

# Apostille Convention

The **Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents**, the **Apostille Convention**, or the **Apostille Treaty**, is an international treaty drafted by the Hague Conference on Private International Law. It specifies the modalities through which a document issued in one of the signatory countries can be certified for legal purposes in all the other signatory states. A certification under the terms of the convention is called an **apostille** (from Latin *post illa* and then French: *a marginal note*). It is an international certification comparable to a notarisation in domestic law, and normally supplements a local notarisation of the document. If the convention applies between two countries, such an apostille is sufficient to certify a document's validity, and removes the need for double-certification, by the originating country and then by the receiving country.

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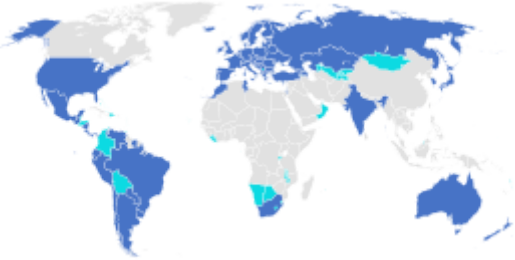
## Procedure

Apostilles are affixed by *Competent Authorities* designated by the government of a state which is party to the convention.<sup>[2]</sup> A list of these authorities is maintained by the Hague Conference on Private International Law. Examples of designated authorities are embassies, ministries, courts or (local) governments. For example, in the United States, the Secretary of State of each state and his or her deputies are usually competent authorities. In the United Kingdom all apostilles are issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Milton Keynes.<sup>[3]</sup>

To be eligible for an apostille, a document must first be issued or certified by an officer recognised by the authority that will issue the apostille. For example, in the US state of Vermont, the Secretary of State maintains specimen signatures of all notaries public, so documents that have been notarised are eligible for apostilles.<sup>[4]</sup> Likewise, courts in the Netherlands are eligible to place an apostille on all municipal civil status documents directly. In some cases, intermediate certifications may be required in the country in which the document originates before it is eligible for an apostille. For example, in New York City, the Office of Vital Records (which issues, among other things, birth

### Apostille Convention

#### Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents



- State parties to the convention (members of the HCCH)
- State parties to the convention (non-members of the HCCH)
- State parties for which the convention has not entered into force

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Signed</b>  | 5 October 1961  |
| <b>Location</b>  | The Netherlands                                       |
| <b>Effective</b>   | 14 January 1965                                       |
| <b>Condition</b>   | ratification by 3 states <sup>[1]</sup>               |
| <b>Parties</b>   | 115   |
| <b>Depositary</b>  | Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands)             |
| <b>Languages</b>   | French (prevailing in case of divergence) and English |
|  <a href="#">Apostille Convention at Wikisource</a> |   |

certificates) is not directly recognised by the New York Secretary of State.<sup>[5]</sup> As a consequence, the signature of the City Clerk must be certified by the County Clerk of New York County to make the birth certificate eligible for an apostille.<sup>[6][7]</sup> In Japan all official documents are issued in Japanese; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, JAPAN) can then provide an apostille for these documents.<sup>[8]</sup> In India the apostille certification can be obtained from the Ministry of External Affairs<sup>[9]</sup> in New Delhi, after authentication by the administration of the Indian state where the document was issued (for educational documents).

## Information

The apostille itself is a stamp or printed form consisting of 10 numbered standard fields. On the top is the text *APOSTILLE*, under which the text *Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961* (French for “Hague Convention of 5 October 1961”) is placed. This title must be written in French for the Apostille to be valid (article 4 of the Convention). In the numbered fields, the following information is added (may be in official language of the authority which issues it or in a second language):

Country ... [e.g. Korea, Spain]

This public document

1. has been signed by [e.g. Henry Cho]
2. acting in the capacity of [e.g. Notary Public]
3. bears the seal/stamp of [e.g. High Court of Hong Kong]  
Certified
4. at [e.g. Hong Kong]
5. the ... [e.g. 16 April 2014]
6. by ... [e.g. the Chief Executive of the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong]
7. No ... [e.g. 2536218517]
8. Seal/stamp ... [of the authority giving the apostille]
9. Signature

The information can be placed on the document itself, on the back of the document, or attached to the document as an allonge.

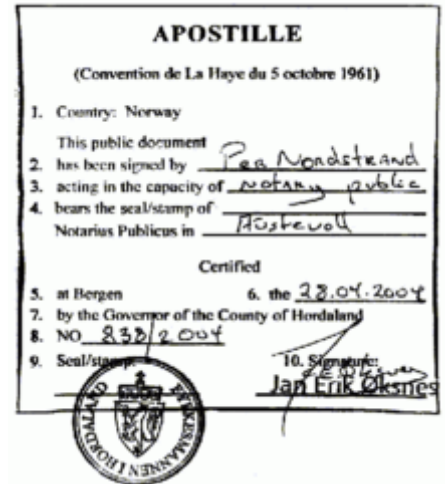
## Eligible documents

Four types of documents are mentioned in the convention:<sup>[1]</sup>

- court documents
- administrative documents (e.g. civil status documents)
- notarial acts
- official certificates which are placed on documents signed by persons in their private capacity, such as official certificates recording the registration of a document or the fact that it was in existence on a certain date and official and notarial authentications of signatures.

## Legalization

A state that has not signed the Convention must specify how foreign legal documents can be certified for its use. Two countries may have a special convention on the recognition of each other's public documents, but in practice this is infrequent. Otherwise, the document must be certified by the foreign ministry of the country in which the document originated, and then by the foreign ministry of the government of the state in which the document will be used; one of the certifications will often be performed at an embassy or consulate. In practice this means the document must be certified twice before it can have legal effect in the receiving country. For example, as Canada is not a signatory,



An apostille issued by Norwegian authorities.

Canadian documents for use abroad must be certified by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs ([http://www.international.gc.ca/departement-ministere/authentication-authentification\\_documents.aspx?lang=eng&view=d](http://www.international.gc.ca/departement-ministere/authentication-authentification_documents.aspx?lang=eng&view=d)) in Ottawa or by a Canadian consular official abroad, and subsequently by the relevant government office or consulate of the receiving state.

## Apostille vs. Legalization



An Apostille of the Hague issued by the State of Alabama



As Canada is a non-signatory, Canadian documents for use abroad must be certified twice: at the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and subsequently by the consulate of the receiving state (in this case, the Netherlands)

## States that are party to the convention

The convention has 115 parties and is in force for all members of the European Union and all but ten members of the Hague Conference on Private International Law. As of 2017 The convention had not entered into force in Bolivia and Tunisia; it entered into force in Guatemala on 18 September 2017.

| State  | Entry into Force | Apostille not recognised in   | Comment |
|--|------------------|---|---------|
|  <a href="#">Albania</a>                  | 9 May 2004       | Belgium (until 2015), Germany, Greece, Italy (until 2011) and Spain (until 2017 <sup>[10]</sup> ).  |         |
|  <a href="#">Andorra</a>                  | 31 Dec 1996      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Antigua and Barbuda</a>      | 1 Nov 1981       |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Argentina</a>                | 18 Feb 1988      | Kosovo  |         |
|  <a href="#">Armenia</a>                  | 14 Oct 1994      | Kosovo  |         |
|  <a href="#">Australia</a>                | 16 Mar 1995      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Austria</a>                  | 13 Jan 1968      | Burundi, Dominican Republic, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan   |         |
|  <a href="#">Azerbaijan</a>               | 2 Mar 2005       | Germany, Hungary (until 2005), Kosovo, Netherlands (until 2010)   |         |
|  <a href="#">Bahamas</a>                  | 10 Jul 1973      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Bahrain</a>                  | 31 Dec 2013      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Barbados</a>                 | 30 Nov 1966      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Belarus</a>                | 31 May 1992      | Kosovo  |         |
|  <a href="#">Belgium</a>                | 9 Feb 1973       | Albania (until 2015), Dominican Republic, India (until 2008), Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Ukraine (until 2004), Uzbekistan |         |
|  <a href="#">Belize</a>                 | 11 Apr 1993      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Bolivia</a>                | 7 May 2018       |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Bosnia and Herzegovina</a> | 6 Mar 1992       |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Botswana</a>               | 30 Sep 1966      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Brazil</a>                 | 14 Aug 2016      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Brunei</a>                 | 3 Dec 1987       |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Bulgaria</a>               | 29 Apr 2001      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Burundi</a>                | 13 Feb 2015      | Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland  |         |
|  <a href="#">Cape Verde</a>             | 13 Feb 2010      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Chile</a>                  | 30 Aug 2016      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Colombia</a>               | 30 Jan 2001      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Cook Islands</a>           | 30 Apr 2005      |   |         |
|  <a href="#">Costa Rica</a>             | 14 Dec 2011      |   |         |

| State  | Entry into Force | Apostille not recognised in  | Comment   |
|--|------------------|--|---|
|  <a href="#">Croatia</a>            | 8 Dec 1991       |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Cyprus</a>             | 30 Apr 1973      | Kosovo   |   |
|  <a href="#">Czech Republic</a>     | 16 Mar 1999      |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Kingdom of Denmark</a> | 26 Dec 2006      |  | Does not apply for <a href="#">Greenland</a> and the <a href="#">Faroe Islands</a>  |
|  <a href="#">Dominica</a>           | 3 Nov 1978       |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Dominican Republic</a> | 30 Aug 2009      | Austria, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands  |   |
|  <a href="#">Ecuador</a>            | 2 Apr 2005       |  |   |
|  <a href="#">El Salvador</a>        | 31 May 1996      |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Estonia</a>            | 30 Sep 2001      |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Fiji</a>               | 10 Oct 1970      |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Finland</a>            | 26 Aug 1986      |  |   |
|  <a href="#">France</a>            | 24 Jan 1965      |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Georgia</a>          | 14 May 2007      | Germany (until 2010), Kosovo and Greece (until 2015)   |   |
|  <a href="#">Germany</a>          | 13 Feb 1966      | Albania, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Dominican Republic, Georgia (until 2010), India, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Paraguay, Peru (until 2014), Tajikistan, Ukraine (until 2010) and Uzbekistan |   |
|  <a href="#">Greece</a>           | 18 May 1985      | Albania, Georgia (until 2015), Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Peru, Uzbekistan  |   |
|  <a href="#">Grenada</a>          | 7 Apr 2002       |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Guatemala</a>        | 18 Sep 2017      |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Honduras</a>         | 30 Dec 2004      |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Hong Kong</a>        | 25 Apr 1965      |  | The convention is still applicable to Hong Kong despite the <a href="#">transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong</a> on 1 Jul 1997. <sup>[11]</sup> |
|  <a href="#">Hungary</a>          | 18 Jan 1973      | Azerbaijan (until 2005),   |   |
|  <a href="#">Iceland</a>          | 27 Nov 2004      |  |   |
|  <a href="#">India</a>            | 14 Jul 2005      | Belgium (until 2008), Finland (until 2009), Germany, <sup>[12]</sup> Netherlands (until 2008) and Spain (until 2008), Kosovo   |   |
|  <a href="#">Ireland</a>          | 9 Mar 1999       |  |   |
|  <a href="#">Israel</a>           | 14 Aug 1978      | Kosovo   |   |

| State  | Entry into Force | Apostille not recognised in  | Comment  |
|--|------------------|--|--|
|  <a href="#">Italy</a>              | 11 Feb 1978      | Albania (until 2011),  |  |
|  <a href="#">Japan</a>              | 27 Jul 1970      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Kazakhstan</a>         | 30 Jan 2001      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Kosovo</a>             | 14 Jul 2016      | Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, China (for Hong Kong and Macao), Cyprus, Germany, Georgia, Greece, India, Israel, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Mexico, Moldova, Namibia, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela |  |
|  <a href="#">Kyrgyzstan</a>         | 31 Jul 2011      | Austria, Belgium, Germany, and Greece  |  |
|  <a href="#">Latvia</a>             | 30 Jan 1996      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Lesotho</a>            | 4 Dec 1966       |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Liberia</a>            | 8 Feb 1996       | Belgium, Germany, and the United States (until 2015)   |  |
|  <a href="#">Liechtenstein</a>      | 17 Sep 1972      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Lithuania</a>          | 19 Jul 1997      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Luxembourg</a>        | 3 Jun 1979       |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Macau</a>            | 4 Feb 1969       | Kosovo   | The convention is still applicable to Macau despite the transfer of sovereignty over Macau on 20 Dec 1999. <sup>[11]</sup> |
|  <a href="#">Macedonia</a>        | 17 Nov 1991      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Malawi</a>           | 2 Dec 1967       |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Malta</a>            | 3 Mar 1968       |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Marshall Islands</a> | 14 Aug 1992      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Mauritius</a>        | 12 Mar 1968      | Kosovo   |  |
|  <a href="#">Mexico</a>           | 14 Aug 1995      | Kosovo   |  |
|  <a href="#">Moldova</a>          | 16 Mar 2007      | Germany and Kosovo   |  |
|  <a href="#">Monaco</a>           | 31 Dec 2002      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Mongolia</a>         | 31 Dec 2009      | Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany and Greece  |  |
|  <a href="#">Montenegro</a>       | 3 Jun 2006       |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Morocco</a>          | 14 Aug 2016      | Germany  |  |

| State  | Entry into Force            | Apostille not recognised in                                      | Comment  |
|--|-----------------------------|--|--|
|  <a href="#">Namibia</a>                            | 30 Jan 2001                 | Kosovo   |  |
|  <a href="#">Kingdom of the Netherlands</a>         | 8 Oct 1965                  | Azerbaijan (until 2010), Dominican Republic, India (until 2008), | <a href="#">Aruba</a> , <a href="#">Curaçao</a> , <a href="#">Netherlands</a> , and <a href="#">Sint Maarten</a>                                     |
|  <a href="#">New Zealand</a>                        | 22 Nov 2001                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Nicaragua</a>                          | 14 May 2013                 | Kosovo   |  |
|  <a href="#">Niue</a>                               | 2 Mar 1999                  |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Norway</a>                             | 29 Jul 1983                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Oman</a>                               | 30 Jan 2012                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Panama</a>                             | 4 Aug 1991                  |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Paraguay</a>                           | 30 Aug 2014 <sup>[13]</sup> | Germany, Kosovo  |  |
|  <a href="#">Peru</a>                               | 30 Sep 2010                 | Germany (until 2014), Greece, Kosovo                             |  |
|  <a href="#">Poland</a>                             | 14 Aug 2005                 | Kosovo   |  |
|  <a href="#">Portugal</a>                           | 4 Feb 1969                  |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Romania</a>                          | 13 Mar 2001                 | Kosovo   |  |
|  <a href="#">Russia</a>                           | 31 May 1992                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Saint Kitts and Nevis</a>            | 14 Dec 1994                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Saint Lucia</a>                      | 31 Jul 2002                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</a> | 27 Oct 1979                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Samoa</a>                            | 13 Sep 1999                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">San Marino</a>                       | 13 Feb 1995                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">São Tomé and Príncipe</a>            | 13 Sep 2008                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Serbia</a>                           | 27 Apr 1992                 | Kosovo   | Ratified as the  <a href="#">Federal Republic of Yugoslavia</a> |
|  <a href="#">Seychelles</a>                       | 31 Mar 1979                 |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Slovakia</a>                         | 18 Feb 2002                 | Kosovo   |  |
|  <a href="#">Slovenia</a>                         | 25 Jun 1991                 |  |  |

| State   | Entry into Force | Apostille not recognised in                          | Comment  |
|---|------------------|--|--|
|  <a href="#">South Africa</a>        | 30 Apr 1995      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">South Korea</a>         | 14 Jul 2007      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Spain</a>               | 25 Sep 1978      | Albania, India (until 2008) and Kosovo               |  |
|  <a href="#">Suriname</a>            | 25 Nov 1975      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Swaziland</a>           | 6 Sep 1968       |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Sweden</a>              | 1 May 1999       |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Switzerland</a>         | 11 Mar 1973      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Tajikistan</a>          | 31 Oct 2015      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Tonga</a>               | 4 Jun 1970       |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Trinidad and Tobago</a> | 14 Jul 2000      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Tunisia</a>             | 30 Mar 2018      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Turkey</a>            | 29 Sep 1985      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Ukraine</a>           | 22 Dec 2003      | Belgium (until 2004), Greece (until 2010) and Kosovo |  |
|  <a href="#">United Kingdom</a>    | 24 Jan 1965      |  | Includes Crown Dependencies and <a href="#">British Overseas Territories</a> |
|  <a href="#">United States</a>     | 15 Oct 1981      | Liberia (until 2015)                                 |  |
|  <a href="#">Uruguay</a>           | 14 Oct 2012      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Uzbekistan</a>        | 15 Apr 2012      | Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Kosovo            |  |
|  <a href="#">Vanuatu</a>           | 30 Jul 1980      |  |  |
|  <a href="#">Venezuela</a>         | 16 Mar 1999      | Kosovo   |  |

[Saudi Arabia](#) is not a party to the convention.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Abuse

The Apostille does not give information regarding the quality of the content in the underlying document, but certifies the signature (and the capacity of who placed it) and correctness of the seal/stamp on the document which must be certified. In 2005 The Hague Conference surveyed its members and produced a report in December 2008 which expressed serious concerns about Diplomas and Degree certificates issued by [diploma mills](#). The possible abuse of the system was highlighted "Particularly troubling is the possible use of diploma mill qualifications to circumvent migration controls, possibly by potential terrorists." (page 5) The risk comes from the fact that the various government stamps give the document an air of authenticity without anyone having checked the underlying document. "An official



looking certificate may be issued to a copy of a diploma mill qualification, and then subsequently issued with an Apostille, without anyone having ever verified the signature on, let alone the contents of, the diploma." (page 7) Further member states indicated "they would be obliged to issue an Apostille for certification of a certified copy of a diploma issued by a diploma mill". (page 15) The evaluation commission of the Hague Conference expressed concern as to whether this issue could affect the entire convention. "... the Apostille does not 'look through the certification' and does not relate to the diploma itself ... There is a clear risk that such practices may eventually undermine the effectiveness and therefore the successful operation of the Apostille Convention". (page 5)<sup>[15]</sup>

In February 2009 the Hague Conference recommended to amend the wording on the Apostille to make it clear that only the seal and the signature were authenticated. The wording to be added is: "This Apostille only certifies the signature, the capacity of the signer and the seal or stamp it bears. It does not certify the content of the document for which it was issued."<sup>[16]</sup>

## See also

- [Legalization \(international law\)](#)
- [Hague Conference on Private International Law](#)
- [Convention on the issue of multilingual extracts from civil status records](#)

## References

1. "12: Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents" ([http://hcch.e-vision.nl/index\\_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=41](http://hcch.e-vision.nl/index_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=41)). Hague Conference on Private International Law. Retrieved 16 January 2011.
2. "ABCs of Apostilles p. 13" (<http://hcch.e-vision.nl/upload/abc12e.pdf>) (PDF). Hague Conference on Private International Law.
3. "United Kingdom, Competent Authorities" ([http://www.hcch.net/index\\_en.php?act=authorities.details&aid=352](http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=authorities.details&aid=352)). Hague Conference on Private International Law. Retrieved 9 March 2011.
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12. "Status Table - 12: Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents" ([http://www.hcch.net/index\\_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=41](http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=41)). Hague Conference on Private International Law. Retrieved 21 May 2014.
13. "Archived copy" (<https://archive.is/20140918150157/http://mersanlaw.com/2014/08/13/entrada-en-vigencia-del-convenio-de-apostilla-en-paraguay/?lang=en>). Archived from the original (<http://mersanlaw.com/2014/08/13/entrada-en-vigencia-del-convenio-de-apostilla-en-paraguay/?lang=en>) on 18 September 2014. Retrieved 18 September 2014.
14. Strong and Herd Import/Export Services, A customer in Saudi has asked for our contract to be legalised, what does this mean? (<http://www.strongandherd.co.uk/faqs/export/export-question-5/>), accessed 23 February 2018

15. Permanent Bureau (December 2008). "The application of the Apostille Convention to diplomas including those issued by diploma mills" (<http://hcch.e-vision.nl/upload/wop/2008pd05e.pdf>) (PDF). Hague Conference on Private International Law.
16. Permanent Bureau (February 2009). "Conclusions and Recommendations of the Special Commission on the Practical Operation of the Hague Apostille, Service, Taking of Evidence, and Access to Justice Conventions" ([http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/jac\\_concl\\_e.pdf](http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/jac_concl_e.pdf)) (PDF). Hague Conference on Private International Law. p. 13.

## External links

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- Treaty text (HCCH) ([http://hcch.e-vision.nl/index\\_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=41](http://hcch.e-vision.nl/index_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=41))
  - Status (HCCH) ([http://hcch.e-vision.nl/index\\_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=41](http://hcch.e-vision.nl/index_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=41))
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