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Apostille

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In short: An apostille is a certificate added to a public document (such as a certificate of incorporation, a notarised power of attorney or a passport copy certified by a notary) so that it is accepted in another country that has joined the 1961 Hague Apostille Convention. It replaces the longer embassy legalisation process.

When you form or manage a company abroad, registries and banks often ask for official documents from your home country. If both countries are party to the **Hague Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents**, one stamp or certificate from the competent authority of the issuing country, the apostille, is enough. The HCCH status table listed **130 contracting parties** at its 30 June 2026 update; recent joiners include China (in force November 2023), Bangladesh (March 2025), Algeria (July 2026) and Vietnam (September 2026), and Thailand's accession takes effect in February 2027.

An apostille confirms the signature, seal and capacity of the official who signed the document, not the content. Many countries now issue electronic apostilles (e-APP). If the destination country is not a party, the document needs full legalisation instead.

See also

- Legalisation
- Certificate of incorporation

Frequently asked questions

Who issues an apostille?

A designated authority in the country where the document was issued, for example the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in the UK or the Secretary of State in each US state.

Does a translation need an apostille?

Often the foreign authority asks for a certified translation as well. Whether the translation itself needs an apostille depends on the receiving country; check before ordering.

References

1. Status table: Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents . Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH). Accessed November 2026.
2. Apostille Section . Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH). Accessed November 2026.
3. Get your document legalised . GOV.UK. Accessed November 2026.

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