



HANKUK
LAW FIRM

Administration Service



NEWSLETTER

Consular Legalization and Apostille Certification

Purpose:

- To ensure documents are legal, authentic, and protected against forgery
- To enable the receiving authority in another country to recognize and accept the documents

***Note:** Legalization does not certify the contents of a document. It only certifies the authenticity of the signature, seal/stamp, and the capacity of the person signing the document

WHAT IS CONSULAR LEGALIZATION?

According to Clause 2, Article 2 of Decree No. 111/2011/ND-CP:
"2. "Consular legalization" means the certification by a competent Vietnamese authority of the seal, signature, and official capacity appearing on foreign-issued documents, so that such documents may be recognized and used in Vietnam."

WHAT IS CONSULAR CERTIFICATION?

According to Clause 1, Article 2 of Decree No. 111/2011/ND-CP:
"1. "Consular certification" means the certification by a competent Vietnamese authority of the seal, signature, and official capacity on Vietnamese documents so that such documents may be recognized and used abroad."



PROCESS



Step 1: Notarization in the country of origin

The notary public certifies the authenticity of the signature and/or official seal



Step 2: Certification by the competent authority of the issuing country

Certification by the competent authority



Step 3: Consular legalization in Vietnam

The Vietnamese Embassy/ Consulate certifies the signature of the foreign diplomatic authority



Step 4: Translation & Notarization in Vietnam

Translation into Vietnamese & Certification of the Translation

Important Note: The receiving authorities in Vietnam generally only accept documents that are valid within 3 months (or 6 months for marriage-related documents) from the date of consular legalization

Documents Exempt from Consular Legalization



1. International Treaties:

Vietnam and the relevant foreign country are both parties to an international treaty, or based on the principle of reciprocity



2. Direct Transfer:

Documents transferred directly or through diplomatic channels between competent authorities of Vietnam and foreign countries



3. Vietnamese Law:

Specifically exempted under Vietnamese domestic laws and regulations



4. Independent Verification:

The receiving authority can independently verify the authenticity of the document without requiring legalization stamps or seals

Bilateral Network: 30 Countries Exempted

Vietnam currently has Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties and Consular Agreements with 30 countries. If your documents are issued by these countries, depending on the type of document, you may be able to skip the 4-step legalization process and proceed directly with translation for use in Vietnam



Classification of Exempt Documents (30 Countries)

Civil, Marriage, Family & Criminal Records	Russia, China, France, Cuba, Czech Republic, Poland, Belarus, Bulgaria, North Korea, Hungary, Laos, Mongolia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Spain (criminal documents only), Algeria, Taiwan (through the Economic and Cultural Office)
Adoption Application Documents	Denmark, Italy, Switzerland
Border Areas (Birth, Marriage, Death Registration)	Cambodia, Laos, China. ⚠ (Must be issued by competent border authorities.)
All Consular Documents	Afghanistan, Iraq, Australia, Romania, Nicaragua

Special Exceptions: Japan (Only civil status documents: Birth, Marriage, Death Certificates). The Netherlands (Only requires certification by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam; certification by the Dutch Embassy is not required).

Key Milestone:

Decree No. 293/2026/ND-CP Guiding the Implementation of the Convention



Accession to the Hague Convention: Effective from September 11, 2026, Decree No. 293/2026/ND-CP introduces a simplified global authentication system.



Key Change: Instead of the complicated 4-step legalization process involving multiple embassies, documents issued by member countries will only require a single certification step by the competent authority of the issuing country.

Comparison

	Apostille	Legalization
Similarities	Both Apostille and Consular Legalization involve a certification step to authenticate the seal, signature, and title/authority of the signatory on a document	
Differences	1. Apostille certification is only applicable among countries that are members of the Hague Convention. 2. The Apostille process requires only one certification step: certification by the competent authority of the issuing country (usually the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The document can then be legally used in other Apostille member countries.	1. Consular legalization applies to all countries, including countries that are not members of the Hague Convention. 2. The legalization process consists of two steps: certification by the competent authority of the issuing country, followed by consular legalization at the Embassy/Consulate of the country where the document will be used.
Applicable Countries	Global network of 100+ countries. Only one certification step is required in the competent authority of the issuing country	Legalized documents can only be used in one specific country and require multiple steps across different authorities and countries
Authentication and Verification	Manual verification. Paper-based documents.	24/7 Online Verification. Electronic Documents.



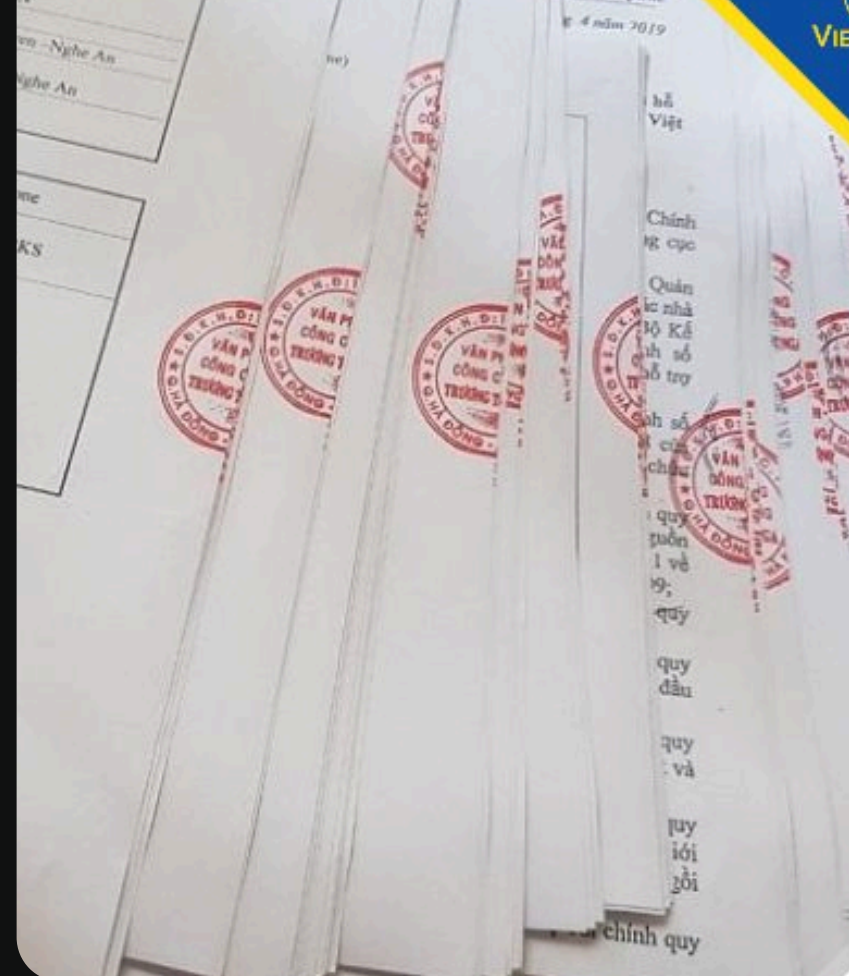
Processing Time:

Paper Documents:

- 1–4 documents → 1 working day
- 5–9 documents → 2 working days
- > 10 documents → 4 working days

Online Submission:

- 1–4 documents → In day
- 5–9 documents → 1 working day
- > 10 documents → 3 working days



Foreign Documents with Apostille:

- Exempt from consular legalization when used in Vietnam
- No additional consular certification procedure is required
- If the documents are not in Vietnamese, they must be translated into Vietnamese

Procedure:

Submission Methods

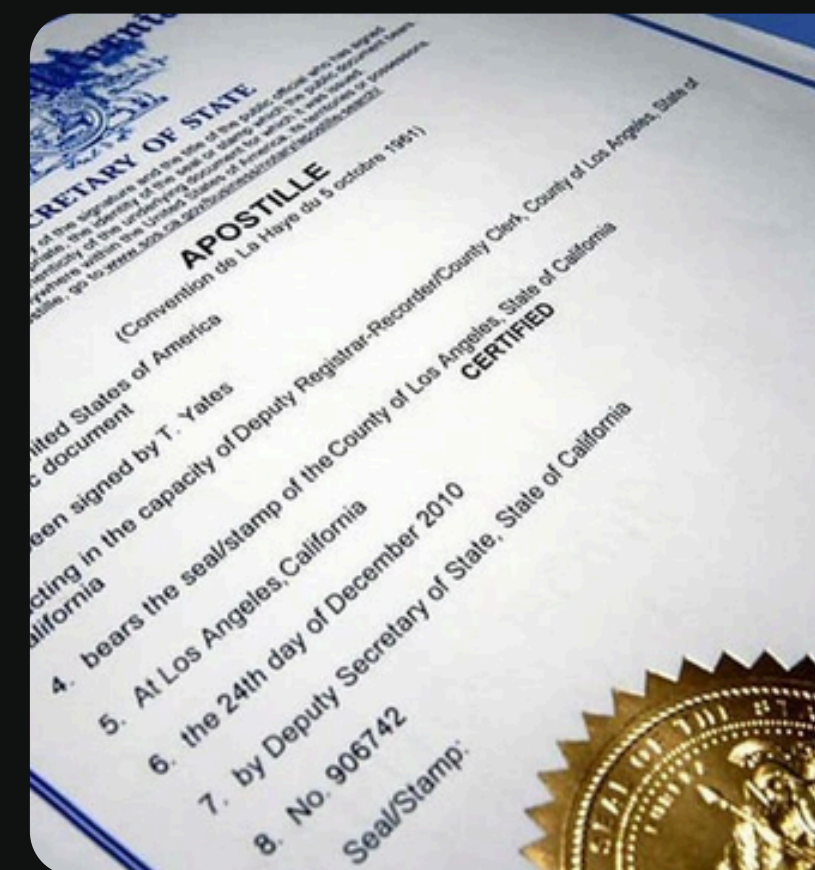
- In person
- By post
- Online

Required Documents

- Application form
- Documents requiring certification (Apostille)

Documents Eligible for Apostille Certification

- + Documents issued by Courts, Procuracy, Investigation Agencies, and Enforcement Authorities
- + Criminal Record Certificates
- + Civil Status Documents
- + Diplomas and Certificates
- + Notarized/Certified Documents
- + Medical Examination Certificates
- + Other documents as prescribed by law.



Apostille Certification

Procedure

Foreign Documents

Does the issuing country of the document belong to the list of 30 countries exempt from consular legalization?

Yes

The documents only need to be translated and notarized for use.

No

Is the issuing country a member of the Hague Convention?

Yes

Obtain an Apostille certificate from the competent authority in the country of issuance and proceed with certified translation for use

No

Complete the consular legalization procedures in the country of origin and at the Vietnamese Embassy, and arrange certified translation in accordance with applicable regulations for official use



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info@hankuklawfirm.com

0942 339 063

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