



Merchant Shipping Directorate



## AUTHENTICATION OF FOREIGN DOCUMENTS

### *Merchant Shipping Notice 206*

*Notice to Shipowners, Ship Operators, Managers, Masters,  
Owners' Representatives and Recognised Organisations*

The Directorate wishes to draw the attention of all stakeholders to the introduction of revised and enhanced measures regarding the authentication of documents executed outside of Malta for the purpose of filing or registration with the Malta Ship Registry.

### **Background**

Presently, certain documents executed in foreign jurisdictions must be authenticated by a notary, lawyer, or equivalent professional and subsequently legalised either via an Apostille (under the Hague Convention of 1961) or through the appropriate Maltese diplomatic or consular representation.

Following a comprehensive review of these requirements, the Malta Ship Registry is introducing an alternative procedure. Under this new framework, the Registry may accept documents executed outside of Malta without the need for formal legalisation, provided the conditions outlined below are met.

**Note:** Documents which currently do not require professional authentication or legalisation remain unaffected by this Notice.

## **1. NEW PROCEDURE**

### **1.1 Waiver of Mandatory Legalisation**

The Malta Ship Registry shall, at its discretion, waive the requirement for formal legalisation of documents and their accompanying certifications, regardless of whether the documents originate from within or outside the European Union.

### **1.2 Responsibility of Local Practitioners**

Where documents are submitted without legalisation, the shipping service professional or practitioner assumes full responsibility for the integrity of the authentication. The practitioner must

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furnish the Registry with a signed electronic [Declaration of Authenticity](#). By submitting this Declaration, the practitioner affirms that, to the best of their professional knowledge, the foreign notary, lawyer, or official authorised by the Registry who executed the document is duly warranted and qualified to practice within the relevant jurisdiction.

### 1.3 Due Diligence and Verification

To ensure the validity of the Declaration, the shipping service practitioner is expected to verify the credentials of the foreign professional. Recommended verification methods include, but are not limited to:

- **Documentary Evidence:** Obtaining a copy of the foreign professional's warrant, licence, or certificate of authorisation.
- **Official Inquiry:** Consulting competent authorities, regulatory bodies, or professional registers in the jurisdiction of origin.
- **Standard Professional Due Diligence:** Any other reasonable method of verification available to the practitioner.

It is strongly recommended that shipping service professionals assuming the responsibility for such a declaration retain all background documentation as evidence of the authentication process.

### 1.4 Authorised Signatories

The Declaration of Authenticity must be executed by a shipping service professional duly warranted and licensed to practice in Malta, specifically:

- (a) An **Advocate**;
- (b) A **Notary Public**;
- (c) A **Certified Public Accountant**; or
- (d) A **Registered Auditor**.

Foreign-qualified professionals may sign such declarations only if they hold an equivalent warrant or certificate entitling them to practice their profession within the Maltese jurisdiction.



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Transport Malta

Merchant Shipping Notice 206  
Page 3 of 3

## 2. PRESERVATION OF EXISTING PROCEDURES

This simplified procedure serves as an alternative and does not supersede existing requirements. Service providers and practitioners may continue to utilise the established process of formal legalisation for foreign documents at their discretion.

## 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Merchant Shipping Notice shall take effect immediately.

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13 May 2026

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