

You graduated in law from a foreign university

1 General

Article 428 of the Judicial Code provides that no one may use the title of lawyer or exercise the profession of lawyer if they:

- 1° do not hold the Belgian diploma of doctor, licentiate or master in law;
- 2° have not taken the oath referred to in Article 429 and;
- 3° are not enrolled on the register of the Bar or on the list of trainees.

2 You are a citizen of an EU Member State, you have obtained your degree in another EU Member State (i.e. other than Belgium), and you have not undergone any traineeship

In accordance with Article 428 (1) of the Belgian Judicial Code, you must comply with the following conditions:

1. be the holder of a degree that grants you access to the legal profession;
2. submit the following documents:
 - a. a certificate of good character;
 - b. a certificate from which it is evident that you have never been declared bankrupt;
 - c. a certificate from which it is evident that you have never performed acts that could give cause for suspending or prohibiting you from practising as a lawyer, i.e. a serious error while practising as a lawyer or a crime;
 - d. the list of subjects in which you passed examinations in order to obtain your degree, diploma or other certificate.
3. pass the professional competence examination as organised by the Flemish Bar Council or the Ordre des Barreaux Francophones et Germanophone (Bar Council of French and German-Speaking Lawyers), depending on the bar where you wish to register*, when the training received relates to fields of study that differ significantly from those covered in the Belgian law degree, unless the knowledge that you have acquired during your professional experience is of such a nature that it completely or partially compensates for these significant differences.

This examination consists of a written section (civil law, including civil procedure, criminal law, including criminal procedure, and a subject chosen from among public law, administrative law, tax law, commercial law or labour law) and an oral section (ethics and the subjects that you did not pass in the written examination section). In accordance with article 428quater, §1 of the Belgian Judicial Code the professional competence examination is organised in Dutch.

* The location of the local bars can be found [here](#).

The registration fee for taking the [professional competence examination](#) is € 370.

The application form to take the professional competence examination can be downloaded [here](#).

For more information regarding this professional competence examination as organised by the Flemish Bar Council, please contact:

Lieve NAESENS
Tel.: 02 227 54 73
E-mail: lieve.naessens@ordevanvlaamsebalies.be

If you pass the professional competence examination, you may register on the list of trainee lawyers.

3 You are a citizen of an EU Member State, you have obtained your degree in another EU Member State (i.e. other than Belgium), you have completed your traineeship so that you can be admitted as a lawyer in that country, but you are not yet a lawyer registered on the lawyers' roll

When you possess all the qualifications in your Member State of origin to be admitted to the lawyers' roll, you can request to be registered on the lawyers' roll of a Belgian Bar Council. You are then exempt from the traineeship obligations. In this case, you must comply with a number of additional conditions.

1. You must submit the following documents
 - a. a certificate of good character;
 - b. a certificate from which it is evident that you have never been declared bankrupt;
 - c. a certificate from which it is evident that you have never performed acts that could give cause for suspending or prohibiting you from practising as a lawyer, i.e. a serious error while practising as a lawyer or a crime;
 - d. the list of subjects in which you passed examinations in order to obtain your degree, diploma or other certificate.
2. You must pass the professional competence examination as organised by the Flemish Bar Council or the Ordre des Barreaux Francophones et Germanophone (Bar Council of French and German-Speaking Lawyers), depending on the bar where you wish to register*, when the training received relates to fields of study that differ significantly from those covered in the Belgian law degree, unless the knowledge that you have acquired during your professional experience is of such a nature that it completely or partially compensates for these significant differences.

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If you pass this professional competence examination, you may take the oath and are exempt from the traineeship obligations. You will then be immediately registered on the lawyers' roll.

4 You are a citizen of an EU Member State, you have obtained your degree in another EU Member State (i.e. other than Belgium), and you are already a lawyer registered on the lawyer's roll in that country

4.1 You wish to practice as a lawyer under the title of the country of origin

You may practice permanently as a lawyer in Belgium under the professional title of your country of origin. You may not use the Belgian professional title under any circumstances. If you make use of this possibility, a number of conditions must be complied with under Article 477 (4), § 2 of the Belgian Judicial Code.

These conditions are:

1. You must register on the EU-list of a bar and provide proof to the Board of the Bar Council of your registration at the competent authority of the Member State of origin (which proof must not be older than three months);
2. You must keep up your membership at the competent authority of the Member State of origin. You may perform the same professional services in Belgium as a lawyer established in Belgium (Article 477 (5), §1 of the Belgian Judicial Code).

For representative acts and to defend a client in court, you must however:

1. act in association with a lawyer who is registered on the lawyers' roll;
2. be introduced by that lawyer to the President of the Court where you will appear prior to the hearing.

4.2 You wish to obtain the Belgian professional title

There are two possibilities in this regard:

- 1) If you practice your profession already under your original professional title and can prove to the Board of the Bar Council that you have actually and regularly performed work in Belgian law, including community law, for a period of three years, you may request to be registered on the lawyers' roll and take the oath. To this end, you must provide the Board of the Bar Council with all the necessary information and documents regarding the number and nature of the cases you have handled (Article 477 (8) of the Belgian Judicial Code).

If you make use of this opportunity, you can continue to use your original professional title in addition to the Belgian title of lawyer provided you keep up your registration at the competent authority of the Member State of origin (Article 477 (8), § 5 of the Belgian Judicial Code).

- 2) If you cannot submit proof of three years' work, you must, before you can be registered on the lawyers' roll, pass the professional competence examination as organised by the Flemish Bar Council or the Ordre des Barreaux Francophones et Germanophone (Bar Council of French and German-Speaking Lawyers), depending on the bar where you wish to register*, when the training received relates to fields of study that differ significantly from those covered in the Belgian law degree, unless the knowledge that you have acquired during your professional experience is of such a nature that it completely or partially compensates for these significant differences.

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5 You obtained your degree outside the EU

A law degree obtained outside the EU is not recognised as fully equivalent to a Belgian law degree. The foreign curriculum deviates fundamentally from Belgian legal education. Accordingly, such a degree does not grant access to the Belgian legal profession.

In order to obtain the necessary equivalence, you can make direct contact with one of the Belgian universities that has a law faculty. These universities have the power to give accreditation to a foreign law degree. The university you choose will then decide independently in which subjects and/or academic years you need to pass additional exams, in order to obtain the necessary degree in law.

You are already a lawyer registered on the lawyer's roll in another country and want to keep that registration

If you keep your registration at the bar of origin, you can ask to be included in the B-list of a bar. The Bar Council will decide on your inclusion on the B-list and will check:

- whether you are regularly registered with your bar association of origin,
- whether you have fulfilled any traineeship obligation at that bar,
- whether there are any legal or deontological incompatibilities,
- whether you have undertaken to submit to the discipline, regulations and decisions of the Bar Council,
- whether your status complies with the legislation on the residence and activities of foreigners in Belgium,
- whether your professional liability is covered by an insurance or guarantee taken out in accordance with the rules of your country of origin and whether it is at least equivalent, in terms of coverage and conditions, to those of the lawyers registered with the Bar.

More information can be obtained from the bar association where you wish to register.