CrossContinental ADVISORS

International documents that stall immigration cases

A checklist of the documents that most often hold up immigration and citizenship files, and what to confirm before you file.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Which international documents stall immigration cases?

Most stalled files trace back to the same few documents: civil records issued abroad (birth, marriage, divorce and death certificates), police and FBI record checks, and any document in a foreign language without a complete, certified translation. This checklist shows what to confirm for each one before a file is submitted.

Six questions to ask about every document

1. What is the document for?
The purpose decides the version, the issuing authority and the format.

2. Who receives it, and in which country?
USCIS, a consulate, a foreign civil registry or an employer each ask for different things.

3. Which version is required?
Full-content (long-form) or short-form, certified copy or original.

4. Who issued it, and is it recent enough?
Some authorities only accept documents issued within a set window.

5. Does it need an apostille or legalization?
It depends on the receiving country, and on whether it is a Hague Convention country.

6. Does it need a certified translation, and in what order?
Translate after the apostille, so the translation also covers the apostille text.

What to confirm, document by document

Civil and family records

- ☐ **Birth certificate:** the full version with both parents' names, issued by the civil registry. Not a hospital record or a short-form extract when the process asks for the full version.
- ☐ **Marriage certificate** for every marriage, plus the divorce decree, annulment or death certificate showing how each prior marriage ended.
- ☐ **Name-change, adoption or legitimation records** whenever names or family relationships differ between documents.
- ☐ **Death certificates** when a parent or former spouse is part of the relationship evidence.
- ☐ **Passport biographic page,** legible, using the spelling every other document must match.

Police, FBI and court records

- [ ] **FBI Identity History Summary,** requested by the person with fingerprints. For use abroad, confirm whether the receiving country needs it apostilled by the U.S. Department of State.
- [ ] **Police certificates** from every country where the person lived, in the issuing country's format and following the receiving authority's rules.
- [ ] **Certified court records** showing the final outcome of any arrest or charge, even when it was dismissed.
- [ ] **Military or service records** when the process requires them.

Education and work records

- [ ] **Diplomas and transcripts,** with certified translations when they are not in English.
- [ ] **Credential evaluation** when an authority or employer requires one (through a partner).
- [ ] **Experience and employment letters** on letterhead, with dates, duties and the signatory's name and title.
- [ ] **Professional licenses and certificates,** current and issued by the licensing body.

Translation and legalization

- [ ] **A complete English translation** of every document that is not in English, including stamps, seals and handwritten notes.
- [ ] **A translator's certification:** a signed statement that the translation is accurate and that the translator is competent in both languages, with name, signature and date.
- [ ] **The original or a copy attached** to the translation, so the reviewer can compare them.
- [ ] **Apostille or consular legalization,** depending on the receiving country. State documents are apostilled at state level; federal documents, such as FBI checks, by the U.S. Department of State.
- [ ] **Powers of attorney** signed, notarized and legalized for use in the destination country.

Final review before filing

- [ ] **Names, dates and places of birth** match across every document, with consistent transliteration.
- [ ] **Nothing is expired, cropped or missing pages,** and every page is legible.
- [ ] **Each document is the version** the receiving authority asks for.
- [ ] **Anything unavailable** has a letter from the issuing authority and secondary evidence ready, where the process allows it.
- [ ] **Files are named and ordered** so the reviewer can find each item at once.

The six most common reasons a document stalls a file

- [ ] An apostille issued by the wrong state or authority
- [ ] A translation that is incomplete, uncertified or missing the original
- [ ] A short-form certificate when the full version is required
- [ ] Names or dates that do not match across documents
- [ ] An FBI record check not prepared for use abroad
- [ ] An expired, incomplete or illegible document

Questions teams ask about immigration documents

Does every immigration case need apostilles?

No. Whether a document needs an apostille depends on the receiving authority and country. US filings generally rely on original documents with complete certified translations, while foreign authorities, such as those handling citizenship by descent in Italy, Portugal or Spain, usually require US documents to be apostilled. Always confirm with the receiving authority before ordering.

What makes a translation "certified"?

A complete English translation with a signed statement from the translator that the translation is accurate and that they are competent in both languages, including name, signature and date. A notary is not usually required for US immigration filings, but check each authority's rules.

Who issues the apostille on an FBI record check?

Because it is a federal record, the apostille comes from the U.S. Department of State, not from a state Secretary of State. FBI Identity History Summaries must be requested by the person themselves.

Can CrossContinental order documents for an individual?

We work with law firms, citizenship companies and corporate teams. Individuals and families are served directly by our sister company Cartório USA Brasil.

Built for teams that handle international documents every month.

- [ ] **Immigration law firms:** visas, green cards and citizenship cases that need civil records, FBI record checks and certified translations.
- [ ] **Citizenship-by-descent companies:** Italian, Portuguese, Spanish or other European citizenship processes for many families at once.
- [ ] **Corporate and HR teams** hiring internationally or sending employees abroad.

- [ ] **Paralegals and operations leads** who coordinate requests across several states and countries.

Prepared by the CrossContinental Advisors team. Last updated November 2026. This checklist is general information, not legal advice, and CrossContinental Advisors is not a law firm. Requirements vary by destination country, process and receiving authority.

Contact
CrossContinental Advisors Inc. · 300 SE 2nd Street, Suite 600, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 · +1 (954) 330-8260 · info@crosscadvisors.com · crosscadvisors.com