



XXIII CLARCIIEV MEETING

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Identity impersonation and fraud: combat strategies and best practices

A European perspective

The concept of fraud, the means of combating it, and the challenges of digitalisation

Nicolas Nord

A common concern for European systems

The reliability of civil status registers and of the documents derived from them is essential to ensuring legal certainty, protecting individuals' rights, and maintaining trust between States.

States

National rules
(Law or case law)

ICCS

Recommendation No. 9 on
combating document fraud in civil
status matters (Strasbourg, 2005)
and report on fraud in ICCS
member states (2000, updated on
several occasions)

European Union

Facilitating the circulation of
public documents whilst
preserving their authenticity



Overview

01

The Concept of Fraud

02

Means of Combating Fraud

03

Fraud and Digitalisation

PART ONE

The Concept of Fraud

Common definition in all the European States

Intentional element

Consists in the existence of a fraudulent intent, which is not always easy to establish

Material element

May take different forms: a false declaration, a fraud against the law, false documents

The forms of the material element

01

A false declaration

For example concerning identity, date of birth, parentage, or marriage

02

A fraud against the law

The use of an authentic instrument to circumvent a legal rule

03

False documents

False documents or authentic documents subsequently altered



A key point

Fraud does not originate with civil status officials

According to the experience of the ICCS Member States, in most cases fraud involves the persons concerned themselves — either alone or with the complicity of third parties

Means of Combating Fraud

The response lies both in the domestic mechanisms of States and in international cooperation

PART TWO

At the level of the States

First mean

Verification of the facts declared

PART TWO

At the level of the States

Second mean

Verification of the formal authenticity of the foreign documents and accuracy of the content

Verifying a foreign document

Legalisation remains the rule

- In most European countries
- Increasing number of exceptions (apostille, bilateral conventions, ...)

Lists of “high-risk” countries

Systematic checks are carried out

ICCS Recommendation No. 9

Warning signs identified

1

An unusually long period between the event and the issue of the document

2

A document issued shortly before an administrative procedure

3

Contradictions in the document

4

A document based exclusively on the statements of the person concerned

Direct cooperation between authorities

A traditional principle enshrined in the ICCS conventions

In cases of serious doubt, the authority of the State in which the document is being used may directly ask the issuing authority to verify its authenticity or content

This direct cooperation between authorities is one of the most effective instruments in combating fraud

Fraud and Digitalisation

A well-protected electronic document is both more difficult to falsify and easier to verify

ICCS Resolution on electronic signature and electronic seal

Adopted in Paris in September 2025

It encourages the verification of electronic documents through verification websites, QR codes, and links incorporated into the documents themselves

European Regulation 2016/1191

Facilitated circulation

Facilitates the circulation of certain public documents between Member States

Electronic tools — IMI

Internal Market Information System
Possible to verify document templates and request information where there are reasonable doubts

An important limitation

Only formal authenticity is verified: the signature, the capacity of the signatory, the seal, and the absence of falsification. Substantive matters are excluded

To conclude

New mechanisms, new challenges

The development of increasingly effective mechanisms for preventing and detecting fraud raises new challenges in terms of the protection of personal data

What limits does this impose on the processing and exchange of such data?

Contact

International Commission on Civil Status



LinkedIn

Secretariat General of the ICCS



Website

www.ciec1.org



Email

ciec-sg@ciec1.org

nicolas.nord@ciec1.org