



Irish qualified solicitors based in a foreign country seeking a practising certificate

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What does an Irish practising certificate entitle the holder to do?

An Irish practising certificate entitles a solicitor practising from an establishment in Ireland to provide legal services as defined by, and subject to the provisions of, the Solicitors Acts 1954 to 2015 and the rules and regulations made thereunder. A practising certificate issued by the Society does not permit practice outside of Ireland. Practising solicitors must have a physical presence in Ireland in order to practise in Ireland.

There is no provision of the Solicitors Acts 1954 to 2015 (or in any rules or regulations made thereunder) for Irish practising certificates to be used to provide legal services outside Ireland and within the EU save for the limited exception under the Services Directive.

The 2020 review of practising certificates

The Society conducted a review in 2020 which confirmed the Society's position that, under the Solicitors Acts 1954 to 2015 and the regulations implementing those statutes, a practising certificate only entitles a solicitor to practise in Ireland from an establishment in Ireland. The review also confirmed that a practising certificate can only be issued to a solicitor on that basis. Therefore, the Society will no longer issue practising certificates to Irish qualified solicitors based outside of Ireland.

The practice of issuing practising certificates to solicitors outside the jurisdiction may create the erroneous impression that the Society permits practice pursuant to the Irish practising certificate outside Ireland. It is clear that no such practice is permitted and, by adopting this approach, the Society will be making clear that such practice is not permitted.

Practising certificates will now only be issued to solicitors who practise from an establishment within Ireland which has a qualifying policy of professional indemnity insurance in place. Practising certificates will also be issued to in-house solicitors in Ireland who provide legal services to their non-solicitor employer only.

Can an Irish qualified solicitor based in a foreign country seek a practising certificate from the Society?

Irish qualified solicitors who wish to register or maintain their registration with a foreign bar outside of the European Union will not be entitled to a practising certificate. Those solicitors may be provided with a certificate attesting to their registration/enrolment as a solicitor instead of a practising certificate. Evidence of registration/enrolment as a solicitor should be sufficient for registration in that jurisdiction. The question of regulation by the Society does not arise as practice in those jurisdictions is regulated by local law.

The above approach should not have any impact on the ability of Irish qualified solicitors who wish to register or to maintain their registration as a foreign lawyer with a relevant bar.