

Context

Access to a legal identity is an essential condition for exercising one's fundamental rights and accessing essential services, especially in fragile contexts. Without it, voting, going to school, sitting an exam, getting medical treatment, travelling, opening a bank account or obtaining credit becomes nearly impossible. Improving civil registry services is therefore a political act for inclusion: The State recognises each individual as a bearer of rights, while affirming the State's responsibilities towards its population.

Almost 850 million people around the world, many of them women and children, live without a legal identity due to a lack of civil registry documents (birth, marriage and death certificates) - World Bank Group, 2021.

Digital civil registration and the replacing or supplementing of paper registers with digital databases improves efficiency and accessibility for local authorities and town halls. It also enables the issuance of documents from any civil registry office, including consulates abroad - a crucial aspect during large population movements. Such reforms also generate major benefits for democratic governance and stability: data protection, public policies informed by reliable and up-to-date data, greater transparency in public services, etc. They also encourage stable and secure investments.



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Our priorities

Enabel offers an approach based on co-construction and local anchorage:

Digitisation of the civil registry system

Digitisation is not an end in itself, but a strategic opportunity to strengthen civil registration as a whole: adapting the legal framework, simplifying procedures, guaranteeing data security and enhancing the skills of the staff in charge, and improving access for the people. As part of the Global Gateway Strategy, the civil registry digitisation - particularly along strategic corridors in Africa - is helping to combat corruption by limiting identity fraud, while enabling everyone to participate fully in economic life: accessing banking services, obtaining credit or setting up a business, thereby supporting inclusive economic growth.

Leveraging Belgium's public expertise

Since 2019, Belgium has been one of the few European countries to fully digitise its civil registration system, eliminating paper records and enabling citizens to obtain official documents from any location, regardless of where they were originally issued. This innovative model inspired Enabel to support reforms in partner countries, while adapting them to local realities. To achieve this, we are mobilising cutting-edge Belgian expertise, both public and private.

Our approach is always demand-driven and based on co-construction

We support the digital systems of partners who wish to draw on the Belgian experience, while designing solutions directly with the end-users - municipalities, courts - to ensure they are adapted to local realities and fully owned by those who use them.

In the same way that Belgium separated its civil registry system from its population register, Enabel supports the modernisation of civil registration. But it does so without intervening in population identification initiatives (particularly biometric ones) in order to preserve and avoid hampering fundamental rights and individual freedoms.

Our services

- Supporting the governance of decentralised civil registry services;
- Securing old civil registers;
- Building up capacity of civil registry servants;
- Civil registry digitisation and linking of civil registry databases with health services, courts and consulates;
- Supporting infrastructure, connectivity and IT equipment;
- Raising public awareness.

Our experience

Improvement of the civil registry system in Guinea

Since 2021, Enabel has supported civil registry digitisation in Guinea through the European PARECIGUI project. The project was launched in 10 pilot municipalities and now covers 28 municipalities, 6 courts and 5 consulates (Paris, Brussels, Madrid, Dakar and Abidjan). The project resulted in the development of a complete digital solution, including a central database, modules for digitising existing documents, registering new documents, integrating court decisions and connecting with consulates. Since 2021, nearly 500,000 civil status records have been migrated to the central database, and two structural laws have been passed to incorporate digitisation requirements.

Support to the functioning of civil registration in Mali

Between 2011 and 2016, Enabel supported Mali's Direction Nationale de l'Etat Civil and local stakeholders to improve the efficiency of civil registry services. From 2018 to 2023, as part of the EU-funded PAECSIS programme, Enabel strengthened civil registry reform by improving central coordination, the accessibility of civil registry services and public awareness.

Enabel's expertise

The QR code gives you access to the full range of our expertise: Global health - Social protection - Education & skilling - Economic & business development - Food systems - Natural resources management, biodiversity - Climate governance - Energy transition - Water - Green building - Urban development - Human mobility - Security - Justice - Financial and administrative governance.

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