

The Council of Europe celebrates the bicentenary of the French Civil Code – 21 and 22 October 2004

International impact of the French Civil Code

The French Civil Code reflects French society. Since 1804, it has governed the most important aspects of daily life in France: nationality, marriage, filiation, divorce, inheritance, property law, contracts of sale, civil liability, etc.

In the last 200 years, it has been amended on various occasions to keep pace with social change: gender equality, bioethics, respect for private life, etc.

In the full sense a civil constitution, and the text which gave birth to France as we know it, the Civil Code is based on the values of liberty, equality, volition and responsibility – and its international impact has been considerable.

It has, for example, influenced and inspired legislation in various parts of Europe, but also North and South America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Maghreb.

In Europe, for example, its influence has been felt in Germany (where it led to preparation of the German Civil Code in 1900), Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and, above all, Belgium.