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YEARS
ENRWA

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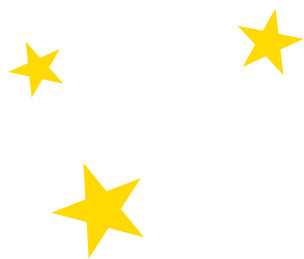
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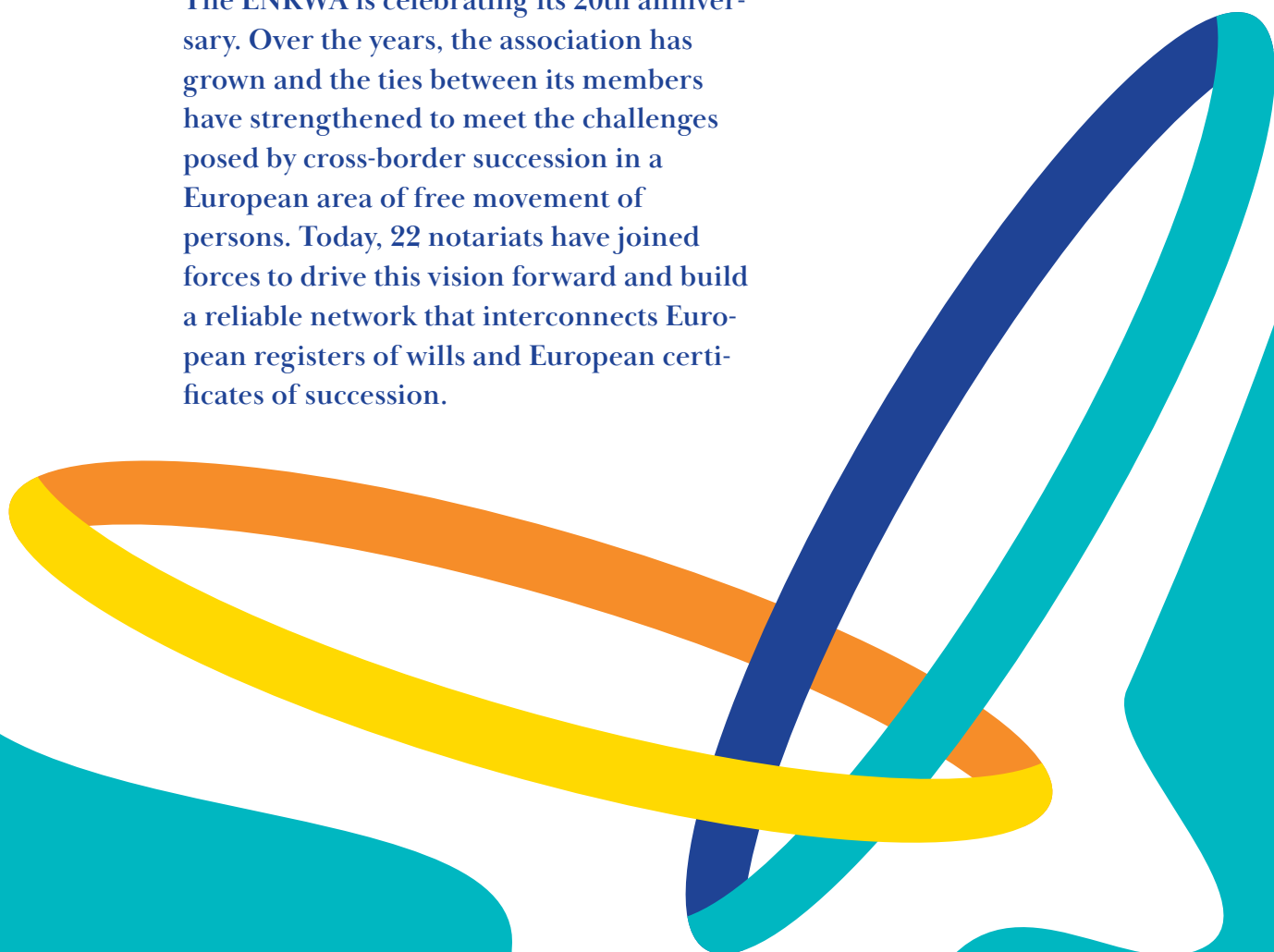
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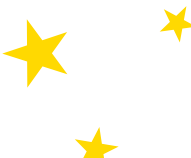
Internationally recognised expertise



Interconnection of last wills and ECS registers: *20 years* of promoting the free movement of European citizens

The ENRWA is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Over the years, the association has grown and the ties between its members have strengthened to meet the challenges posed by cross-border succession in a European area of free movement of persons. Today, 22 notariats have joined forces to drive this vision forward and build a reliable network that interconnects European registers of wills and European certificates of succession.





Celebrating *20 years* of building a European area of justice

It is with pride that I celebrate the 20th anniversary of the ENRWA, a milestone in terms of growth, excellence and unwavering commitment to notaries and European citizens for greater legal certainty. This event is an opportunity to pay tribute to its founders and to all those who have contributed to ensure that this initiative has prospered and grown stronger.

The ENRWA was founded in 2005.

It now brings together 22 notariats and provides interconnection between 14 European registers of wills and 5 registers of European certificates of succession (ECS). We continue to pursue its mission

of facilitating the exchange of information on wills and ECSs and to promote the creation of registers.

The network created for this purpose, the European network of registers of wills (ENRW), now meets the highest standards of efficiency and IT security, improves access and reduces costs of searching for wills.

Nowadays, 3.1% of people living in a European Union (EU) country are from another EU country. People work or settle in one country and frequently preserve family ties and assets in their country of origin. These situations, which potentially affect nearly 14 million people, often give rise to successions with a cross-border dimension. For them, drawing up a will

becomes a safeguard to ensure that their last wishes are respected.

Europe provides its citizens with an area of free movement, but this area must be extended to include a genuine European area of justice. Since its inception, the ENRWA has contributed to building a European judicial area with expertise that has been strengthened over the last two decades.

A major factor in our success is undoubtedly our commitment to a set of shared requirements within Europe, derived from the Basel Convention of 16 May 1972 of the Council of Europe. The ENRWA has also been able to adapt to European regulations, proposing the interconnection of ECS' registers as early as 2015.

We also reaffirm that unity in

diversity must be the strength of the new Europe of justice. Respect for national specificities is at the very heart of ERNWA's concerns, and any effective register is rooted in a concrete legal environment, which must be taken into account for interconnection.

The ENRWA remains committed to promoting a culture of cooperation among legal professionals. Interconnection requires mutual trust between registers' managers and the professionals who use them, as well as an understanding of the diversity of legal traditions in Member States.

Finally, the support of the European institutions has been important for the development of the ENRWA, both on financial level, to develop the ERNW and electronic registers, as well as on regula-



From left to right: François-Xavier Bary, Octavian Rogojanu, Anne Wuilquot.
© CNUE

tory level. And within this EU organisations, the Council of Notariats of the European Union (CNUE) has been an essential and unwavering ally.

In a world where digital technology is playing an increasingly important role, we believe that notaries are key players in the European model of justice, ensuring effective and inclusive access to justice for all citizens. Moreover, we remain firmly committed to providing a secure, high-quality service for an interconnection covering all European countries.

“We also reaffirm that unity in diversity must be the strength of the new Europe of justice.”

The creation of the **ENRWA** by its founding members



On 8 July 2005, Mr. Tobback, a Belgian notary, registered the Statutes of the non-profit association “ENRWA” in Brussels. This visionary project was initiated by three European notariats (Belgium, France and Slovenia).

Interview with the President of the Slovenian Chamber of Notaries

The Chamber of Notaries of Slovenia (NZS) is one of the ENRWA founding members. Bojan Podgoršek, its current President, participated in the founding conference held in Madrid in 2003.

He remembers that the motivation of the late Erika Branislej, then-president of NZS, was decisive at the time.

“She wanted notaries to be key players in succession matters, also in Slovenia. Moreover, we thought that being ENRWA founders would show our authorities the important role played by notaries in succession matters and encourage them to change the law. We still have frequent exchanges with the Ministry of Justice, and we are gradually moving in this direction.

Currently, Slovenian notaries can draw up successions agreements between spouses and last wills, and the notarial chamber has a fully digitalised register of wills. However, jurisdiction over succession matters lies exclusively with the courts. If foreign notaries want to query our register, they can do it through the NZS“.

Over the past 20 years, the NZS has actively participated in the development of the ENRWA. “We welcomed ENRWA’s participation in our national meeting in 2023 in Portorož, to present the European Network of Registers of Wills (ENRW). It was very well received by all the notaries present. Slovenian notary Sonja KRALJ is an active member of ENRWA Steering committee, and we intend to continue to collaborate“.

For President Podgoršek, the founders showed great vision and designed a very solid proposal.

“In 2002, 30 years after the Basel Convention, the notarial association seized the opportunity and created the ENRWA, the first organisation to take advantage of this Convention“. According to him, tools developed by the notariat such as the ENRW are necessary.

“In a European digitalised justice, we need notaries to make sure the interests of all parties are taken care of. Notaries play an essential role in the legal system of the future Europe“.

Interview conducted in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 8 April 2025

Joint interview with Mr. Karel Tobback *Belgian notary* and Mr. Philippe Girard *French notary* the first ENRWA Presidents between *2005 and 2021*



ENRWA: Where did the idea to create the ENRWA come from?

Karel Tobback: It was a combination of visions and circumstances. The French and Belgian notariats had experience in managing registers of last wills and in bilateral cooperation. This also marked the beginning of digitalisation in notarial practice. During those years, citizen mobilisation was on the rise in Europe, and European institutions were taking an increasing interest in cross-border legal and succession matters.

ENRWA: What have been the key elements of success in setting up the ENRWA?

Philippe Girard: The political and financial support of the Belgian and French notariats was essential, and our position within our respective notariats facilitated their involvement. We also relied on the technical expertise of the ADSN (Association for the Development of Notarial Services).

We started out with a small group of motivated notariats

and maintained fluid communication with the other CNUE member notariats, so that everyone could join the initiative at their own pace. We have always believed in and defended this institution, and it is with resilience and self-sacrifice that we have managed to overcome "resistance."

ENRWA: What kind of relations has the ENRWA developed with the European institutions?

Philippe Girard: We quickly benefited from the funding and enthusiasm of the European Commission, which understood the value of such a digital tool but also, and above all, the willingness of notariats to cooperate.

Karel Tobback: Building Europe is no easy task. Bottom-up projects that rely on collaborative efforts rather than force take time. Our small and modest initiative has shown that with a constructive spirit, improvements can be made for European citizens.

ENRWA: What are the ENRWA achievements you are most proud of?

Karel Tobback: Many digital initiatives are launched, but few survive beyond implementation. The ENRWA continues to develop, and that gives me the most satisfaction. It is a model project that can be useful for other sectors.

ENRWA: What prospects do you foresee for the ENRWA?

Karel Tobback: With Europe's aging population, the ENRW will become an increasingly useful tool, and the number of queries is likely to increase. Moreover, the ENRWA's expertise could be applied to other registers such as the incapacity register and the register of mandates.

Philippe Girard: One of the ongoing challenges is communication. Many notaries are not familiar with the ENRWA. We will continue to work tirelessly, as it is important to keep the momentum going and not give up.

Public recognition for *20 years* of commitment to serving notaries and European citizens

On 9 December 2025, the ENRWA celebrated its 20th anniversary at an event co-organised by the CNUE.



Octavian Rogojanu, President of ENRWA
© CNUE

The day brought together notaries, legal experts and institutional partners to assess the application of the EU Regulation on international successions (EU) No 650/2012. The afternoon was devoted to the ENRWA and the use of

European Certificates of Succession (ECS).

Mr. Octavian ROGOJANU, President of the ENRWA, presented the achievements of the European Network of Registers of Wills and its

ambitions for the future. Mr. Jorge Batista da Silva, President of the Portuguese notariat, presented the creation of the national register of ECSs, which was inaugurated in July 2024. This initiative illustrates how



From left to right, front row:
François-Xavier Bary, Michael McGrath, Cosita Delvaux, Vincent Tilman.
From left to right, second row:
Octavian Rogojanu, Karel Tobback, Alain Pilette.
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notariats are adopting European instruments to enhance legal certainty and efficiency in cross-border succession matters.

During the roundtable discussion on the digitalisation of ECS, Ms. Maria Vilar Badia, legal expert at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, reiterated the institution's support for the interconnection of registers.

The day ended with a reception attended by Mr. Michael McGrath, European Commissioner for Justice. The latter set out the priorities of the 2030 Strategy for the Digitalisation of Justice, stressing that the challenge

goes beyond mere technical modernisation to cover all European justice systems.

The Deputy Director of the Council of the European Union, Mr. Alain Pilette, spoke about persistent obstacles to the interconnection of registers and the need to develop new approaches to broaden their participation. He also stressed the importance of making legal professionals and citizens aware of the benefits of this initiative.

Ms. Cosita Delvaux, President of the CNUE, highlighted the proactive approach of the notariat in digital innovation, as demonstrated by the ENRWA. She stressed the importance of continued

cooperation with European institutions to provide reliable solutions for citizens, families and businesses.

Finally, Mr. Karel Tobback, First President of the ENRWA, recalled that this association contributes to the development of Europe through a slow, continuous and innovative process, rather than through reactions to crises. He emphasised that this development is based above all on cooperation between professionals and organisations, and not simply on a technological challenge.

ENRWA

today



Member notaries



Interconnected registers



Interconnected ECS registers



“The European network of registers of last wills is the only operational tool available to European notaries.

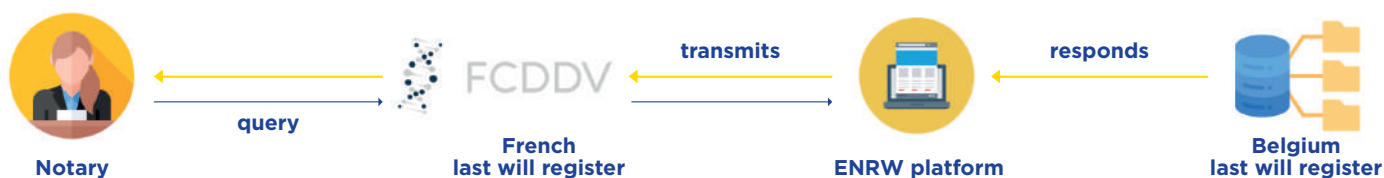
As such, it serves a dual purpose :

- Firstly, it serves a political purpose, as it demonstrates to the European authorities our ability to set up a tool that can be used by European citizens across borders.
- And, of course, it serves a purpose in terms of legal certainty.”

Pierre-Luc Vogel, honorary president of the CSN and treasurer of the ARERT

The *ENRW* guarantees security and efficiency in the execution of last wills

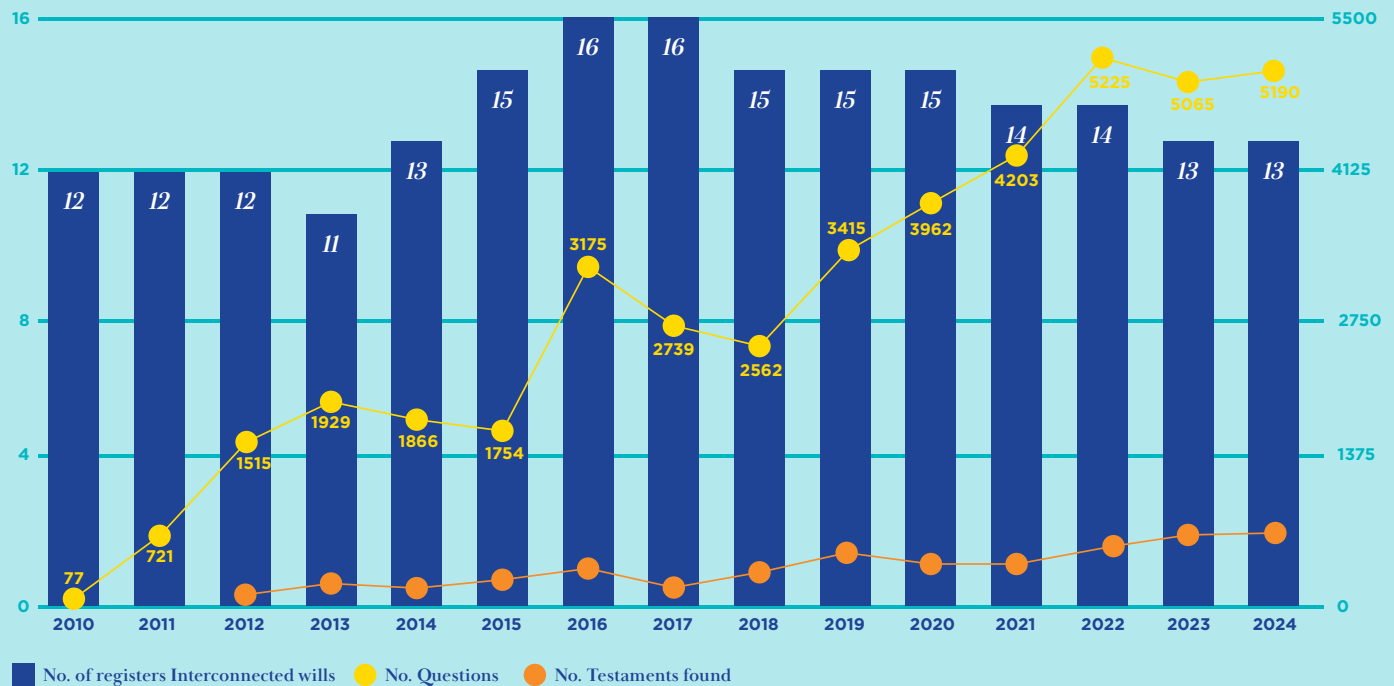
An exemple of how the ENRW works



The ENRW (European network of registers of wills) allows for:

- Interconnection of last wills and ECSs registers
- Facilitation of searches within European countries for last wills and ECSs

Interrogation of the ENRW and recovered wills



Since 2010: Nearly 45,000 enquiries / + 5,500 wills found

How does the ENRW work:

- Two interconnection modes:
 - Manual interface, known as “RERT Light”
 - Automated interface (RERT)
- Confidentiality and security of information transmitted via the use of electronic certificates.
- A multilingual interface: adoption of the UTF-8 standard to support the use of characters and diacritical marks used by all languages of the Member States, and integration of a transliteration tool into the Bulgarian register interface to automatically convert requests received in Latin script into Cyrillic script and vice versa.

Note on the graph showing requests:

Requests are increasing every year, as are the number of wills found (14% of requests, for a total of 724 wills found in 2024).

The ENRW's principles:

- A network of reliable holders: register managers, the notariat or state bodies undertake to exchange high-quality information
- Secret of the existence and content of the provisions during the testator's lifetime, as provided for in the 1972 Basel Convention.
- Compliance with national legislation and specific requirements: compliance with member countries' laws and practices

The positive results of a register of wills interconnected with the ENRW in *Luxembourg*

For more than 12 years, Luxembourg has been relying on the inter-connection of registers to facilitate succession proceedings.

In this context, the European Network of Registers of Wills (ENRW) is fully responding to the challenges of a country located in the heart of Europe, where successions frequently cross borders.

The country's specific demographic composition – almost half of the population in Luxembourg is now made up of foreign nationals, mainly from another EU Member State – gives the ENRW a paramount importance. When a person passes away in Luxembourg, it is possible that they may have expressed their last wishes in another European country. At this crucial moment, it is essential that heirs and notaries have quick and unhindered access to the deceased's testamentary dispositions, regardless of the national register in which they were recorded.

It is with this in mind that the Registration, Domains and VAT Administration (Administration de l'enregistrement, des domaines et de la TVA, AED), which is responsible for the national register of last wills in Luxembourg, became involved in this project.

The first phase of the deployment of the 'RERT Light' app in 2013 allowed the various stakeholders to progressively get used to this new information exchange system. Since its inception, Luxembourg's national register has been heavily used by its foreign counterparts. However, despite the interconnection, reverse queries – from Luxembourg to foreign registers – remained limited. This imbalance was quickly identified as a major area for improvement.

Driven by the first encouraging results, those involved in the project quickly recognised the potential for further automation.

As part of this process, when the national register was modernised in 2016, the decision was taken to migrate to the 'ENRW' app, marking a new stage in the inter-connection of registers of wills.

The introduction of the automatic exchange via the 'ENRW' app, carried out four times a day, ensures a smooth and secure flow of data between interconnected registers. In the past, heirs and notaries had to request information from several foreign registers, often with disparate access conditions. Now, they can contact a single authority, greatly simplifying the administrative process.

This progress now makes it possible to ensure that last wishes can be found, regardless of the state of registration – thus providing citizens with greater legal certainty.

The results speak for themselves: since 2016, the number of



foreign register queries made by the Luxembourg register has risen sharply. This trend reflects the active cooperation of the notariat, which has fully embraced the tool and now systematically incorporates foreign registers' queries into its practice.



The Luxembourg register therefore actively supports the initiative of the ENRWA to establish an automated exchange between all registers in the EU Member States. This would be fully in line

with an already well engaged European dynamic and would contribute to the emergence of a harmonised framework for the direct benefit of European citizens and legal professionals.

Directorate for Registration,
Domains and VAT
Luxembourg

ADSN technological expertise at the service of succession proceedings in Europe

The Association for the Development of Notarial Services (ADSN) plays an essential role in the technical implementation of the interconnection of registers. Since its inception, the ENRWA has entrusted it with the management and operational run-

ning of the European Network of Registers of Wills (ENRW). The platform designed by the ADSN meets European standards for personal data protection and cybersecurity. Over the years, the ADSN has ensured the efficient management of the

network and has introduced technological innovations, as was the case with the introduction of the interconnection of European Certificates of Succession (ECS).

The ENRWA is a *successful* example of cooperation between European notaries

He is a notary from Coruña and Doctor of Law at the University of Santiago de Compostela. Isidoro Calvo is part of the International Section of the General Council of the Notariat and the Succession working group of the Council of the Notariats of the European Union (CNUE).

“ I found out about the ENRWA – European Network of Registers of Wills Association – several years ago, on the occasion of an international colloquium on cross-border successions. This was the starting point for a growing interest in its work, which led me, a few years later, to join its Board of Directors, representing the Spanish notariat, of which I had the honour to be a member for several years. This experience allowed me to appreciate from the inside the rigorous work and the European vision of the association.

Since its creation in 2005, the ENRWA has established itself as a key player in legal cooperation in Europe. Initially focusing on the networking of registers of wills under the Basel Convention of 1972, it has been able to broaden its scope and strengthen its practical impact on the legal certainty of European citizens facing successions with an international dimension. The spirit of the Basel

Convention of 1972 remains fully alive in the work carried out by the ENRWA. The possibility to verify the existence of a will abroad safely is now a reality thanks to the tools developed by the association. This technical extension of an old legal principle is a good example of developments in line with the current needs of citizens.

A decisive turning point was the entry into application of Regulation (EU) No 650/2012 on successions, which extended the interconnection to European Certificates of Succession (ECS). Through this development, the ENRWA is fully in line with the European dynamic of mutual recognition and simplification of succession procedures. It thus contributes to giving effective scope to the principle of free movement of persons and their rights within the European Union.

As the ENRWA is about to celebrate the twentieth anni-

versary of the European Network of Registers of Wills (ENRW) in 2025, several challenges are clearly emerging. The number of interconnected registers will need to be further expanded, the training of legal professionals should be stepped up, the security of electronic exchanges should be enhanced, and these mechanisms should be made more widely known to the general public. I also consider it desirable for the association to continue playing a leading role in European projects related to the digital transition and to building trust in the European legal area.

To sum up, the ENRWA is a successful example of cooperation between the European notariats at the service of citizens in matters of succession, while at the same time embodying a certain idea of Europe: a Union based on legal certainty and cross-border trust.

”

Isidoro Antonio CALVO VIDAL

20 year anniversary of the ENRWA and the European strategy on e-justice

The twentieth anniversary of the European Network of Registers of Wills Association (ENRWA) is an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the interconnection of registers, which has long been one of the objectives linked to the digitalisation of justice in the European Union.

In its 2008 Communication “Towards a European e-Justice Strategy”, the European Commission already mentioned the value of establishing a European register of wills.

In 2009, in its first multiannual action plan (2009-2013) on e-Justice, the Council of the European Union included the objective of interconnecting registers of wills. This led to the launch of the IRTE (Interconnecting European Registers of Wills) project, co-financed by the European Commission between 2010 and 2012 and launched under the leadership of the ENRWA.

In 2012, Regulation (EU) No 650/2012 on succession matters introduced a European Certificate of Succession.

The second multiannual action plan of the Council of the European Union on e-Justice, covering the period

2014-2018, then included two projects: the first one aimed at interconnecting registers of wills and the second one at exploring the feasibility of an electronic European Certificate of Succession.

In 2017, the Council of the European Union and its Member States approved conclusions encouraging the Member States to cooperate in order to improve the electronic exchange of information on wills and successions. At that time, the ENRWA had already enabled 14 Member States to interconnect their registers of wills. These conclusions stated that the ENRWA thereby significantly improved access to information on the existence of a will. The conclusions recall that by linking national registers, citizens and legal professionals can more easily access information on the existence of wills across Member States, allowing succession cases to be settled more quickly and with greater legal certainty. These conclusions were accompanied by guidelines highlighting the ENRWA's role in developing the interconnections of registers of wills. The Council of the European Union's e-Justice

Action Plan for 2019-2023 included among its projects a new initiative for the interconnection of registers of European certificates of succession, under the responsibility of the ENRWA. The interconnection of registers is one of the actions foreseen in the European e-Justice Strategy 2024-2028. For example, successive Council Action Plans and strategies on e-Justice have emphasised the importance of the interconnection of registers and, in particular, of the interconnection of registers of wills and certificates of succession in order to improve cross-border succession processes. The extension of the number of these interconnected registers is still challenging, in particular due to technical and legal differences between Member States. This twentieth anniversary could be an opportunity to make progress in expanding the European digital justice area by continuing efforts to interconnect registers of wills and certificates of succession.

The views expressed by the author are his own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the institution for which he works.

Alain Pilette, Deputy-Director,
Council of the European Union

The *ENRWA* and *EU* cooperation, projects co-financed by the European Commission

Shortly after its creation, the ENRWA benefited from projects co-financed by the European Commission under the Justice Programme, aimed at supporting judicial cooperation within the European Union (EU). In 12 years, the Association has implemented four projects and worked jointly on four others. Interview conducted by ENRWA with Céline Mangin, ENRWA project manager during that time.



Co-funded by
the European Union

What did the ENRWA projects co-financed by the European Commission consist of?

Our contribution encouraged cooperation between legal professionals in the field of cross-border successions. We compared laws and practices to define a set of mandatory or optional data to search for a will. Looking at the function-

ing of the different national registers, we established the legal and technical foundations of the interconnection. We also helped Member States to set up their national registers. These projects have resulted in an increase in the number of interconnected registers and the consolidation of an efficient and secure IT platform, the European Network of Registers of Wills (ENRW).

What impact have these projects had on the creation of a European area of justice?

From 2009 onwards, the ENRWA has drawn up an overview of the registration and search systems for wills in the EU Member States. This information fed into the discussions on the development of a European regulatory framework, which subsequently resulted in Regulation (EU) 650/2012 on cross-border successions. We have also contributed to strengthening mutual trust between registers of wills' managers and cooperation between legal professionals through the exchange of best practices.

How important are these projects for European institutions?

The ENRWA promotes legal cooperation in Europe and supports the European institutions' efforts to simplify succession procedures. The interconnection offered by the ENRWA allows for rapid and secure exchanges, while respecting Member States' national legal frameworks. Since its inception, the ENRWA has proposed a legal IT solution ("e-justice") with an effective digital tool for a connected and digital Europe.

How do you think these projects have transformed the daily lives of notaries and legal professionals?

The ENRWA member notariats have been the driving force behind the development and implementation of these projects. The ENRWA allows them to know with certainty whether a deceased person has left a will in another European country. Moreover, the ENRWA has helped to strengthen ties



Cross-border Wills Project Meeting, Paris, 2014

between notariats, who have developed a better knowledge of the law and practice of succession processes in Europe. These achievements have been made permanent by practical factsheets available online on the website of ENRWA.

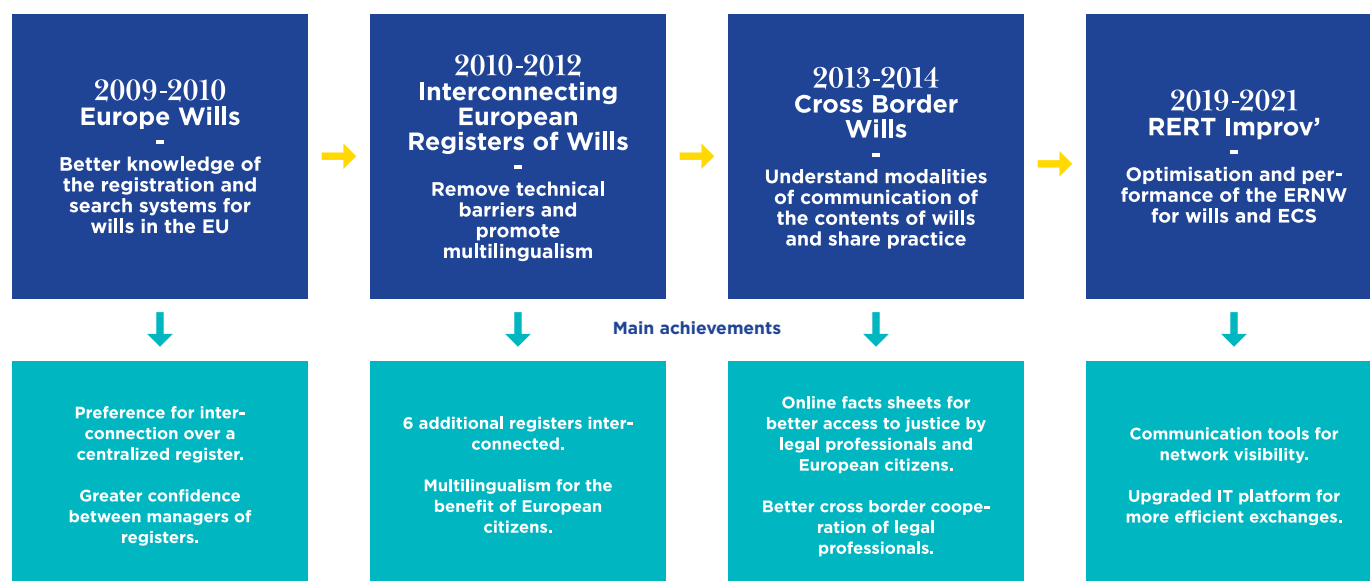
How do you think that these projects have benefited European citizens?

The ENRWA ensures a level of legal certainty for European citizens, be it the

deceased who will be assured that his last wishes will be taken into account, or his or her relatives who will obtain the necessary information on a will filed abroad. Since 2010, practical information sheets have been available on its website to provide information on how to register and search for a will in most Member States.

What are the achievements you are proud of the most?
The network set up in 2012 was one of the first operational interconnection projects in the EU. We have relied on sound legal bases and a network of reliable owners, making the ENRWA a project always useful with high quality standards and regularly renewed standards. And its accessibility is ensured through a multilingual interface.

European funds support a wider and more efficient RERT/ERWA



Ongoing European cooperation: the ELAN 2 and 3 and JuWiLi2 projects

The ENRWA has benefited from co-financing offered by the European Commission under the Justice programme. It is currently collaborating with European notariats on the e-learning for Notaries (ELAN 2) and Justice Without Litigation (JuWiLi 2) projects.

ELAN 2

Notaries' training in European law is necessary to ensure the effective and consistent application of EU law in civil law areas. In this project, in collaboration with the CNUE, the ENRWA is fully committed to delivering training activities on Succession law, thereby meeting the needs of practitioners and the priorities set at EU level.



JuWiLi 2

The objective of JuWiLi II is to strengthen judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters within the EU by transferring certain non-contentious judicial procedures to non-judicial players, such as notaries. In this project, coordinated by the Austrian notariat, the ENRWA is part of the Digitalisation Taskforce. This group is modelling the issuing process of ECSs. This thematic is particularly relevant for the ENRWA. Today, the ENRW connects the ECSs registers of five Member States: Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. With an increase in cross-border successions in Europe, the smooth circulation of ECSs' references is essential to protect people's rights. Not all EU Member States have established an ECS register. The ENRWA is monitoring developments in this area, aiming at further extending the network's coverage.

Internationally *recognised* expertise

The ENRWA works with the International Union of Notaries (UINL) and notariats around the world to share its expertise in the interconnection of registers.

In 2024, François-Xavier

Bary, ENRWA Director, was invited to three conferences organised by the Georgian notariat and the Congress of African Notaries addressed to members of the European Affairs Committee of the UINL. These events have

facilitated fruitful exchanges of views.

In 2025, the ENRWA contributed to the UINL publication 'Strengthening Gender Equality – Guidelines for Notaries'.



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Consultez les dernières informations sur l'interconnexion des registres testamentaires et de CSE et les fiches pratiques sur les successions en Europe



VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE ARERT.EU

Consult the latest information on the interconnection of registers of wills and ECS and factsheets on successions in Europe.



ARERT Association du Réseau Européen des Registres Testamentaires

L'ARERT faciliter le règlement des successions transfrontalières en Europe



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