“At a time when physical frontiers have fallen, legal frontiers persist. People cannot always move and manage to assert their rights and access to justice varies depending on whether they are at home or have gone elsewhere. This is why the Maastricht Treaty provided for the development of an area of freedom, security and justice among its objectives for the EU. This is a question of withdrawing the legal obstacles to citizens’ mobility. We must avoid a situation whereby free movement or living in a Member State other than one’s own lead to an increased number of legal procedures and formalities”.

Today eight million European citizens live in a Member State other than their own to study, work, be with their partner or spend their retirement. There are between 50,000 and 100,000 cross-border successions every year. A growing number of bi-national marriages are celebrated in Europe every year. Another striking development are the 170,000 divorces declared each year involving spouses of different nationalities.

During the various stages of their lives, these people are confronted with complex situations brought about by the confrontation of national laws and to which EU law has not yet responded. Marriages and registered partnerships between same-sex couples are not recognised in the same way, depending on the Member State in which the couple live. Cross-border divorce often involves complicated procedures for citizens, such as the settlement of maintenance costs and the division of the property consequences of the marriage. Cross-border successions also bring about considerable practical and legal obstacles. These are all uncertainties which, for example, a German-Italian couple living in Brussels could face.

By organising this colloquium jointly with the European Commission, the Notaries of Europe aim to answer the legitimate questions that citizens who move around Europe can ask. Illustrated with case studies, the event will bring together representatives from academia and European figures, who will be joined by professionals who provide legal certainty - civil law notaries. Together they will envisage actions to be undertaken to create a real European legal area at the service of citizens.