

[Home](#) > [Family Matters & Inheritance](#) > Divorce and legal separation

Divorce and legal separation

When a married couple decide to separate permanently, one of the spouses, or both together, will generally institute divorce proceedings.

In most countries divorce is decided by a court, and that court's judgment dissolves the marriage.

If the couple has children, besides the separation of the spouses, the divorce will lead to a reorganisation of the relationship between each of them and the children they have in common.

It will also lead to a division of the assets owned in common by the spouses, and if necessary to the payment of a contribution or maintenance by one spouse to another, or to support the children.

In the European Union, there are rules for working out to which court an application for divorce must be filed when the couple separates. These rules are particularly useful for couples where the spouses are of different nationalities, or where the spouses have lived in different Member States during the marriage.

The rules also allow a divorce pronounced in one country of the European Union to be more easily recognised in another Member State and have effect there.

Please select the relevant country's flag to obtain detailed national information.

Last update: 30/05/2023

This page is maintained by the European Commission. The information on this page does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission. The Commission accepts no responsibility or liability whatsoever with regard to any information or data contained or referred to in this document. Please refer to the legal notice with regard to copyright rules for European pages.