



Gènealogistes  
de France

**PRESS RELEASE  
PARIS, 19 OCTOBER 2017**

**Genealogists of France: the profession announces exceptional measures to reinforce the guarantees it offers**

**Following the extraordinary meeting of its Executive Committee, Genealogists of France, in the wake of two bankruptcies, has revealed the measures being taken to reinforce guarantees made to heirs, making known the results of the audit conducted this summer to improve the soundness of the profession, and announcing crucial measures for the economy of the sector.**

**In 2017, the profession was faced with a serious and unprecedented situation.**

For the first time in nearly 200 years of existence, the professional genealogy sector has seen the court-ordered liquidation of two companies. The liquidation of these two companies brought into the open their unlawful practices and has made it clear that the guarantees offered by the profession did not provide sufficient protection to heirs. The system of fraud practised in these two companies (which are still awaiting the final decision of the courts) consisted in using client funds, destined for heirs in settlement of their estates, to falsify accounts and commit budget fraud.

**The revelation of these practices has led Genealogists of France, an umbrella organisation covering 95% of professional genealogists, to take a very strong stance.**

**1. Genealogists of France has forced the companies at fault into voluntary deregistration and taken steps in favour of the heirs who have suffered prejudice**

At the start of 2017, in view of evidence that these companies were not capable of producing statements of administration of client funds, Genealogists of France:

- Forced the companies to deregister and withdrew their professional licences.
- Informed the relevant public authorities (Chancery, Civil Affairs and Seals Directorate (DACs), Paris Public Prosecutor, SIAF<sup>1</sup>) and the High Council of French Notariat.
- Strongly recommended its members to take on the files handled by the companies placed in liquidation, urging them to agree a reduction in fees (in some cases of up to 95%) in order to compensate heirs who had suffered prejudice as a result of the bankruptcies.
- Contacted insurance companies in order to ensure their policies offered compensation for heirs.
- Asked KPMG to conduct an audit of the profession in order to ensure that members were in a position to administer client funds.

**2. The KPMG audit made public today confirms that from hereon in 100% of Genealogists of France members administer client funds.**

**The audit conducted by KPMG has produced very reassuring results as far as the profession as a whole is concerned. Only five small companies (very small or one-person companies) refused to submit to the audit, for reasons of their own.**

**These companies, collectively representing less than 1% of the turnover in the sector, were unable to demonstrate that they offered the levels of guarantee required by Genealogists of France.**

**Consequently, Genealogists of France has asserted their de facto resignation, validated during the extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee on 18 October.**

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<sup>1</sup> Interministerial Service of the Archives of France



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de France

**Henceforth, 100% of current members of Genealogists of France are in a position to administer client funds.**

The comprehensive updated list of the members of the organisation has been posted on the internet site<sup>2</sup> and communicated to the relevant public authorities and Chambers of Notaries, in order to encourage notaries to deal from now on exclusively with genealogists who are members of Genealogists of France.

**3. Genealogists of France has today decided that old habits need to be changed and is reinforcing still further the guarantees offered**

Antoine Djikpa, President of Genealogists of France, convened a meeting on 18 October of the Executive Committee, which decided to take exceptional steps on the of administration of client funds:

- Enter into negotiations with the Deposit and Consignment Office (CDC: *Caisse des D p ts et Consignations*) for the **creation of third party accounts to make client funds secure**, with implementation in 2018 ;
- Negotiate significantly improved **professional indemnity insurance, with a doubling of authorised ceilings per claim and per year**<sup>3</sup> and complementary options for companies, notably the ability to subscribe to a specific policy for succession;
- Oblige members to subscribe to a **new agreement for collateral security, specifically for client funds, with an increase in liability limits** (liability limits per claim more than tripled<sup>4</sup>, and annual ceilings more than doubled<sup>5</sup>) ;
- Create a system whereby notaries are automatically informed each time client funds are released, in order to reinforce transparency of the management of members.

**In consultation with public authorities and as part of the co-regulation principle that has always been at its heart , the organisation will continue to make new proposals to ensure that successors are not affected by the actions of a few isolated genealogists.**

**From now on, in order to become a member of Genealogists of France, it will in addition to existing conditions be necessary**<sup>6</sup> to accept a regular audit on administration of client funds, conducted by an independent audit company, and to have secure third party accounts.

**Herv  Dolidon**, Secretary General of Genealogists of France, has this to say: "*The results of this audit, which was ordered the moment we were informed of the failures of these two companies, are very encouraging for the profession as a whole. They demonstrate that the members of Genealogists of France take the matter of administration of client funds very seriously, and highlight the effectiveness of the commitments already in existence, although our wish is to go ever further in safeguarding the interests of heirs. We are going to share the list of companies that are members of Genealogists of France, and which offer the broadest guarantees possible, and we invite notaries to work with them.*"

**Antoine Djikpa**, President of Genealogists of France, says, furthermore: "*Genealogists of France has stood by its principles at a key moment in the existence of the profession, which can rest assured that its foundations are solid as it moves forward. We reacted without hesitation and will continue to work at enhancing the protection we offer. Now is the time to speak of a significant change of culture and, moreover, of a Genealogists of France label: henceforth, we are going to offer fundamental guarantees to heirs, to the notaries that engage us and to public authorities. The genealogists who are members of Genealogists of France are conscious of the importance of these new commitments, and all now offer the best guarantees possible. **Knowing our profession is useful to the public, we shoulder our responsibility. Each year we identify 150 000 heirs who knew nothing of their rights, through whom we must effectively***

<sup>2</sup> See link for list of professional licence holders: [site de G nealogistes de France](http://site.de.G nealogistes.de.France)

<sup>3</sup> Now set at 4 000 000 euros per claim and 6 000 000 euros per year

<sup>4</sup> Increased from 765 000 euros to 3 000 000 euros

<sup>5</sup> Increased from 2 300 000 euros to 5 000 000 euros

<sup>6</sup> It is compulsory for all members to subscribe to a professional indemnity insurance policy that covers all activities, as is adherence to the Charter of ethics...



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*reinject 1 billion euros into the economy, more than 350 million of which revert to heirs, and 550 million of which constitute duties paid to the State. For this reason we seize the opportunity to reform our profession and add in extra guarantees."*

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### **About Genealogists of France**

Genealogists of France is the national organisation that represents the genealogy profession. It unites 95% of the profession with its two specialisations: probate genealogy and family history genealogy. Each year the organisation issues 650 professional licences, and it represents 1000 staff members across 150 companies. Overall turnover for the profession exceeds 100 million euros per year. Members of Genealogists of France all sign the charter of ethics for the profession.

Site of Genealogists of France: [www.genealogistes-france.org](http://www.genealogistes-france.org)

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