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Abstract: This essay, after determining the characteristics constituting a codification, sets out the historical conditions for the creation of national codifications in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It then deals with a number of myths and misconceptions associated with codifications. The Proposal for a Regulation on a Common European Sales Law has now firmly placed the issue of codification on the European legal agenda. The essay therefore attempts to assess its chances of success against the background of the historical experiences; thus, it considers the arguments that have, in the past, been advanced in favour of codifications of private law and also looks at other factors that have contributed to their success. All in all, the auspices for a European Code of Contract Law, let alone a Civil Code, are far from ideal.