

UNIDROIT 2026 ESSAY COMPETITION TERMS OF REFERENCE

This Terms of Reference document relates to the 2026 UNIDROIT Essay Competition (hereinafter the '**Competition**') themed "*Harmonising Private Law and Shaping the Future – 100 Years of UNIDROIT's Impact*". This Competition is subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. The Competition shall be organised by the UNIDROIT Secretariat, with support from the UNIDROIT Foundation, in light of its mission to conduct activities which support the work of UNIDROIT and promote its instruments.
2. In order to encourage academic scholarship and research examining the Centenary of UNIDROIT's impact on private law harmonisation, the UNIDROIT Foundation shall facilitate an essay competition to invite interested individuals to submit manuscripts relevant to the subject matter.
3. The Competition shall be promoted through the UNIDROIT Website, social media, and direct email communications to UNIDROIT's network of legal scholars, practitioners, students, and other interested parties. The Competition shall be promoted as the '*UNIDROIT Essay Competition, supported by the International Law Institute (ILI), and facilitated by the UNIDROIT Foundation*'. The terms for the Competition shall be as follows:
 - i. Participants shall be invited to author an essay examining the topic of the Centenary of UNIDROIT's impact on private law harmonisation. Participants can choose to submit their essay in one of the two categories:
 - a. *Historical review and analysis of UNIDROIT's earlier academic studies.* Since 1926, UNIDROIT has prepared over seventy [studies](#) and foundational texts on diverse matters of private law, ranging from methodology and arbitration to transport and international sales law. While not all have resulted in formal instruments, they all represent a significant academic contribution to legal harmonisation. A submission in this category should examine a study of choice and analyse its influence on the evolution of its respective legal field over the past century.
 - b. *Future-looking analysis identifying legal gaps in transnational private and commercial law and proposing new areas for harmonisation.* In line with the Centenary's goal, submissions should identify specific legal gaps within one of the seven [Centenary](#) Workstreams (Contract Law; Procedural Law and Dispute Resolution; Financial Markets and Technology; Cultural Property; Private Law and Agriculture; Access to Credit; or Sustainable Development). In their essay, participants should provide a focused, evidence-based academic argument for a specific way forward or recommendation for private law reform, taking into account, where necessary, the work of other international organisations.
 - ii. The essay shall be between 2000-3000 words, excluding footnotes and references. There are no specific requirements regarding formatting, e.g., double-spacing, font type/style, or citation style.
 - iii. The essay shall contain extensive legal research and legal analysis; therefore, it shall include adequate footnote references and proper citations. The absence of those shall cause the essay to be disqualified.

- iv. The Competition shall be open to any law student, graduate, researcher, or junior legal professional (with less than five years of legal practice) of any nationality. Participants in advanced stages of their legal career and tenured academics shall be excluded.
- v. Each participant shall be allowed to make one submission in English or French via an [online submission form](#). No email entries shall be accepted. No revisions or alterations to the entry shall be allowed or accepted.
- vi. Individual submissions are encouraged. Co-authored submissions shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis according to the Competition terms.
- vii. All submissions for the Competition must be the sole creation and original work of the participant. Artificial Intelligence ('AI') tools may be used only for research, proofreading and/or to check spelling. If a participant chooses to use generative AI for one or more of those limited purposes, the participant is responsible for checking the accuracy of the output. Participants are not permitted to use any AI tool to write all or part of an essay to enter for the Competition. Any essay which has been written in part or in whole by an AI tool will be ineligible and excluded from the judging process. UNIDROIT has absolute discretion in determining whether an essay has been written in part or in whole by an AI tool.
- viii. The Competition shall accept entries between 1 April 2026 and 30 June 2026. UNIDROIT reserves the right to extend the deadline by a period of time not exceeding two weeks at its discretion. Essays received after the deadline shall not be accepted.
- ix. The Competition shall reward the top 5 essays in the following manner:

	1st Position	2nd Position	3rd Position	4th Position	5th Position
Cash Prize	2500 EUR	1500 EUR	500 EUR	X	X

- x. All the winners shall be announced on the UNIDROIT website and invited to have their essays published on the UNIDROIT and UNIDROIT Foundation websites. The respective publications shall be disseminated across UNIDROIT and UNIDROIT Foundation social media channels.
- xi. The winner of the 1st place may receive and invitation to submit an essay for consideration of publication in the Uniform Law Review after the author has made the necessary adjustments to suit the requirements of the Journal. The Uniform Law Review is a peer-review Journal, and all essays are subject to a peer-review.
- xii. The essays received shall be judged by the UNIDROIT Secretariat, with support from Members of the Board of Governors of the UNIDROIT Foundation, and other experts identified by the UNIDROIT Secretariat as needed.
- xiii. The judging period shall, in principle, last six weeks after the final date for submissions to the Competition. The winners shall be announced on the UNIDROIT website thereafter.

- xiv. All copyrights to the essays submitted shall be retained by the authors. The UNIDROIT Secretariat shall seek express consent from the authors to publish their manuscripts on the UNIDROIT Foundation website.
- xv. The winners of the competition shall present their research in an online webinar organised by the UNIDROIT Secretariat. The cash prize shall be paid via bank transfer only upon the winner's successful presentation of their research.
- xvi. The winners shall receive a certificate that attests to the award received, which can be presented to any organisation or educational institution the winner deems appropriate.
- xvii. Submission for the Competition presupposes acceptance of the terms described herein.