UNIDROIT
International Institute for the Unification of Private Law
Institut International pour l'Unification du Droit Privé

UNIDROIT CENTENARY CULTURAL PROPERTY WORKSHOP

Venue: Rome, Villa Aldobrandini

29 September 2026, 9:00 - 13:00

To mark its Centennial year, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) has established seven Workstreams to develop strategic White Papers on UNIDROIT's main areas of work. The purpose of the White Papers is to critically evaluate the development and success of existing instruments, as well as lay out future initiatives UNIDROIT could undertake to achieve its purpose of harmonising international private and commercial law in the respective legal fields.

The Centenary Workstream on Cultural Property was established in 2025 to develop a White Paper reviewing UNIDROIT's existing international instruments and ongoing projects related to the international protection of cultural property. Over the past months, the Workstream has prepared the draft White Paper, which assesses UNIDROIT's work in relation to (i) the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects, (ii) the 2011 UNESCO-UNIDROIT Model Provisions on State Ownership of Undiscovered Cultural Objects, and (iii) the current work on Private art collections – Orphan Objects.

This Workshop will provide an opportunity to review and discuss the draft White Paper in advance of its finalisation and submission to the UNIDROIT Governing Council and General Assembly for approval in December 2026. The Workshop will feature a discussion on the relevance of private law to cultural property, followed by three panels focussing on the instruments and project covered by the White Paper, as well as a panel on reflections and recommendations for future work.

This event is by invitation only. Institutions and individuals with expertise in the international protection of cultural property have been invited to participate. Online participation is possible, although in-person attendance is strongly encouraged in order to facilitate active participation and discussion. Invited participants can register their participation using the Workshop registration link.

AGENDA

9:00 - 9:10 Opening & Introduction

Manlio Frigo, Honorary Professor, University of Milan; Of Counsel, Bonelli Erede (Chair of the Committee for the UNIDROIT Workstream on Cultural Property)

9:10 - 9:40 The White Paper and the Relevance of Uniform Law to Cultural Property

Participants are invited to reflect on the scope and structure of the draft White Paper, as well as on the conceptual foundations, functions and core domains of private law in cultural property.

Manlio Frigo, Chair of the Committee for the UNIDROIT Workstream on Cultural Property

9:40 - 10:40 Panel I - Instruments adopted

The panel will review the impact of the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects and of the 2011 Model Provisions on State Ownership of Undiscovered Cultural Objects

Chair: Marina Schneider, Principal Legal Officer and Treaty Depositary, UNIDROIT

SPEAKERS

Vincent Negri, Chercheur à l'Institut des Sciences sociales du Politique (ENS Paris-Saclay), France
Giuditta Giardini, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy

10:40 - 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 - 11:30 Panel II - Current Work

The panel will assess the current work on Private Art Collections – Orphan Objects.

Chair: Marc-André Renold, Honorary Professor at the University of Geneva, UNESCO Chair in international law on the protection of cultural property, Co-Director Art-Law Centre of the University of Geneva

SPEAKERS

Keun-Gwan Lee, School of Law, Seoul National University
Marcílio Toscano Franca Filho, Professor, Federal University of Paraiba

11:30 - 12:40 Panel III - Reflections and Recommendations for Future Work

The panel will discuss the reflections and recommendations for future work by UNIDROIT as outlined in the draft White Paper.

Chair: Angelo Dan, Ambassador, Chargé d'affaires a.i., Embassy of the Republic of Benin in France

SPEAKERS

Angelo Estrella Faria, Secretary General, Comité Maritime International; Former UNIDROIT Secretary General
Ana Filipa Vrdoljak, UNESCO Chair in International Law and Cultural Heritage, Co-coordinator, UNESCO-UNITWIN Network on Culture in Emergencies

12:40 - 13:00 Conclusions and Closing Remarks

Manlio Frigo, Chair of the UNIDROIT Workstream on Cultural Property