



Award of the English Fernand Collin Prize for Law 2025

Press Communication by the University Foundation

The bi-annual English Fernand Collin Prize for Law aims at stimulating junior researchers in Flemish academic institutions in the area of law. The award was established in honour of Fernand Collin (1897-1990), who was chairman of Kredietbank from 1938 to 1973.

The Fernand Collin Prize for 2025 is awarded to Hannelore THIJS for her work *Solidarity in Acquisitions Regimes* (720 p.). This is the dissertation with which Ms. THIJS obtained her doctorate in law from KU Leuven on 5 December 2024. Professor Alain-Laurent Verbeke was the supervisor of this dissertation.

About the Laureate

Hannelore Thijs graduated magna cum laude as Master of Laws from KU Leuven in July 2020. During her Master's, she followed the research master programme. Between September 2020 and August 2025, she was a PhD researcher at the Rector Roger Dillemans Family Property Law Institute at KU Leuven. She defended her PhD thesis on 5 december 2024. During the academic year 2024-2025, she served as a substitute lecturer in family property law at KU Leuven, where she taught at both the master's and bachelor's level. Hannelore is currently a doctor-assistant at the Rector Roger Dillemans Family Property Law Institute. Since October 2025, she is appointed as part-time assistant professor at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, where she teaches succession and gift law. Hannelore is also a member of the editorial board of Tijdschrift Estate Planning.

About the Work

The jury praises this dissertation as an extensive, innovative, and groundbreaking contribution to comparative matrimonial property law. The study provides original insights into the concept of solidarity between spouses within various matrimonial property regimes, challenging and refining long-standing assumptions in the field.

At its core, the dissertation conducts a monumental comparative analysis of thirteen matrimonial property regimes across seven European jurisdictions, including Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, and Norway. It examines each system on ten parameters—subdivided into forty-five sub-parameters—and quantifies their levels of solidarity. This approach enables the author to assess the internal coherence of each regime, identify inconsistencies, and formulate concrete recommendations for reform. The scope and depth of this research, spanning over 700 pages, are breathtaking.

A particularly remarkable feature of the work is its introduction of quantitative analysis into comparative law—a methodological innovation rarely attempted in this field. This tool effectively reveals underlying similarities and differences between diverse systems, offering a new empirical dimension to legal comparison.

The findings demonstrate that the level of solidarity in acquisition systems can indeed be measured and compared across national borders. Contrary to traditional belief, the study shows that community regimes do not necessarily entail greater solidarity than settlement regimes. By integrating functional and comparative approaches with quantitative assessment, the dissertation convincingly rebuts the idea that such systems are too fundamentally different to compare.

Beyond its academic significance, the work has substantial practical value. It provides legislators and policymakers with a concrete toolkit to improve the coherence of matrimonial property regimes. The numerous specific and general recommendations emerging from the analysis are expected to inform both national and European legal reforms.

In sum, the jury regards this dissertation as a highly ambitious and comprehensive comparative study, both in breadth and depth. It constitutes a landmark contribution to the study of family and property law, not only in Flanders but across Europe, and is poised to influence scholarly debate and legislative practice for years to come.

Award Ceremony

The Prize will be presented on Monday, 8 December 2025, at 6:00 p.m. during an academic session at the University Foundation (Egmontstraat 11, 1000 Brussels).

Information

On the prize, see the website of the University Foundation:

<https://www.universitairstichting.be/en/content/fernand-collin-prize-law>

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