



The European Law Students' Association

FAIRS HANDBOOK

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2025/2026



Foreword

Professional Development as one of ELSA's key areas aims to prepare ELSA's members for Professional life after their studies. The vague scope of the key area provides a platform for much creativity in which events can be organised. In ELSA there is no singular event which is better at providing a direct link with employers for the students than the Career & Job Fairs. Therefore, the event can be considered to be at the very core of what Professional Development sets out to do - provide students with the tools they need to enter the job market and future lives.

This Handbook aims to define Career & Job Fairs, as well as explain the benefits they have to ELSA as an association and ELSA's members. It also aims to explain how you should go about creating a Career or Job Fairs based on the experiences of previous Professional Development Officers.

If you have any questions regarding organising Career & Job Fairs after reading this Handbook, or questions about this Handbook itself, do not hesitate to contact the Vice President in charge of Professional Development of the International Board of ELSA for your term, at the email professionaldevelopment@elsa.org.

Our gratitude also to the Marketing EIT for their assistance with writing the section on promotion of the event.

Best of luck with organising your event!

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1. Introduction to the event

1.1 Definition of Career & Job Fairs

Career & Job Fairs (C&J Fairs) are events held either in person or online that bring together a variety of organisations such as law firms, international institutions, NGOs and universities. Their purpose is to **present workplaces and promote them as potential future employers for students.**

Within ELSA's Professional Development framework, Fairs are divided into two categories: Career Fairs and Job Fairs, each serving a distinct purpose explained below. While they may be organised as separate projects, it is common to combine them into a single Fair, which offers the participants the opportunity to explore career paths while also engaging directly with recruitment opportunities.

Fairs can be organised as:

- A single Career Fair;
- A single Job Fair; or
- A joint Career & Job Fair

1.1.1 What is a Career Fair?

The International Council Meeting Decision Book, Part 8 Professional Development, Chapter 4 Other Professional Development Events, Article 3.3 defines a Career Fair as a *“project where participants can discover different career paths and fields of work after the conclusion of their studies.”*

In practice, a Career Fair focuses on **exposing students to the wide variety of opportunities** available within the legal and professional world.

The aim is not necessarily for participants to apply for jobs immediately, but rather to **learn about sectors and career paths they may wish to pursue in the future.** Law firms, international organisations, NGOs, public institutions, and universities often take part in Career Fairs to present the nature of their work, the skills they value, and the career trajectories they can offer. Invitations to participate in Career Fairs are often welcomed by most organisations.

For ELSA members, Career Fairs provide inspiration and guidance at an early stage of their professional journey. It gives insight and a platform for asking questions to their potential future career paths, and may change their aspirations and give them broader perspectives. For ELSA as an association, they underline the role of Professional Development as a bridge between academic studies and professional life.

1.1.2 What is a Job Fair?

The International Council Meeting Decision Book, Part 8 Professional Development, Chapter 4 Other Professional Development Events, Article 3.4 defines a Job Fair as a “*project where participants can explore career opportunities and share their recruitment documents with stakeholders, who participate to present their companies.*”.

A Job Fair is therefore a Fair which aims to provide a platform where **students can engage with legal professionals with the aim to secure themselves future employment**, and where the legal professionals aim to seek out students to recruit to their firms for the future.

Typical participants in Job Fairs include law firms, companies, and institutions that are currently hiring or looking to build a pipeline of future talent. For students, a Job Fair offers both learning about organisations and concrete steps toward employment. For employers, it provides efficient access to a motivated and internationally minded pool of young professionals.

Job Fairs therefore function as a “**marketplace for jobs,**” bridging the gap between legal education and immediate professional opportunities, and reinforcing ELSA’s role as a facilitator of career development.

1.1.3 Fairs as a physical event

The easiest way to organise C&J Fairs is as physical events. This is usually done by **booking a large room or a hall** capable of fitting both the participating organisations, as well as students. A venue should be close to university premises, as accessibility greatly influences student attendance.

Physical Fairs also allow for a more personal experience. Students benefit from **face-to-face interactions**, while organisations can showcase their culture through personal conversations, presentations, and promotional material.

1.1.4 Fairs as a digital event

ELSA International hosts its own annual digital Fair, known as the Career Launch. This event is conducted through a digital conference platform and is open to all ELSA members for a participation fee. Its primary purpose is to provide members with insight into the international career opportunities that await them as European law students once they have completed their studies at their national universities.

Digital Fairs offer several advantages compared to their physical counterparts. They allow participation from students and organisations **across borders without the need for travel**, making the event more accessible and inclusive. The online setting also allows for flexible event design, incorporating features such as **digital booths, live presentations, Q&A sessions, and private interview rooms.**

At the same time, digital events come with challenges that require careful preparation. A reliable platform is essential, as technical issues can disrupt the experience for both participants and partners. Organisers must also invest extra effort in creating engagement, since digital interactions can feel less personal than face-to-face meetings.

1.2 Purpose and Benefits of Career & Job Fairs

Career & Job Fairs serve as an important **bridge between students and the professional world**. They are designed not only to provide participants with knowledge about different career paths but also to strengthen ELSA's role as a platform connecting academia and practice. The benefits of organising and participating in Fairs extend both to individual members and to ELSA as an international organisation.

1.2.1 Benefits to ELSA's members

For ELSA's members, the primary benefit of Career & Job Fairs lies in the exposure to professional opportunities across diverse sectors of the legal field. Through participation, members can:

- Gain first-hand insight into career paths in law firms, international organisations, public institutions, NGOs, and other professional environments.
- Establish initial professional contacts, which may later develop into internships, traineeships, or long-term employment.
- Receive practical information about recruitment processes, expectations of employers, and required qualifications.
- Develop professional skills through networking and direct interaction with employers in a structured setting.
- Increase awareness of the international dimension of the legal profession by engaging with organisations operating across borders.

In this way, Fairs support members in preparing for their future careers, while also enhancing their employability and confidence as young professionals.

1.2.2 Benefits to ELSA as an organisation

At the organisational level, Career & Job Fairs contribute to strengthening ELSA's visibility and credibility within the professional community. It is also a good source of revenue for groups on a local, national or international level, if the ELSA group requires organisations to pay for participation in the event. The Fairs enable ELSA to:

- Build and maintain partnerships with leading law firms, companies, institutions, and other stakeholders.
- Position itself as a valuable partner in the field of legal education and professional development.

- Enhance the reputation of ELSA as a provider of meaningful opportunities that connect students with the professional market.
- Generate long-term cooperation and potential sponsorships by showcasing the association's reach and impact.
- Bring financial revenue to ELSA's groups.

Thus, Fairs play a dual role: they directly serve members by opening doors to career opportunities, while at the same time reinforcing ELSA's standing as the largest independent law students' association in the world.

2. Organising a Fair

Thorough preparation is the key to ensuring that Career & Job Fairs are successful, both in terms of member participation and organisational impact. The process requires the **engagement of the organising committee, the clear distribution of responsibilities, and careful planning of each stage leading up to the event.**

2.1 Event preparation

The preparation of a Career & Job Fair should **follow a structured timeline**, beginning several months in advance. Key preparatory steps include:

1. **Defining the Event Concept**
Decide whether the Fair will be physical, digital, or hybrid. Define the scope of the event, including the target audience, the type of organisations to be invited, and whether it will be organised as a Career Fair, Job Fair, or a combined format.
2. **Establishing a Budget**
Prepare a clear budget covering venue costs (if physical), digital platform costs (if online), marketing expenses, and any additional logistical needs. Consider potential income from participation fees, sponsorships, or external grants.
3. **Securing Partners**
Begin outreach to law firms, companies, institutions, and organisations well in advance. Provide them with clear information about the event's objectives, expected outcomes, and participation conditions.
4. **Venue or Platform Arrangements**
For physical events, secure a suitable venue accessible to students, ideally on or near university grounds. For digital events, select a reliable platform capable of hosting multiple organisations and facilitating interaction between students and professionals.
5. **Promotion and Marketing**
Develop a comprehensive promotional strategy, including digital channels, university outreach, and collaboration with student networks. Effective marketing is essential to ensure high participation from both students and organisations.
6. **Logistics and Support**
Arrange all necessary logistical details such as technical equipment, furniture, catering (if

physical), or IT support (if digital). Assign volunteers or officers to assist during the event.

7. Final Preparations

In the final weeks before the event, confirm participation with all stakeholders, distribute practical information to students and organisations, and conduct internal run-throughs to identify and resolve any potential issues.

Through careful planning and board-wide engagement, Career & Job Fairs can be delivered as professional, impactful projects that benefit all participants while strengthening ELSA's reputation.

2.2 Budgets for Career & Job Fairs

A well-prepared budget is one of the foundations of a successful Fair. Without a clear overview of both expected income and projected costs, there is a risk that the event may either exceed available resources or fail to reach its potential. Preparing the budget early in the planning process allows the organising board to determine whether the Fair is financially feasible, as well as to identify opportunities for sponsorships and external funding.

The income side of the budget often consists of **participation fees** charged to partner organisations, sponsorships from law firms, companies, or institutions, and in some cases contributions from university partners. It may **also include funds from the ELSA group's own resources**, if the board has decided to prioritize the event as a key project. On the expenditure side, the most common costs include venue rental (if the Fair is physical), fees for digital platforms (if online), marketing and promotional expenses, practicalities such as furniture, catering, or technical equipment, and smaller items such as thank-you gifts for volunteers or printing costs.

It is the **responsibility of the Treasurer** to keep accurate records of all expenses and revenues. The Treasurer should also regularly update the organising committee to ensure transparency. After the event, a short financial report should be produced and stored for future reference, providing a valuable resource for subsequent organisers who wish to build on past experience.

2.2.1 Potential Income Revenues

When planning a Fair, one of the first questions is how to cover the costs. Luckily, Career & Job Fairs can also **serve as a source of income for your group**. The most common way is to charge a participation fee from the organisations that join. This fee can vary depending on the size of the event, the visibility offered, and the financial realities of your local or national group. For example, larger law firms may be willing to pay more for the opportunity to meet students directly, while smaller organisations or NGOs might be invited at a reduced fee or even free of charge to ensure diversity.

In addition to participation fees, sponsorships and grants can play a big role. Universities, bar associations, or even local authorities may support the event financially, especially if it is

presented as a contribution to student development. Some groups also decide to allocate part of their own annual budget to the Fair if it is seen as a flagship project.

The key is to be **transparent about what organisations get in return** for their support. Whether it is visibility in promotional material, direct access to students, or participation in panel discussions, partners should feel that their contribution is worthwhile.

Typical income revenues are such as:

- Sponsorships
- Participation fee for organisations
- Potential additional services sold to participants
- ELSAs own reserves

2.2.2 Potential Expenses

On the other side of the budget are the costs that must be covered to make the event possible. These will depend on whether the Fair is physical, digital, or hybrid.

For a physical event, the main expenses are usually the venue rental, technical equipment, furniture for stands, and sometimes catering. Printing posters, flyers, or brochures also adds up. Even smaller details such as name tags, signs, or thank-you packages for volunteers should be accounted for.

For a digital event, costs are often lower, but they still exist. A reliable online platform may require a license or subscription fee, and technical support is often necessary to ensure everything runs smoothly. You may also wish to invest in digital promotion, such as targeted social media ads.

2.3 Securing a Venue

The choice of venue strongly influences the experience of both partners and students. A venue should be **large enough to accommodate all organisations with sufficient space for stands**, walking areas, and networking opportunities. Accessibility is equally important: if students must travel too far, participation will likely decrease. For this reason, university premises are often the best option, as they are familiar, affordable, and naturally linked to the student audience.

When selecting a venue, the organising board should also consider **practical needs** such as internet access, electricity, lighting, furniture, and any audio-visual equipment required for presentations. Costs should remain within budget, and potential partnerships with universities or local authorities should be explored to reduce expenses.

2.4 Logistics & Support

Logistical planning is what ensures that the event runs smoothly on the day itself. For a physical Fair, volunteers should be assigned to welcome participants, provide directions, and assist organisations with practical needs. Clear signage and printed schedules help create a professional atmosphere. For digital Fairs, technical support must be available to both participants and organisations, as online platforms often require troubleshooting.

Registration systems should be put in place to track attendance, both for internal evaluation and for reporting to partners. The organising committee should also develop contingency plans for common challenges such as late arrivals, technical failures, or unforeseen disruptions. A successful Fair is one where participants feel guided and supported from start to finish, without being made aware of the inevitable challenges behind the scenes.

2.5 Promotion of the Fairs

In order to maximise the impact and success of the event a clear and well-structured promotional strategy should be implemented. This is the moment in which the Vice President in charge of Marketing should lend their support. To ensure consistent visibility throughout the event cycle make sure that your strategy is easy to follow. A practical approach here would be structuring your promotion in three sections, namely promotion *before*, *during* and *after* the event.

Another important matter to take into consideration would be the identification of the target audience of the Fairs. On the one hand, you have the potential partners - law firms, organisations, institutions, universities, etc., and on the other hand, you have the students as the primary beneficiaries of the event.

2.5.1 Before the Event

Your main objectives during the preparation phase of the project are to, firstly, **attract** more firms and institutions to participate, and secondly, **maximise attendance** and registrations from students.

When reaching out to potential partners a great way to outline the objectives of the event and to present it as a mutually beneficial opportunity is by creating and providing a **Media Card** for the kind of Fair you have set out to organise (for reference ELSA International provides a Media Card for the ELSA Traineeship programme). The Media Card could include **short information** about ELSA and your National/Local Group, expected audience at the event and if applicable for your event - partnership or sponsorship packages. In the case that this isn't the first edition of your event you can also present **statistical data** about student registrations and the event's reach in previous years and **testimonials** from participants in the face of both students and partners. Incorporating such information puts an emphasis on the professional angle of the event and showcases ELSA as a trustworthy and reliable partner.

Securing student attendance is your second objective in this timeframe. Utilising **both digital and in person promotion** is key for building awareness and anticipation about the upcoming Fair. You can conduct teaser campaigns throughout your social media channels starting around 6 to 8 weeks before the event. Some examples for content to include in your campaign are “save the date” graphics and countdown posts or stories for your Instagram page, while on platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn the option to create and promote an event page could be used depending on your audience. It is always a good idea to **include a link with the registration form** when sharing your content. Introducing **confirmed employer participants** with short profiles could also generate student interest while simultaneously giving visibility to your partners which always leaves a positive impression.

For the “in person” promotion approach, consider accounting for the printing of **posters or brochures** if possible (as a tip here - create a QR code for the registration form). Approach university or faculty career offices as potential partners, this could help for securing your physical venue on university grounds. In exchange, you could offer them the opportunity to have a booth during the fair presenting career paths in academia. And of course, last but not least, remember to **collaborate with your board on promotion**.

2.5.2 During the Event

The promotional strategy during the event should be all about **engagement and visibility**. From branded Instagram stories highlighting the booths of the participating companies to utilising some of Instagram's more interactive tools such as polls, Q&As or creating an “Add yours” sticker under which participants could share their experience, feel free to be creative. Where possible consider providing Live Streams of some of the panels or workshops so that members who couldn't participate in person could also be engaged.

Partners usually provide their own marketing materials such as leaflets, brochures, stickers or pencils. If it is feasible for your budget you could consider creating your own magazines or leaflets for the Fair. They could include information about the event's programme, short profiles of the participating employers, the ways to apply for a job opportunity, etc. Print materials are also effective means to highlight the sponsors of the project.

Remember to **secure media content** by capturing photos and short videos for future promotional purposes. If possible conduct short interviews with employers and participants for later use as testimonials.

3 After the Event

After the conclusion of the Fair do **not forget to celebrate your successes**. Create Recap visuals or short videos for your social media channels. This is the moment to also thank your partners. Expressing your **gratitude through social media posts**, especially on LinkedIn, could contribute to strengthening relationships and facilitating future collaborations. Law firms,

institutions and other externals yet to participate in a Fair are also your audience. Highlighting the results of your event is an advantageous approach for attracting future partners.

3.1 Evaluation

Once the event is concluded, evaluation becomes the final step in the project cycle. Without it, the knowledge and experience gained during the Fair risk being lost. Evaluation should therefore be systematic and involve all stakeholders.

Students can be asked to complete **short feedback forms** about their experience, highlighting what they found useful and what could be improved. Partner organisations should also be consulted, as their input provides insight into how ELSA is perceived externally. The organising board should meet to conduct an internal review, reflecting on strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for the future.

In addition, statistical data such as the number of participants, organisations, and overall budget performance should be collected and stored. A short written report can then be **shared** with national or international officers, ensuring that lessons learned benefit the wider ELSA network. Evaluation is not only about identifying problems but also about celebrating successes and consolidating ELSA's role as a professional, student-run association.

4. Annexes

4.1 Responsibilities and Board Engagement

The successful organisation of a Fair depends on the **active involvement of the entire board** of the organising group. While the Vice President for Professional Development usually takes the lead, the project should be treated as a collective effort. The following responsibilities should be considered:

- **Vice President for Professional Development:** responsible for overall coordination, communication with external partners, and ensuring compliance with ELSA's regulations on Professional Development events.
- **President:** oversees the project at a strategic level, supports external representation, and ensures alignment with the group's overall goals. The President also helps with the creation of Partnership Packages and Contact Approval Form Procedures.
- **Treasurer:** manages the financial aspects of the Fair, including budgeting, sponsorships, and participation fees where applicable.
- **Vice President for Marketing:** designs and implements the promotional strategy to attract both participants and partners, ensuring visibility before, during, and after the event.
- **Vice President for Seminars & Conferences:** may provide additional input regarding event arrangements, especially if the Fair is combined with a conference or workshop programme.
- **Other Officers and Board Members:** assist in outreach, arrangements, and participant engagement, ensuring that all operational aspects are covered.

Involving the whole board not only distributes the workload but also ensures that the Fair is recognized as a flagship project of the local or national group, rather than the responsibility of a single officer.

4.2 Partner outreach

One of the most important tasks in preparing a Career & Job Fair is securing **high-quality partners**. These are the organisations that will ultimately provide value to the students, and their participation also defines the professional profile of the event. Careful planning and professionalism in outreach are therefore crucial.

4.1.1 Approach

Potential partners should be researched in advance to ensure they align with the scope of the event. Law firms, international organisations, NGOs, companies, and public institutions can all bring unique perspectives to the Fair. When approaching these stakeholders, it is important to **present the event as mutually beneficial**. On the one hand, students gain exposure to different career paths, while on the other hand, organisations gain direct access to motivated, internationally-minded law students.

Communication should be professional and well-prepared. A **partnership package or invitation letter** should be drafted in advance, clearly outlining the objectives of the event, the expected audience, and the benefits of participation. Ideally, first contact should be made via email, followed up by a phone call or meeting. The tone should be **formal but approachable**, reflecting both the professional standing of ELSA and its identity as a student-run organisation.

4.1.2 Contact Approval Forms

Before contacting any external organisation, ELSA officers must **respect the network's internal regulations regarding contact management**. The use of Contact Approval Forms ensures that communication with potential partners is coordinated across all levels of the association. This prevents situations where multiple ELSA groups approach the same organisation at the same time, which can create confusion and damage ELSA's reputation.

By submitting a Contact Approval Form, the organising board ensures that their outreach is approved and properly registered. This system protects not only the external relationship but also the credibility of the association as a whole.

4.1.3 Partner Maintenance

The work with partners does not end once they agree to participate. **Maintaining good relationships is essential if the cooperation is to be sustainable**. After the event, the organising group should send formal thank-you letters to all participants and provide them with a short report summarizing the event's outcomes. Sharing statistics such as the number of students reached, along with photos or media coverage, helps demonstrate the value of their participation.

Throughout the year, the group should **keep in touch with its partners**, not only when asking for support. This could be through invitations to other ELSA activities, updates on the

association's work, or acknowledgments on social media. Such small gestures build trust and increase the likelihood of long-term cooperation.

4.3 Timeline & Checklist

The timeline and checklist can be found as a separate document under the Fairs section of the PD Officers' Portal.