



The European Law Students' Association

INSTITUTIONAL VISIT HANDBOOK

SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES 2025/2026



Foreword

Dear S&Cers,

Institutional Visits represent one of the most popular and fundamental S&C projects of ELSA. They reflect the core values of ELSA - contributing to legal education while putting an emphasis on the importance of mutual understanding in the spirit of diversity and internationality. Institutional Visits are a singular opportunity to gain or expand knowledge on the workings of national and international institutions and be able to peek “behind the curtain” - in addition to immersing yourselves in the local culture and discovering new cities.

Furthermore, Institutional Visits are a great opportunity to convince ELSA members to stay involved in the association or to acquire new members – all the while enabling your ELSA Group to stand out at your faculty or university.

This Handbook aims to simplify and facilitate the organisation of Institutional Visits in the Network, especially if you are planning to go abroad. It is structured into four main segments: a definition of the project as a whole, a step-by-step manual to its organisation, a guide to communication with participants before and during your event and a catalogue of guides to popular destinations. As it is based on real, personal experience, it constitutes a valuable tool which we hope the Network will find useful.

Should any questions persist after reading this Handbook, please do not hesitate to contact me at assistant.sc@elsa.org or our VP S&C at seminarsconferences@elsa.org. We remain at your disposal.

Wishing you many successful and interesting Institutional Visits!

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Table of contents

1. What are Institutional Visits?	3
1.1. Definition	3
1.2. Types	3
1.3. Aim	4
2. Organising an Institutional Visit	4
2.1. Timeline	4
2.2. Organising Committee (OC)	5
2.3. Participants	6
2.4. Academic Programme	6
2.4.1. The External Relations Procedure	7
2.4.2. Contacting Institutions	7
2.5. Social Programme and Meals	8
2.6. Logistics	9
2.6.1. Accommodation	9
2.6.2. Transportation	9
2.6.3. Materials for the participants	10
2.6.3.1. Before the visit	10
2.6.3.2. During the visit	10
2.6.4. Meals	11
2.7. Finances	11
3. Communication with Participants	12
3.1. Before the event	12
3.2. During the event	13
3.3. After the event	13
4. Promotion	14
5. Useful Links	14

1. What are Institutional Visits?

1.1. Definition

Regulated under Article 6 of the Decision Book, Institutional Visit (IV) is an event aiming to give the participants a chance to visit and learn more about governmental or non-governmental organisations, public administrations, private institutions, universities or other higher education institutions. The main purpose of the event is the visit itself.

Examples of institutions are:

- EU institutions, Council of Europe, national parliaments, ministries, courts, public administration offices, embassies, law enforcement authorities, non-governmental organisations, universities, or prisons.

In a nutshell, IV is an event during which you give your participants the opportunity to get to know the work of different types of institutions firsthand and benefit from the fact that the trip is completely organised by motivated ELSA Officers.

1.2. Types

Institutional Visits can be:

1. **Local** (situated in the town/city of the Organising Group).
 2. **National** (situated in the country of the Organising Group).
 3. **International** (institutions situated in a different country from the country the Organising Group is located).
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1. A **local** Institutional Visit is a visit to governmental or non-governmental organisations, public administrations, private institutions, universities, or other higher education institutions located **in the town/city** of the **Organising Group**.
 2. A **national** Institutional Visit is a visit to governmental or non-governmental organisations, public administrations, private institutions, universities, or other higher education institutions located **in the country** of the **Organising Group**.
 3. An **international** Institutional Visit is a visit to the headquarters of **international** governmental or non-governmental organisations, public administrations, private institutions, universities, or other higher education institutions.

1.3. Aim

Institutional Visits provide law students and young lawyers the unique chance to understand the functioning of governmental or non-governmental organisations, private institutions, universities or other institutions of higher education. Getting direct information on organisations/institutions and developing international cooperation, the exchange of information and experience represent the main purposes of every Institutional Visit.

International Visits reflect the spirit of ELSA by promoting **cultural exchange, education, and international cooperation among law students and young professionals**. IV participants travel and explore a different city, enriching their knowledge of the respective institution and meeting other ELSA members.

IV Organisers will gain valuable experience in how to approach national/international institutions and develop project management skills. It's also a great learning experience in teamwork and leadership!

2. Organising an Institutional Visit

2.1. Timeline

To make the process easier, you may find a detailed timeline on how to organise a successful IV below.

- **10 months before the event:** Start researching different institutions that would be beneficial for your members to visit. The success of your IV largely depends on the choice of your institution and cities, so try to gather as much information as possible before your final decision. After you have decided upon the destination and the time, you should create an Organising Committee (OC), depending on the size of your project and the expected number of participants. *TIP: It is not recommended to have an OC of more than 7 members.*
- **8 months before the event:** When you've decided on the **main institutions** for the IV, you should start looking for travel options, especially for larger events (*e.g. for a trip overseas, you may need to travel by plane*).
- **6 months before the event:** Open applications for the Institutional Visit on your social media! *TIP: mouth word is a powerful promotion! Talk to people at your University.*
- **5 months before the event:** When you have an estimated number of participants, you can start searching for accommodation. *TIP: Do it in advance!*
- **4 months before the event:** Finalise **travel arrangements** if you are travelling by plane, **contact institutions if they are usually busy**, and you really want to include them in your programme.
- **2 months before the event:** Contact **ELSA International** and **the institutions** you wish to

visit (*popular institutions should be contacted earlier*), if needed, considering the External Relations Regulations.

- **1 month before the event**: Finalise **accommodation arrangements**, the list of participants and organise the **social programme and meals**. Start preparing your participants for the trip, **send them information** about the institutions, accommodation, country and the social programme.
- **After the event**: **Evaluation**, thank you letters to sponsors and institutions, and bookkeeping.

TIP: You must accept that the timeline itself cannot be kept strictly during your planning process, but it is a good starting point. This timeline depends on the type and size of the visit, so you need to adjust it for every event.

2.2. Organising Committee (OC)

A successful Institutional Visit starts with setting up a clear and reliable **Organising Committee (OC)**. It should consist of between **2 and 4 members** (depending on the destination, length, programme, number of participants, and visits).

Suggested roles may include:

- **Head of the Organising Committee (HoC)**: Coordinates the Organising Committee, delegates tasks, motivates the team, introduces new ideas, and provides information.
- **Head of Logistics**: Manages accommodation arrangements, room allocations, and provides participants with information about their stay. Communicates with the hotel or hostel before, during, and after the event, and coordinates transportation for participants throughout the event.
- **Head of Finances and Fundraising**: Develops the budget, approves payments, prepares grant applications, and engages with partners and sponsors.
- **Head of Participants**: Reviews applications and communicates with participants before, during, and after the event.

TIPS:

- Depending on the size of your IV, one person may take on more than one role.
- Stay organised, **set internal deadlines**, and check in regularly with your OC members.
- Use **shared tools** (Google Drive, Trello, Notion, etc.) to keep everyone updated.
- Create a **joint checklist** to track progress.
- Respect each other's time and roles, and try to solve issues early through **open communication**.

Having a strong OC helps make the Visit not only well-organised, but also far more enjoyable to run!!!

2.3. Participants

You are always responsible for the participants of the Visit. **Participants** should not be more than **30**, since usually that is the maximum number that the institutions can accept. Be aware that some institutions do not accept groups of under 20 participants!

IMPORTANT:

- Make sure you pick only **motivated participants** who want to take part in the Academic Programme.
- **Collect all the data** about the participants that you might need during the trip (date and place of birth, passport/ID number, phone number, email, emergency contacts, potential allergies or medical conditions), complying, of course, with Data Protection Regulations.

2.4. Academic Programme

The **Academic Programme** shall consist of visits to governmental or non-governmental organisations, public administration bodies or private institutions.

Many institutions offer different options for visitors, check them out and see how they fit in your schedule. However, the institutions sometimes ask you what the group's main interests are, so make sure you know what they are.

TIPS:

- Inform the institutions about the **level of knowledge of the visitors** beforehand so that they can adjust their presentation for law students' (undergraduate/bachelor's/master's/graduate) needs. The most successful visits are usually those designed specifically for your group!
- **DO NOT book more than two institutions per day**, as participants might get tired and they won't be able to participate as actively as they should.

The Academic Programme should be clearly structured and scheduled, and include **opportunities for Q&A or informal exchange**. It should also reflect both legal substance and accessibility, considering language, background knowledge, and level of complexity.

2.4.1. The External Relations Procedure

FIRST THINGS FIRST: In order to safeguard ELSA's reputation and to avoid conflicts or concurrency between ELSA Groups, External Relations within ELSA follow a standardised common procedure. This procedure ensures transparency, coordination, and proper representation of the Association.

When it comes to Institutional Visits (IVs), the procedure is simplified, and in certain cases, no request is required.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: If you are visiting an international institution (such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, or the European Parliament), the Institutional Visit exception applies. No request is needed if the institution offers public visits. In this case, you may proceed directly and book the visit independently.

This exception applies only to the visit itself.

If you intend to:

- establish a partnership,
- organise a workshop or event, or
- engage in any other form of cooperation,

The standard External Relations procedure applies, and a request must be submitted.

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: For national or regional institutions (e.g. national or regional parliaments, supreme courts), the general principle is also that no request is needed. However, you must first verify:

- whether the institution offers public visits (similar to international institutions), and
- whether the host National Group has listed the institution in the External Relations Database.

If the institution is listed, a CAF (Cooperation Approval Form) is required.

If the institution is not listed, you may proceed without submitting a request.

REGULATORY BASIS: The relevant regulations can be found in Part II, Chapter 3 of the ICM Decision Book.

The institutional visit exception is regulated in Article 3.6(c).

Please note that Articles 3.6(a) and 3.6(b) may also apply:

- Article 3.6(a): Requesting promotional items or goodies from an institution does not require a CAF.
- Article 3.6(b): Booking accommodation for the purpose of the IV does not require a CAF, as the group acts purely as a customer.

Definitions of national and international institutions can be found in Article 2.3.

ALL OTHER CASES: In all other situations, such as:

- requesting financial support, or
- organising private or closed workshops with an institution,

The standard External Relations procedure applies, as regulated in Article 3.

TIMELINE: When a CAF is required, the requested party has 7 days to respond.

If no response is received within this period, the request is considered approved by default, and you may proceed.

2.4.2. Contacting Institutions

After having received the approval from the IB, you can start contacting the institutions you want to visit:

- For visits outside of Europe and popular/busy institutions: 6 months in advance.

- For other institutions: **2 months** in advance.

TIP: don't wait too long, especially if your travel plans are set, or you have a tight schedule for the Programme!

Information about the institutions and contact information is usually found on their websites. However, the best way to get in touch with an institution is to have a **personal contact**. Therefore, always start by asking your fellow board members or your National Officer if they have any relevant contacts.

Another safe way is to contact your home **country's embassy** in the country you are visiting. Contacting institutions via the embassy or your University might help you (see **sample letter in Annex II**). You can also obtain recommendations about places to visit and the contact details of the contact person from the embassy or university.

2.5. Social Programme and Meals

Social Programme creates the most memories and helps people connect beyond the academic side.

Some ideas could be:

- Welcome dinner or **national drinks night**.
- **City tour** or themed walking game.
- **Local traditions** (cooking class, dancing, etc.).
- Pub night, karaoke, or **quiz night**.
- **Cultural sightseeing** (museums, landmarks).

Think about what makes your city special, and make sure there is a **balance between free time and planned activities**.

IMPORTANT: One of the nicest things to do during an IV is to **meet up with other ELSA members** in the city you're visiting. Make sure to contact the **National and/or Local Group** in advance. You should prepare maps, plans of the city, tourist highlights in advance. The Local Group can help you in guiding the city and preparing a social/cultural programme.

2.6. Logistics

2.6.1. Accommodation

You should start organising accommodation months before the event, especially if your Group is a larger one. Options might include:

- Student dormitories or university guest rooms;
- Hostels or low-budget hotels;
- Airbnb.

Before confirming any accommodation booking, it is important to consider factors such as accessibility (including location, transport options, and mobility access), safety measures and emergency procedures, as well as whether the venue has group-friendly policies such as late check-in or flexible curfews.

If you're using multiple accommodation types, make sure the distribution is fair and communicated in advance.

IMPORTANT: You can ask for **special discounts** (student, group, ELSA members). Other than youth hostels, you can always ask institutions if they offer accommodation options for their visitors or if they have any special discounts in hostels.

2.6.2. Transportation

- **To the city:** If you are travelling with a larger group, you need to consider forms of transportation carefully. Try to **order the plane/train tickets as soon as possible**, so that you can secure the lowest price. If you are travelling with a bigger group, it might be convenient to **order a bus**: it gives you more flexibility with the schedule, and your group can use it in the city to save on public transportation costs!
- **Around the city:** If you have ordered a **bus** for the group, you can use it in the city so that you have freedom, but bear in mind that there may be restrictions for buses in central areas, or extra costs when entering the city centre. If you choose **public transport**, you should check your options in advance, as there may be group tickets or day tickets you can save money on. *Also, order them online if you can, sometimes there is a **discount for online tickets**, and it's definitely easier than every participant standing in line to buy their own ticket.*

TIP: Some accommodation providers offer free or cheap public transport tickets, so be sure to check that in advance.

2.6.3. Materials for the participants

2.6.3.1. Before the visit

It is best to prepare your participants for the trip, so send them information about the institutions, accommodation, country, academic, cultural and social programme via email before the trip (a sort of **IV Participant Booklet**).

A simple Booklet can include:

- The **Programme** (academic, social, and cultural);
- Addresses of **accommodation** and venues;
- General info about the **institutions**,
- Local **transportation** tips or group ticket info;
- **Emergency contacts**, including OC members;
- Key locations on a **local map**.

You can also include a few fun extras, like local phrases, cultural tips, or a **welcome message from the OC**. It can be a part of a countdown and can make your participants more excited about the trip!

2.6.3.2. During the visit

If you have funds for it, the participants always appreciate a small **welcome package**. These could consist of badges, promotion materials about the institutions/your sponsors, maps, a notebook, a pen or a small souvenir.

2.6.4. Meals

When it comes to the meals, be clear about:

- Which meals are covered, or **organised** by the OC;
- Pay attention to **dietary needs** (vegetarian, halal, allergies, etc.);
- Meal **venues** (e.g. student canteens, restaurants, homemade dinners).

It's always appreciated when local dishes or traditional foods are included - a great way to share your culture!

2.7. Finances

One of the first things to do when organising an IV is the **budget** (see Annex III).

While drafting it, always remember to:

- to prepare for **unforeseen expenses**: a good rule is to add 10 % extra costs to the budget;
- Ask hostels/restaurants for **group offers** and book flights and/or trains well in advance. (i.e. *hiring a bus for the group might be cheaper and also create a comfortable road trip feeling for the participants*);
- take **all the costs** you might have (travel, accommodation, meals, entrance fees, marketing materials, OC costs, etc.);
- secure successful **fundraising** by applying early. *Grants are often national, so be sure to contact your national board and other local groups before you apply.*

GRANTING SUGGESTIONS:

- The **European Parliament** has several options for funding visits to Brussels and Strasbourg.
- **Bar Associations/Associations of Lawyers** sometimes give out **grants** for law students for studying purposes. If there are no open calls for applications, you can contact them directly or send an open application.
- **Universities** sometimes support their students' visits to international institutions. They can be counted as studies abroad if participants get credits. Contact your faculty, home university or your local student association.
- Different **national foundations** give out grants, especially for talented students, for their studies. Encourage your participants to apply!
- **In-kind support & sponsorship**: i.e. meals at institutions/law firms (even small items like city maps, bags, or snacks can add value).
- **ELSA Development Foundation** (EDF), in case of financial loss, despite proper planning, Local and National Groups may apply to EDF for partial reimbursement. Applications must follow the EDF regulations and include clear documentation of the deficit. Full details and deadlines are available on the Officers' Portal. *Please consult your National Board on this matter.*

ELSA members have access to a range of **discounts and offers**, some of which can be particularly helpful when organising an Institutional Visit. These benefits include reduced rates at certain **accommodation providers and transport services** across Europe (e.g. FlixBus and Accor Hotels).

3. Communication with Participants

3.1. Before the event

In the weeks leading up to the event, do not forget to:

- Confirm the final **list of participants**.
- Share the agreed **programme and logistical information (IV Booklet)**.
- Explain payment deadlines, travel plans, and what to pack.
- Provide emergency **contacts and local addresses**.
- Set and clarify **expectations**.
- Create a **group chat** for participants to ask questions, share updates, and start getting to know each other.

3.2. During the event

IV has started: creating lifetime memories for all participants is the core responsibility of the Organising Committee. To ensure that your Institutional Visit is successful, make sure to display **safety for your participants**, promote gentle behaviors and make sure we are all having a nice time, create an **environment where everyone feels welcomed** and valued.

Make sure to keep the group chat active by:

- **sharing the schedule daily** and any relevant announcements.
 - sending **reminders on time & locations**.
 - sharing with them the **OC/emergency contacts**.
 - reminding participants about **general expectations** (punctuality, dress code, etc.).
- IMPORTANT:** When visiting an institution, ALWAYS remind participants that they all **represent ELSA**, whatever they do, it will reflect on all of us, so please follow the dress code and behave adequately.

3.3. After the event

An Institutional Visit doesn't end when the visit ends. Wrapping things up properly helps preserve what you have built - and makes it easier for you to organise an even better one next time: make sure to take time to reflect with your **Organising Committee** on how the Institutional Visit went and share **feedback** during a debrief meeting or through a dedicated survey. ***TIP:** Archive your notes, documents, and planning timeline. This will be a huge help to whoever organises your next Institutional Visit.*

If you would like to be really thorough, ask participants to fill in a **participants' evaluation form**, and ask for their experiences and tips for improvement. Especially if you are planning to make the trip annual. They can also be good motivational tools for your future ELSA generations, as they will see how much fun you had, which will encourage them to want to have the same experience!!!

Do not forget to:

- Send a short **thank-you message** to participants (as well as to the institutions, academic partners, Sponsors/Universities and supporters, and Venues).
- Ask participants to write a **short reflection or post**: many people are happy to share a story or memory, and it keeps the spirit of the event alive even after it's over.
- **Share photos** (*with permission*), quotes, or short testimonials on social media to show what you achieved.

4. Promotion

A planned and good promotion strategy is the key to attracting participants! Consider using:

- o Your Group's **Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn** pages.
- o **Mailing lists** or university newsletters.
- o **On-campus visibility** (e.g. posters, infodesk, student meetings).
- o **Word-of-mouth** via ELSA members (i.e. workshops, events).

Make sure the materials include a short description of the Institutional Visit (destination, dates, costs), a link or instructions for the application, contact info for questions, and a clear deadline.

<i>TIP: Always double-check the accuracy of details before posting, especially costs, dates, and application procedures.</i>
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ELSA does **not have a specific branding package for Institutional Visits**. However, all promotional materials must respect the **general ELSA Brand Guidelines**, including:

- o Proper use of the ELSA logo and fonts.
- o Language and tone aligned with ELSA's values.
- o Avoiding any misleading or overly commercial messaging.

For reference, you can consult the **ELSA Brand Book**, available on the Officers' Portal.

5. Useful Links

- **General**

1. [Officers' Portal](#)
2. [International Council Meeting Decision Book](#)
3. [ELSA Brand Book](#)

- **Organising Process**

4. [Annex I. Guide to Popular Destinations](#)
5. [Annex II. Sample Letter](#)
6. [Annex III. Draft Budget](#)
7. [Annex IV. Draft Programme](#)

- **Additional**

8. [ELSA Development Foundation Guidelines](#)
9. [ELSA Members Benefits](#)

