

Manual for Studies Abroad Projects

ELSA International 2014/2015



Dear reader,

The purpose of ELSA is, among others, to promote legal education, cultural exchange and social responsibility. We tend to focus mostly on the first group. Studies Abroad Projects (SAP) has however been a priority within Academic Activities (AA) since the very start and it represented our commitment to internationality and it has proven ELSA to be a socially responsible association. The idea was to encourage law students to go on exchange. The most significant contribution used to be a Guide to Legal Studies in Europe- a massive printed publication which presented all exchange opportunities of our continent.

Nowadays, Internet is much more efficient than a printed birck of paper and ELSA-officers have questioned whether SAP should continue being an AA-activity. At the International Council Meeting in Cologne, 2013, the Council decided SAP should still be a focus in AA. It was argued that supporting educational and cultural exchange is an extremely important task. One might question why the AA-officer is assigned this responsibility. SAP is not always purely academic, but the importance, the opportunities and the benefits involved are so significant that we should nevertheless being in charge. SAP is indeed a perfect tool for the fulfillment of our beautiful vison!

This manual is the result of a working group which was appointed by ELSA International winter/spring 2014. The aim of the document is to explain what SAP is, why we should organise it and how we can do that. We hope it can be inspirational and lead to even more cross-border exchange on both personal and academic level.

Embrace cultural diversity,

Tino Boche, Michael Morgen, Adriana Moças and Olav Vogt Engeland
Working Group on Studies Abroad Projects, 2014

Introduction

Studies Abroad Projects (SAP) are activities that can be organised in accordance with the AA-part of the ELSA Decision Book. However, SAP doesn't receive a big focus in many National Groups. An aim of this manual is therefore to inspire and to find solutions to the obstacles connected with this specific event. Furthermore, the AA handbook deals with SAP and is recommended readings - it gives a general overview whereas this manual has a rather hands on approach and shows examples.

1. What are Studies Abroad Projects?

Studies Abroad Projects are activities that **encourage law students to embrace cultural exchange** and to be internationally minded. These events facilitate interaction between local and exchange students through academic and social activities. The aim is to create a platform, which promotes the exchange of knowledge, ideas and multicultural understanding.

Many law students invest a lot of time and effort in going abroad to gain international experience and to expand their network. Luckily, this can also be done at home. A large number of international students go every semester on exchange to universities all over Europe. SAP is about seizing the opportunity this gives to the **fulfilment of our vision**. Cultural diversity, internationality and social responsibility are key words in ELSA. SAP can be a tool when implementing these goals.

The SAP deserves attention from ELSA-officers regardless of their position. However, the AA-officers have been given a special role. We are the ones who make sure SAP is put into practice. **Therefore we shall organize events that encourage local students to study abroad and, additionally, we receive those who have chosen to come and study at our university.** This last task brings many benefits to ELSA and it is a step towards social responsibility and cultural exchange.

2. Is there a market for SAP in my local group?

This is up to you to decide. ELSA groups should of course not invest resources in projects that are not requested by its members. If similar activities are already taken care of by other student association, or if there are no exchange students at your faculty, the market for SAP might seem non-existing. However, under there are listed some solutions you should take into consideration before drawing any final conclusions.

Some universities receive few exchange students. There is not so much ELSA can do about this but SAP can still be fruitful. Encouraging local students to **go and study abroad** is one of the two sides of the SAP-coin, meaning that there is a market for SAP even though the number of foreign students is low.

It is often the case that Erasmus Student Network (ESN), or other associations, are in charge of activities targeted at exchange students. SAP is nevertheless different from the ESN-programme in many ways. First of all, ELSA should aim at **academic and law related** activities where international students can participate. ESN tend to focus on other activities and they are not specialized into law. Moreover, ELSA is a place where exchange students can meet **local students at the faculty**. When one goes abroad an aim is often to get local friends and contacts, who study the same as you do. At ESN-events, on the other hand, it is rare to meet local students who study the same as you. In conclusion, the main obstacles preventing SAP from being successful can be avoided by adapting the programme to the needs of your faculty.

The ESN does have an eventful programme for the Erasmus students, but ELSA's programme is different in many ways. Almost no local students were part of ESN and there was no focus on academic events related to law. ELSA, on the other hand, resulted in local friends and contacts at the law faculty. This is what I was really looking for when I decided to go on exchange.

Carmen Moreno Campos (La Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain)

3. How to organize SAP?

The focus should of course be on activities that are academic when organizing SAP. One should however not be afraid of loosening up a little and use social events to create a multinational platform. Further, the crucial element in a successful SAP is obviously to reach the students. The marketer will help you with that and co-operation with the university administration is recommended. They might help you with the promotion as we share many of the same goals.

Under is a non-exhaustive list of **concrete ways of organizing studies abroad projects:**

- Include exchange students in the **already exciting ELSA-activities**. The activities we already organize could easily be adapted so that foreign students can participate. Exchange students can, for example, participate in many of our moot Court Competitions, Institutional Visits are easy to adapt to SAP and Legal Debates, Law Reviews and L@W-events could be enriched with new people who have a different legal and cultural background.

During the past Legal Research Groups, for example in Norway, exchange students were engaged as linguistic editors since they were highly competent in legal English. This ensured a correct and efficient language and the final report became much more presentable. Also, international students can be a good source of information, e.g. regarding international law.

- **Information meetings about exchange opportunities** can be organized – for example in cooperation with your law faculty. The exchange students at your faculty can, for example, present their home universities and that way local students get first hand information in addition to a contact person.

In Oslo there was an event called “The Exchange Fair” where international students teamed up, according to their nationalities, behind information stands and promoted the study programmes in their home countries. Besides, a lawyer came and gave a talk on the importance of having international experience in professional life.

A mentor week (or day(s)) aims at introducing the arriving students to the university, the city and the legal system of your country. A number of activities at the start of the semester will contribute to inclusion of new students and understanding of the given society. The faculty administration is often very interested in this and they might give financial, practical and academic support. Examples of events that can fill the week: L@W events, institutional visits, information meetings about ELSA, sightseeing, cultural events and parties. The OC of a mentor week should not only consist of AA'ers since it is also relevant to other fields within ELSA (e.g. S&C-events and human resources).

- ELSA Lingua is a language tandem exchange programme. The idea is simple: You teach me your language and I teach you mine. ELSA creates a database where students register the languages they know. The participants are matched and then they decide how they want to exchange language skills. There are perhaps such programmes present at your university but law students are often interested in talking with other law students. ELSA Lingua is a simple way of developing the soft skills of our members and there are no costs involved. Check out elsa.no/oslo/lingua for further inspiration.



- Social events can be useful when bringing people of different nationalities together. These can for example be dinner parties (bring your national dish), theme parties (dress up in your national costume), study visits to other cities or cabin trips.

4. Is there a market for SAP in my local group?

Benefits for the ELSA group:

- SAP allows officers to get in touch with the international side of our association. Sometimes it is difficult for local officers to attend international events such as International Council Meetings due to financial restrictions. SAP allows you to create the multicultural ELSA Spirit at home without any extra costs.

- SAP gives an opportunity to the ELSA Group to demonstrate its internationality. To many local students this is very attractive hence SAP can be an important way to promote ELSA events, as well as a clever way to receive interest from the University, research centres, law firms, etc.

Law studies tend to lack internationality. This I can find at ELSA-events where I meet exchange students who can teach me about their respective legal systems. In fact, I joined ELSA mainly due to interaction with international students. These events allow me to practice my language skills and to get a clearer idea of where I want to go on Erasmus. Now I already have contacts at many foreign faculties! I strongly recommend other ELSA groups to organize similar events. It's a niche which makes ELSA much more interesting for those who want to be members on a low threshold level.

Nicolas Amilien Simon (Faculty of Law, Oslo)

- Involving exchange students will result in **more members** for the local group. Many international students are not as busy as locals. It is therefore probable that the number of participants at ELSA events will increase. Moreover, with SAP it is easier to organize events in **English**. For example, local groups can easily organize Moot Courts with international students, focused on international fields of law, or Legal Debates in English.
- Foreign students can contribute as **human resources**, both locally and nationally. Many of them are willing to be committed since they do not have many other obligations when they are abroad. Besides, SAP can be an excellent way to find support for the ELSA projects organized on the international level. We have seen in the past that many exchange students want to be participate in, for example, the international legal research groups and the moot court competitions.
- SAP is the perfect strategy for building a good **reputation**. If an exchange student feels well received, he/she will tell fellow students about the experience and maybe even become an active member once he/she comes back home. Also, SAP can help ELSA **expand**. The exchange student might be filled up with so much ELSA spirit that he/she starts up a new local group at home.

After my exchange year, having been received by a wonderful ELSA group, I returned to my home university and joined the ELSA Zagreb. I am very happy I was immediately given the opportunity to initiate SAP here.

Karla Vlahinja (University of Zagreb)

Benefits for the exchange students:

- SAP ensures that the arriving students find themselves welcomed, not only on a social level, but also at an **academic** level.

ELSA facilitated interaction with both local and other exchange students. I was welcomed to the Oslo faculty of law in a way which made my Erasmus-year much more active and academically relevant. When I got back to Madrid, I immediately contacted the national ELSA group and became a member!

Carmen Moreno Campos (La Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain)

- Students have the possibility to guarantee that their exchange programme is not going to be a “mere pause” in their studies. They can actually raise the bar and improve their skills and their legal English. In addition, their network of future lawyers will expand.