

Strategic input on Refocus

(A Living Vision)

Open BEE Call - 27 May 2020

This strategic input is structured in such a way that it gives the reader the feedback of what has been discussed by 15 presidents of the ELSA Network during the Open Call on Wednesday, 27 May. The Q&A format will allow the reader to understand the inputs introduced by different officers.

The Strategic Goals of ELSA

Strategic Goal 2: A Living Vision

Focus 2.1 Refocus

Aim: Strengthen the ELSA identity by creating a clear understanding of what the purpose statement means for today's members, in different countries and settings and how it defines and determines our actions.

Operational Goals:

- ELSA shall define what 'non-political' means within international association law and practice;
- ELSA shall develop a clear understanding of what the Philosophy Statement of the Association means within association law and practice and for its members;
- ELSA shall constantly develop awareness and knowledge of Human Rights by aligning certain activities with these goals;
- ELSA shall establish Human Rights partnerships at least on International and National level;
- ELSA shall create a strategic plan to increase the awareness and knowledge of the International Focus Programme;
- ELSA shall research the exact legal and, reputational implication of actions such as advocacy (including statements) or any other actions it makes or takes in the pursuit of being the voice of law students;
- ELSA shall aim to foster mutual understanding between legal professionals and law students by redefining and understanding what each of these terms implies;
- ELSA shall acknowledge legal matters, as well as engage in activities which encourage social responsibility through a holistic approach;
- The International Board shall explain in each International Council Meeting the steps taken to fulfil this aim.

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What is it that makes ELSA different than other youth NGOs?

- ❖ Our internationality
- ❖ Our community
- ❖ Legal education
- ❖ Our brand
- ❖ The structure of the association (board structure / international – national - local structure)

What is it that makes ELSA different than other law students' associations?

- ❖ Our vision:
 - Social responsibility as part of our purposes;
 - Advocacy;
 - Education.
- ❖ Our values:
 - Volunteerism;
 - Diversity and respect for each other;
 - Commitment and engagement; the way we work.
- ❖ The spirit of ELSA – our community – our people

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When do you feel most like you belong in a community?

- ❖ During our Open Calls;
- ❖ During the International Internal Meetings;
- ❖ While organising and hosting projects of ELSA, with the result of meeting other ELSA members.

How can we boost the community feeling when meeting in person?

- ❖ Include sports and competitions in the social programme;
- ❖ Enrich the cultural nights with various elements, other than the alcohol element (ELSA Vision as an example of great social programme);
- ❖ Be more aware of the alcohol driven spirit and try to invest on cultivating a “Drink responsibly” mindset.

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When did you feel the proudest about ELSA building awareness?

- ❖ ELSA's participation in the negotiations for the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 1996;
- ❖ Cooperation with the LGBTQ community in various projects;
- ❖ Gender Sensitive project;
- ❖ Organising football matches with kids with special needs
- ❖ ELSA campaign for the rights of the elderly;

A great similarity of all these initiatives is that they do not focus on the law community itself. On the contrary, they identify problems in our society and try to tackle them by raising awareness, speaking out and lobbying. **ELSA should be speaking out to the society, about the society, for the society.**

Challenges we see:

- ❖ Losing our focus on our purpose and vision, when organising too many, similar and with the same aim projects;
- ❖ A great focus on legal education and not the same focus on mutual understanding and social responsibility;
- ❖ Advocacy that does not have the impact it had in the past.

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Facing the challenges:

- ❖ In order to develop large scale social responsibility projects, we need to develop a different international board structure;
- ❖ Foster projects such legal clinics and the ELSA for Schools. The essence of the ELSA for Schools project is the delivery of interactive lectures by ELSA members to high school students on interesting facets of the law;
- ❖ Develop the sense of volunteerism from the early stages of an ELSA member;
- ❖ ELSA advocacy should be addressing the civil society and the policy makers, not just the membership of ELSA and other youth NGOs.