

STRATEGIC GOALS YEARLY REPORT

INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF ELSA
2022/2023



elsa

The European Law Students' Association

Foreword

In the following report, we will give a brief overview of the progress regarding the Strategic Plan implementation. We suggest that you consult the [Strategic Planning Implementation Handbook](#) and the yearly reports of the years [2019/2020](#), [2020/2021](#), and [2021/2022](#) while reading this report, as the information provided in these documents is essential to understand the following document.

This year we were presented with a Janus head of Strategic Planning, having to focus both on the present and past with the Strategic Plan 2019-2023, and on the creation of the Strategic Plan 2023-2028. This provided a significant challenge, as the creation of the new plan took a considerable amount of time, limiting the amount of effort being put into the implementation of the current goals. In the Strategic Plan Final Report, which will be published in the upcoming year, the final conclusions on the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 will be made, hopefully also proving useful for the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

Kindest regards,

Yuri B. Schaller Mikko Mäntinen Inês Gonçalves

Jean Linnéa Leia Dora

Yuri, Basil, Mikko, Inês, Jean, Linnéa, Leia and Dora
International Board 2022/2023

Good Governance

Advisory Body

A lot of work had already been done on this goal, so our main focus was ensuring the utilisation of the Advisory Body in a way that actually benefits the International Board. At the beginning of the term, we were faced with a situation where input from the Advisory Body was needed. We immediately reached out to the previous International Board members in the Advisory body and we were blown away by the speed and quality of the replies of everyone we contacted, which was highly appreciated. The replies proved to be helpful to our questions. In the rest of the term, we did not encounter further situations during which we utilised the Advisory Body. Nonetheless, we are convinced that the Advisory Body, especially the section consisting of members of the last few International Boards, is an asset to ELSA in its current form, especially in high-pressure situations or during the beginning of the term where many questions may arise. One thing that was discussed a lot during both the term and during Transition was the splitting of the Advisory Body into sections consisting of experts in useful fields (Data Privacy, Dutch Association Law, Accounting, etc.) to give specific advice related to their area of expertise and a section consisting of previous International Board members to give ELSA related advice. While all of us agreed that having such a structure would be beneficial, acknowledging that treating all members of the Advisor Body equally is not the most efficient way to proceed, and we found a plethora of fields ELSA could use support in, the finding of interested experts proved difficult. If the improvement of the Advisory Board is a future goal, it is our opinion that this is the way to proceed.

Board Reform

The last years in ELSA have been shaped by Board Reform, leading to multiple proposals, both successful and unsuccessful. It was clear to us that our term was not the term to push for another large regulatory reform, instead focussing on the implementation of the approved changes in the most efficient ways.

Linnéa was the first ever Vice President for Competitions, being put in charge both of the Helga Pedersen Moot Court Competition and the John H. Jackson Moot Court Competition, as well as the coordination of other Competitions in the Network. This challenge was made even more demanding by the fact that she was the first Head of Organisation of the Moot Courts that had to organise both in-person Regional Rounds and Final Rounds since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The workload was considerable, leading to limited time to dedicate to the other competitions in the Network, but the two flagship projects were organised successfully, proving that it is possible for one person to organise both. However, we want to underline that both an experienced Vice President and two dedicated EITs are necessary to make these projects a success.

Jean was the first Vice President in charge of Academic Activities that was not in charge of organising the Helga Pedersen Moot Court Competition since it was moved under Academic Activities for the term 2018/2019, allowing him to dedicate himself more to the remaining projects in the area of Academic Activities. We were able to secure grant funding for a Training Conference under the broader Rule of Law Education Programme (ROLE). This Training provided members with the skills to facilitate sessions that engage high school pupils in empowerment, active citizenship, and systemic fairness and honesty through the rule of law. In line with this development, the International Council adopted a proposal to make the definition of Academic Activities fit better to the current purpose of the area and to clarify its relation to Seminars and Conferences.

Leia continued working on establishing the Professional Development area by developing new Professional Development projects, namely Career Launch and Legal Tandem, and by involving the Network in the creation of documents to expand the knowledge of Officers about Professional Development projects. She also worked on the balance of these with ELSA Traineeships and the link between the two parts of this area. She also worked on a lot of improvements regarding ELSA Traineeships to adapt it to the new reality this project is facing in the Professional Development area, being no longer the only focus of the Vice President in charge of STEP, but being one of the multiple projects that the Vice President in charge of Professional Development is working on.

Secretariat Reform

Both the benefits and the financial unfeasibility of having a professional secretariat remain the same after this year.

We seriously considered and investigated applying for Erasmus project grants which would allow us to instal a professional secretariat but ended up making the decision not to apply. As a successful application would have caused a considerable restructuring of ELSA on an international level, focussing a lot of efforts towards the completion of the grant objectives, we did not feel comfortable applying without a foundational discussion with the Council. As project grants are also limited in time, there would be a considerable amount of instability inserted into the financial situation of ELSA. An increase of ELSA's budget by tens to hundreds of thousands of Euros hinging on a temporally limited project grant, with no certainty that ELSA would be able to get similar funding in the future, would create substantial problems.

Annual ELSA Cycle of Meetings

Our term was the first since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic with all in-person Internal Meetings actually being organised physically, posing a significant challenge not only for us as an International Board but also primarily for the organising groups. A lot of knowledge was lost

during the pandemic, as large-scale events could not be organised and experienced Officers moved on from ELSA to the professional world. We hosted the first in-person International Strategy Meeting, immediately utilising this great opportunity to work on the creation of the next Strategic Plan. The lack of structure to rely on was apparent to us while preparing the ISM, and it will be interesting to see how the coming International Boards adapt to this, as they will also face a different ISM than we did, seeing as the next editions will be greatly focussed on implementation and not the creation of strategic goals.

Our term also saw the first International Training Meeting in a post-pandemic world, making it the only online Internal Meeting in a term full of in-person events. The event had high accessibility due to a low barrier of entry, but at times also a very low level of engagement.

Due to the pandemic, a realistic evaluation of the new cycle of meetings has been considerably slowed down but we rest assured that the following International Boards will follow up on this integral part of ELSA.

A Living Vision

Refocus

The Rule of Law Education Programme (ROLE) is one of the youngest projects within ELSA. The Rule of Law paves the way for a society that respects human rights. As a concept, it often seems abstract and dusty and may be misunderstood as a result. Thus, law students have a responsibility to put their knowledge to good use and outline the importance of the rule of law in their society. During this term, different National Groups worked on the implementation of ROLE. On the International Level, a supportive Conference was organised to provide knowledge and skills training to National and Local Officers for a better implementation of ROLE. During Internal Meetings, the International Council adopted a proposal to define ROLE, as well as its structure and responsibilities that are linked to it.

To have a more thorough dedication to Human Rights, ELSA has established its Annual Human Rights Campaign around the traditional ELSA Day in recent years. To improve the communication and structure of this Campaign, the International Council adopted a proposal to update and specify different aspects such as its duration, its forms and documents, its competition, and responsibilities that are linked to the Campaign. As per usual, with the strong relationship with the Council of Europe, experts were consulted in choosing a fitting topic for the next Annual Human Rights Campaign, Corruption and Human Rights.

For the International Focus Programme (IFP) on Law and Sustainability, Dora and Jean have published an IFP Outline. To commit to the importance of this topic, Jean established an International Legal Research Group (ILRG) in partnership with the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy. This ILRG should identify the legal tools across Europe that accommodate sustainable transitions and what role these tools play in regard to human rights, economy and climate justice, for example.

Finally, we were able to start a collaboration with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), having them present at the International Strategy Meeting, and we are in the process of discussing if and how further cooperation between ELSA and FRA could function. ELSA also started cooperating with United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), which is a partner which has a lot of potential to be useful in increasing the knowledge and interest in all things related to Human Rights and the Rule of Law in ELSA.

Speak Out

The International Strategy Meeting served different purposes. One of these purposes was to accommodate extensive discussions among Officers from different corners of the Network on advocacy and non-politicalness in relation to ELSA. The findings of these discussions were that non-politicalness is a dynamic concept. Rather than further defining or rewriting this concept in ELSA's regulations, Officers concluded that the approach to non-politicalness and advocacy should be approached structurally within the Association. Additionally, Officers concluded that the lack of such a structure thus far does not obstruct speaking out on social topics that relate to ELSA's nature altogether. On the contrary, the International Council subsequently adopted a proposal to encourage speaking out on topics relating to human rights and the rule of law from a strictly legal, academic, fact-based, and impartial approach.

In order to foster advocacy within ELSA, we had to evaluate the advocacy potential of each project. ELSA Delegations is one of the advocating tools we have used in the past to share our values and represent ELSA.

Experience and knowledge of the ELSA Delegations Team ensured the further growth of the project and particularly the quality of the participation in ELSA Delegations. First and foremost, the Reports of ELSA Delegates we receive are now unified, which will ease archiving data about ELSA's activity, e.g., potentially giving statements or organising side events. Further, the creation of the coherent structure and practice was also applied to the academic preparation of ELSA Delegates, and the Coordinators for ELSA Delegations dedicated time to encourage active participation and higher engagement in side events.

Lastly, in November 2022, we witnessed a milestone in ELSA's Climate advocacy. During COP27 at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, ELSA was admitted as an Observer to UNFCCC by the Conference of the Parties. This outstanding accomplishment will bring ELSA closer to key meetings, sessions, and side events at future Conferences of the Parties and also to different UNFCCC events that carry so many chances to advocate. It is an opportunity that allows us, as law students and young lawyers, to advocate and emphasise the importance of legal education when addressing climate change. Furthermore, our members and alumni are gaining such an exceptional experience and are able to contribute to international climate negotiations and voice their perspectives and concerns.

In conclusion, we encourage Officers to continue developing great advocacy potential within ELSA Delegations.

Continuity

We introduced the ELSA Awards to celebrate the outstanding achievements of Officers in our Network. The first edition of the ELSA Skills Academy has also been held, involving our International Trainers' Pool (ITP) Trainers in a new way in the training of our Officers by providing multiple soft-skills training sessions enabling the participants to not just learn new skills for ELSA but also for their future after ELSA, additionally earning a certificate for their successful completion of the ELSA Skills Academy.

The relationship with ELSA Alumni was improved, and an agreement was reached to formally clarify both any intellectual property questions and the scope of the cooperation on the ROLE project. This will help stabilise the project and prevent future issues that could have appeared with ROLE expanding in numerous participating ELSA Groups and funding.

While law firms are the most relevant source of cooperation and support for most Local and National Groups, ELSA on an international level has struggled to cooperate with such firms for general partnerships, usually being outcompeted by its very competent and attractive Local and National Groups. Instead, such partnerships were limited to projects, specifically the John H Jackson Moot Court Competition. While we were able to expand the already impressive list of JHJMCC partners with Lee&Ko this year, geographically diversifying the partners to include a region with growth potential, we were sadly unable to attain similar partnerships for the Helga Pedersen Moot Court Competition. While our requests usually garnered some initial interest, they ended up not materialising for a plethora of reasons. We are convinced that the concept of "JHJ-style" partnerships will still be a success and a necessary step towards greater financial stability for the HPMCC and its Regional Rounds. As per the important relationship with the Council of Europe, we sought out and were given their approval to pursue these kinds of partnerships, and we

encourage future International Boards to continue the work and look for future commercial partners. We were able to reach a cooperation with Arendt& Medernach, Luxembourg's leading business law firm, for general cooperation, with a special focus on the area of Professional Development. The foundation of this collaboration is a deep understanding of the wants and needs of both Arendt and ELSA and we hope that the cooperation proves fruitful for both parties in the future for many years to come.

After a visit to the first Annual Conference of the European Commission Legal Service, ELSA was able to clarify the areas of cooperation with the EU Commission Legal Service this year, building upon work done by our predecessors. We believe that the EU Commission Legal Service and ELSA are predestined to be successful partners and look forward to what the future boards will come up with in implementing the ideas agreed upon during our term.

An engaging Association

Member Value

A lot of work had already been done on this goal in the past term, creating and offering member benefits, as well as discussions on both a membership application and a membership card. While the membership application was further pursued during our term, we were not able to successfully implement it. The proceeding regarding the application was discussed in-depth with the Network during an open call, and both the Officers present at the open call and the International Board agreed that the conditions under which this partnership was supposed to materialise were not favourable to ELSA. Our Association has historically struggled with IT infrastructure, with the current infrastructure being outdated. Implementing an app requires a combination of financial resources, commitment, and expertise which we do not think ELSA is able to produce. We do not recommend that a membership application is further prioritised, instead focusing on the general website of ELSA.

Regarding member benefits, this term served to let the Network get familiar with the many offers and discounts that were secured by our predecessors. The year showed that ELSA's members were mainly interested in a very specific section of the member benefits, being those that most closely relate to either ELSA's projects (for example accommodation and travel discounts to enable cheaper participation in Traineeships or Conferences) or legal studies (for example professional data privacy courses and scholarships). We were able to conclude cooperation agreements with the International Association of Young Lawyers (AIJA) and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), both of which included free attendance to interesting events for our members. We were also able to come to an

informal agreement with an international insurance provider who will hopefully be able to provide discounted insurance for ELSA members. For the future, we suggest focusing on similar types of member benefits, while turning away from the less relevant benefits to ensure that the portfolio remains as attractive as possible.

Community

During this term, efforts were made to ensure the fulfilment of this goal. Marketing materials created for and together with international partners have followed suitable branding, through the consistent usage of similar templates for content. At the same time, there has been a focus on making ELSA and its activities understandable for all members and externals by facilitation or clarification meetings.

This last year, multiple events across the Network were organised on a regional level such as two European Regional Rounds of the John H. Jackson Moot Court Competitions (Salzburg and Brno), three Regional Rounds of the Helga Pedersen Moot Court Competition (Birmingham, Maastricht and Tbilisi), an International Strategy Meeting (Prague) and two International Council Meetings (Dubrovnik and Malta).

The brand of ELSA was carefully applied as it was, and further developed in alignment with its international and professional character. Furthermore, the brand was extensively discussed with the Network, on multiple levels, in order to assess the satisfaction of the Officers. The current status of the brand ensures a clear and easy-to-understand image of the activities and vision of the Association, making it comprehensible for all the stakeholders. To achieve a unified image of ELSA, Canva templates were introduced this year, in addition to the Photoshop templates already provided in the past. By including Canva format templates in the marketing materials, compliance with the brands of ELSA was strengthened and adherence to the provided templates has notably increased.

In line with the established goals, three Public Relations Strategies were developed and published this year — in November, March and July. These can be found in the Officers' Portal, under the Marketing area, and consist of structured guidelines for the Network on how to conduct its PR.

Retain Talent

This year, we focussed on raising awareness of Le Cercle among both active ELSA members and alumni as a way for members to contribute to ELSA after their time as active Officers.

The Mentorship Programme established by ELSA Alumni serves as a great opportunity for ELSA members and recent alumni to benefit from the knowledge present within our alumni network. We encouraged our Members to become active alumni by having ELSA Alumni present at both of our International Council Meetings.

Strategic Plan 2023-2028

One last point to mention in this report is the relationship between the old goals and the new ones. While it is normal to not achieve all goals set out in a Strategic Plan, we do think that the plan that has accompanied ELSA in the last few years has faced a special set of challenges. When the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 was being discussed, the idea of a global pandemic effectively shutting down not only any international travel, but even the gathering of medium-sized groups, was completely unimaginable. Due to the pandemic, we had to cancel Internal Meetings and Law Schools, move ELSA completely online, participate in online ELSA Delegations, stay academically ambitious through online Webinar Academies, compete in online Moot Court rounds, and stay in contact with our ELSA friends who all of a sudden felt so unimaginably far away in online socials. During the final days of the ICM Malta, during which we voted on the new Strategic Plan 2023-2028, we started considering if the extension of the Strategic Plan for an additional two years, to make up for the Covid years, would not have been the better solution. It would have certainly been an easier solution. What happened instead was that some of the goals ended up finding a new home in the Strategic Plan 2023-2028, which allows us to continue striving towards some of the goals which had not been completed, while still allowing ELSA to shift focus towards new, additional goals as well.