

How to approach and what to prepare

External Relations - Chapter 4
BEE Tutorials

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So...

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**You know the needs
of your Group? Yes.**

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**You did your research
on who to contact?**

Yes.

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**You have an idea of
what to offer for the
support you need?**

Yes.

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**Now it is time to start
the contact. But how?**

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How to approach an external?

The approach part is a difficult one, specially in big organisations where the normal contact emails that are provided are not responsible for making decisions.

This is why the approach normally takes longer than we would like to or, in the worst case scenario doesn't develop to the negotiation phase.

Nevertheless, there are some tips that can be given in order to make your approach more efficient.

1) Do you know someone there?

The first tip is related still to the research phase. A good element to take into account when researching an organisation is to try to understand who works there.

For this purpose, knowing your alumni and where their professional lives took them is a good start. Also, LinkedIn is your friend. There, you can try to understand if any of the people working in the organisation are acquainted with ELSA. If so, it is an easier way in!

How to approach an external?

2) Start small, then expand

Sometimes smaller is better. For that reason, if you want to start a more complex relationship with an organisation (ex. a general partnership), maybe you can start smaller by inviting one of that organisation's members to be a speaker or panelist of your events.

This way, you contact directly that member and, if everything goes well, you just got a contact person in there that can help you expand the relationship. Thinking on the long-term is sometimes more effective than looking for immediate results.

3) Know your way through the general emails

If you conclude that the general emails are the way to go, then choose them carefully. Normally organisations have different kind of general emails (ex. Human resources, pro bono, marketing) so it is important for you to choose the one that best fits your initial proposal.

If you wish a partnership for ELSA Traineeships, then most likely the choice to go is human resources or recruitment. So, look into the website of the organisation, its departments and choose the one that makes the most sense for you.

How to draft the first email



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Drafting the first email

After selecting your target, then you need to write your first email. Here, everyone has their own style of writing as well as the typical rules of cordiality that are used within each country.

Nevertheless, some general rules can be followed in order to make your first presentation more appealing:

1) Sometimes less is more

Do not make your email an essay. There is (in general) no need. It is better to keep your text concise and straight to the point so that whoever reads it easily understands the purpose of the contact.

2) Watch out for the formalities

In some countries or when addressing some individuals, formalities are important. Be aware of them and respect them as addressing someone in a way that is not expected may be seen as rude and ruin the contact

3) State your purpose

In the first few lines of your email you need to say what you want, as those first few lines will determine the interest of the reader in what you are sending. Ensure that they understand the purpose of your message

Drafting the first email

4) Explain why you are contacting that organisation

Besides stating your purpose, it is important for you to explain to the reader “why us?”. So, you need to explain why you are contacting that organisation for the purpose you identified and how both parties may get benefits from cooperation.

This not only shows that you studied the contact and are interested in mutual assistance (again, salesman approach), but it also gives you a personalised approach to the partner which is always appreciated.

5) Attachments

In order to keep emails short, sometimes you need to send explanatory materials as attachments (more on that later). Nevertheless, don't overdo it. Send one or two short attachments in case the reader wants to know more but that is it.

6) The subject of the e-mail

Don't make it too long and don't make it too short. Make it in a way that illustrates clearly the content. Something in the lines of “Invitation to speak at X” or “Partnership proposal regarding traineeship opportunities for law students” are good starters.

The structure

Concretely, regarding the structure, here are a few tips.

Each email should follow these main sections:

- Introduction (of yourself and the purpose of the contact);
- Presentation of ELSA (the Association in general and your Group);
- Explain the purpose of the contact and why that organisation;
- Conclusion.

For the introduction, it is important for you to explain who you are and the purpose of the contact in two to three sentences. Something like:

“My name is {insert name here} and I am contacting you as the current President of ELSA Narnia. I am representing the European Law Students’ Association (ELSA) in Narnia with hopes of starting a cooperation with {organisation’s name} in regards to {purpose of the contact}.

Structure - Presentation of ELSA

Then comes the presentation of ELSA, both in general as well as your Group concretely. Here, pay attention to not sell yourself short but also to not project the image of being cocky. Also, avoid making long descriptions. The longer it gets, the less people read. So, take this as a starting point:

“I would first like to introduce ELSA in a few words. ELSA is an association of law students and young lawyers present in 43 countries and in over 400 universities, joining over 60.000 individual members together under the vision of “A just world in which there is respect for human dignity and cultural diversity.

As an international NGO, we focus on contributing to the legal education of our members, as well as to their professional development while also focusing on promoting social responsibility among law students and young lawyers. To that end, we cooperate with organisations such as the Council of Europe, the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations, in order to contribute to our vision and goals.

ELSA Narnia, as a {National/Local} Group of ELSA contributes to these ends by {description of the Group}.

Structure - Purpose of the contact and conclusion

Then, it is time to explain more in-depth the purpose of the contact. Here is the moment to explain the cooperation you are proposing and why you are proposing it to this organisation.

As a rule of thumb, two paragraphs here suffice: one for the in-depth explanation and another one for why it would be appealing to the potential partner.

Of course, if you wish to propose something more elaborate, you may need to add more text, but don't overdo it. Too much text looks boring and people do not read it.

After that comes the conclusion. Here it is important to reiterate the purpose (“With this in mind, we would like to get in touch with you to discuss a potential cooperation between ELSA Narnia and {potential partner} regarding {initiatives described}”).

It is also important to suggest next steps, either a meeting or waiting for their feedback (i.e. “I would be glad to have a meeting with you in order to discuss this more in detail”).

Lastly, if you have materials to send, it would make sense to mention them (i.e. “I am sending you a short description of the project as an attachment to this email”).

Reminders

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What to do when the Partner does not respond?

It is frequent for the emails you send to not have a quick response. In those cases, it is good to think about sending a reminder.

Here, a good rule of thumb is to not send it too close to the original email (to not look too persistent) but also to not send it too long after, or else you will be forgotten. Ideally, one to two weeks after the first contact is a good start.

When it comes to frequency, one or two reminders are good to go. After that, it is suggested that you either try to find a different contact person within the organisation, or leave it all together.

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Structure

Reminder emails can be quite simple. One good way of doing them is to reply to the first email you sent with a small question regarding if the person had had time to look into your original email. Something like this is a good starting point:

“Dear X,

I hope this email finds you well.

I am contacting you to ask you if you have had the opportunity to look into my previous email. It would be our pleasure to cooperate with you in the future.

If you have any questions, I am at your disposal.”

The logo for the European Law Students' Association (elsa) features the word "elsa" in a white, lowercase, serif font. The letters are closely spaced, with the 'e' and 'l' being particularly prominent.

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Materials to prepare



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What to prepare

When presenting yourself to a potential partner, it is good to have some materials ready. These can be used to present ELSA and/or its projects, as well as presenting the proposal that you are offering.

With that in mind, it is recommended for you to have a general booklet that can serve as a presentation of ELSA, your Group, as well as the activities you develop.

After this one, you can also make smaller presentations that are project-oriented, in case you are trying to get partners for a specific project.

In terms of content, here are a few things to take into consideration when creating these materials:

- Present ELSA and your Group (Philosophy Statement, Fields of Activities, partners, main projects and where we are present)
- Present your projects in a more detailed way than in your email (phases, statistics, average number of participants);
- Present what you are looking for in terms of a partnership (potentially adding the partner packages at the end);
- Present the team (your Board and potentially your Local/National Team)

Lesson 4 done!

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