

STRATEGIC PLANNING HANDBOOK

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elsa

The European Law Students' Association

STRATEGIC PLANNING HANDBOOK

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I. FOREWORD

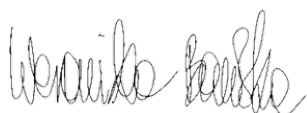
Dear Officers,

At the beginning of any organisation's existence, there is an idea. A vision of what we want to do and how it may appear. Gradually, the vision turns into structure and action plans since, without specifying the vision, setting priorities, and selecting appropriate resources, it is impossible to effectively achieve the assumed goals. Moreover, without systematic evaluation and readiness to introduce changes, there is no possibility of development. However, the dynamically changing reality requires us not only to plan but also to predict the effects, analyse risks, and consider the influence of external factors. And so, the plans turn into a strategy that is like a living organism. But how to do it and where to start?

We are pleased to present you with a compendium of knowledge about strategic planning which, we hope, will help you take your first steps in creating a strategy for your organisation. You will find here the characteristics of the processes taking place at each stage of strategy development, methods of carrying them out, practical tips and advice. In this document, we try to show you not only how to develop a "Strategic Goals of XYZ" but, most of all, how to think about strategic planning in your organisation, what to consider, where to begin and what to focus on. The development of such skills is useful not only for the Officer of ELSA but in fact for every person, both in professional and private life.

Finally, we would like to assure you that the content and methods presented below are not the only ones known and used. Strategic planning is a field of science that is constantly evolving. Moreover, the final selection of resources is strictly dependent on the type of organisation and the goals set. We consider those that we have decided to include here to be one of the most effective and appropriate for associations such as ELSA but there is nothing to prevent you from deepening your knowledge and being equipped with new experiences, to consciously make your own choices.

We wish you a pleasant reading and many successes on your "strategic" paths,



Weronika Bańska
President of the International Board
2020/2021



Francisco Arga e Lima
President of the International Board
2021/2022

II. BASIC DEFINITIONS

1. STRATEGIC PLANNING

There is no single definition of strategic planning, as both literature and field experts attach different importance to different elements. Simply put, it can be said that **strategic planning is the process of documenting and establishing the direction of your organisation — by assessing both where you are and where you're going.** Thanks to it, you have a place to record your:

- vision and mission,
- values,
- long-term goals, and
- action plans.

In a more detailed description, it can be concluded that **strategic planning is an organisational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that members and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes/results, as well as assess and adjust the organisation's direction in response to a changing environment.** It is a disciplined effort that produces fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide:

- what an organisation is,
- who it serves,
- what it does, and
- why it does it, with a focus on the future.

Effective strategic planning articulates not only where an organisation is going and the actions needed to make progress, but also how it will know if it is successful.

Translating the above into the reality of our Association, it should be stated that strategic planning is **a general task** that corresponds to an appropriate degree to each level of ELSA's activity. Local and National Groups, as well as the International Board of ELSA, are committed to working together to define priorities and implement the necessary measures for the development of the organisation as a whole. Moreover, strategic planning refers to each of the elements of the organisational structure individually to ensure their sustainable development, considering their local and/or national conditions. This applies not only to project activities, but also to the issues of financial management, human resources management, the image of the organisation, internal and external communication, and many others. Therefore, the involvement of representatives of all areas is essential.

2. PLANNING VS STRATEGY

Planning is “**Thinking before the action takes place**”. It encompasses deciding beforehand the what, when and how the task is to be accomplished. It is not exactly the same as **strategy**, which is nothing but “**a comprehensive plan.**”. The strategy is all about using a trick to achieve a particular purpose. It is the skill of managing the affairs of the organisation.

Planning is an **organised process of thinking in advance about a future action**. It is among the five management functions apart from organising, controlling, motivating & leading and decision making. It requires good judgment skills for choosing which action is to be done earlier or later to avoid overlapping. Planning needs **goal setting** and finally deciding which course of action will lead to your destination successfully. Moreover, planning shall be **flexible in nature** so that any change can be done if required by the organisation.

The strategy is a master game plan designed for achieving the objectives of an organisation. It is a mix of competitive moves and actions made by the top-level management for the accomplishment of goals successfully. They are **dynamic and flexible in nature**. Strategies are based on **practical experiences**, not on theoretical knowledge, i.e., they are **realistic and action-oriented activities**. It requires deep analysis of the executives on any move or action, implementation timing, the sequence of actions, outcome, reactions of competitors, etc. Strategies are made **according to the present situations and conditions** prevalent in the specific environment, but it can't be said that they are perfect because of the changing needs and demands of the people, strategies may fail.

Therefore, **planning is a forethought of what is to be done in future**, but **strategy is a blueprint of what you want to be and where you want to be**. Both planning and strategy are made by the top-level executives as they know the mission and vision of the organisation clearly, so they will make their plans and strategies to take a step forward towards their mission and vision. Planning is preventive in nature whereas strategy is quite competitive. Nevertheless, both aim at the optimum utilisation of scarce resources.

BASIS FOR COMPARISON	PLANNING	STRATEGY
Meaning	Planning is thinking in advance about the actions which are going to take place in the future.	The best plan opted for achieving the desired outcome.
What is it?	Planning is a roadmap for accomplishing any task	Strategy is a path chosen for achieving the objectives.
Related to	Thinking	Action
Basis	Assumptions	Practical considerations
Term	Depending upon the circumstances	Long term
Nature	Preventive	Competitive
Part of management functions	Yes	Sub-part of decision making

3. STRATEGIC PLAN

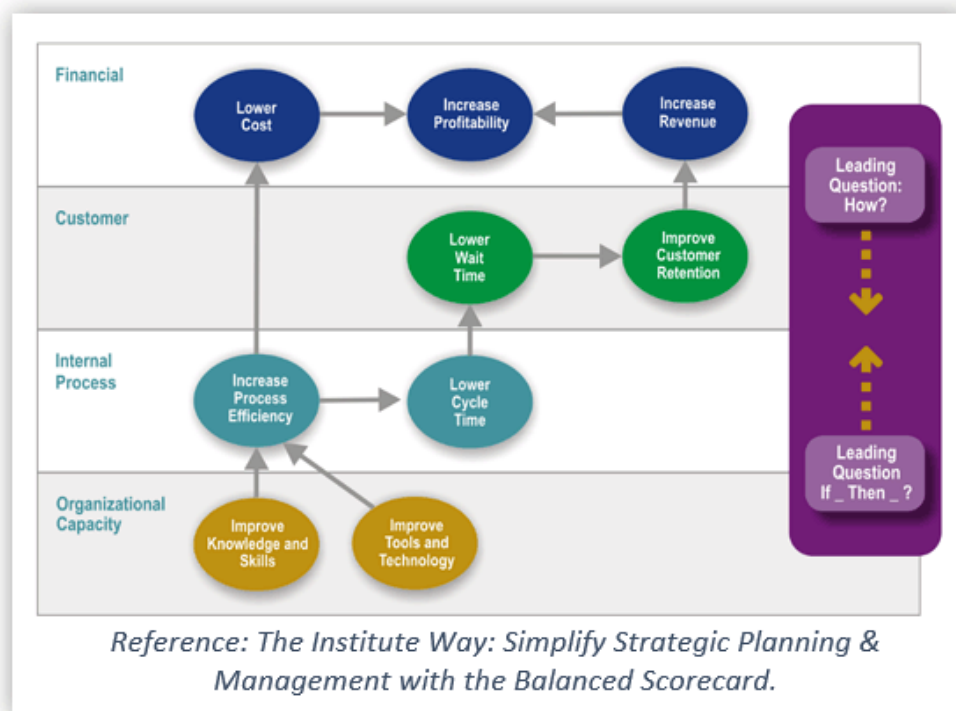
Considering the abovementioned, a strategic plan is **a document used to communicate** the organisation's goals, the actions needed to achieve them and all the other critical elements developed during the strategic planning exercise. It is **a result of your actions**, not the focus.

4. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Strategic management is **the comprehensive collection of ongoing activities and processes** that organisations use to systematically coordinate and align resources and actions with mission, vision and strategy. Strategic management activities **transform the static plan into a system** that provides strategic performance feedback to decision-making and enables the plan to evolve and grow as requirements and other circumstances change.

5. STRATEGY MAP

A strategy map is **a simple graphic** that shows **a logical, cause-and-effect connection** between strategic objectives (shown as ovals on the map). It can vastly improve any strategy communication effort. Most people are visual learners and so a picture of your strategy will be understood by many more Officers than a written narrative. Plus, the process of developing a strategy map forces the team to agree on what they are trying to accomplish in simple, easy-to-understand terms. With a well-designed strategy map, every Officer can see how they contribute to the achievement of the organisation's objectives.



The example above demonstrates how a business might organise its strategic objectives across the four perspectives. Arrows are used to illustrate the cause-and-effect relationship between the objectives. **By following the path of the arrows, you can see how the objectives in the lower perspectives drive the success of the higher ones.** Like the example above, most for-profit companies put the financial perspective on top because their end goal is to generate more profit. For public sector organisations, however, finances are more of a means to an end. Since a government or nonprofit's final goal is to provide the best services it can, it is common for them to switch the top perspectives so that the customer/stakeholder/member is on top.

III. WHY SHOULD WE DRAW OUR ATTENTION TO STRATEGIC PLANNING?

1. NEW, INNOVATIVE IDEAS

The strategic planning process should involve **all Officers**. Many people are involved in the day-to-day activities and can provide you with **a unique view of the organisation**. They can share with you what they think is and isn't working with the Association today, which should influence your planning for the future. In addition to the Officers of your National or Local Group, it's beneficial to reach out to **externals** to get their opinions as they also have a unique perspective on your activity. Such discussions shall encourage new ideas and thoughts because it's the only way for an organisation to develop.

2. INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

Involving your Officers in the strategic planning process also means they receive **a sense of accountability** that can increase productivity. Whether they contributed to the process or were just informed of the organisation's goals and objectives after the strategic plan was created, they'll be **more likely to want to help you** achieve those targets. There is nothing more beneficial for strengthening a community than boosting a sense of belonging and joint efforts.

3. IDENTIFIED STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

As part of the strategic planning process, you'll **examine and analyse your entire activity**. You'll take a look at what your Local/National Group does well and the areas where it still needs to improve. By identifying your current strengths and weaknesses, the process gives you and your Officers **an opportunity to improve in the future** and become a durable organisation by minimising risks.

4. CLEAR DIRECTION AND PROACTIVE ENVIRONMENT

By the end of the strategic planning process, you should have **a clear direction** of where you want the organisation to go in the future. These discussions and the planning process itself help put the organisation in the best position to succeed in the future. You naturally find time **to figure out how to grow** over the next few years and how **to address new opportunities and challenges** that appear all the time. It's a moment when you dedicate yourself to long-term action, overall responsibilities that are often neglected in our Association.

IV. STRATEGIC PLANNING MISCONCEPTIONS

Unfortunately, it is a quite common opinion that strategic planning is complicated, inefficient, or hard to manage. Many doubts have their roots in a wrong understanding of the process or its phases. Therefore, we have decided to clarify the most “popular” misconceptions.

“We are local Officers so it’s not our task to do”

Regardless of the size of your organisation, a strategic plan is beneficial. It helps you make sure the organisation is headed in the right direction. Strategic planning does not belong to the National Board or ELSA International only. We should have multiple strategies adopted on different levels of the organisation. All coherent but still various based on local or national circumstances.

“How do I know that my decisions are right? It’s too much of a risk, it can destroy the organisation.”

The beginning phases of strategic planning focus on research and discussions. The decisions you make during strategic planning aren’t based on assumptions but on research and information you’ve gathered while talking with your Officers, members, partners etc.

“If I make a decision based only on practical experience and logic, where will I find the space for innovations?”

The process doesn’t exclude creativity either. When you meet with your team for strategic planning, you’re asking everyone to have a discussion and brainstorm ideas. The strategic planning process puts everyone’s minds together to think of creative ideas. In fact, that’s the best way to implement innovative ideas.

“This process is too complicated. I have neither the knowledge nor the skills to go through it.”

The strategic planning process may seem daunting at first, but when you understand what’s involved and how to do it, it’s not that complicated. It takes time, but the amount you invest in the process pays off when everyone in your organisation works toward accomplishing the goals and objectives you’ve laid out. Additionally, there are multiple sources where you can find easily understandable explanations or practical support throughout training or mentoring.

“Strategic planning was the focus of my predecessors. Now, as we have our Strategic Goals, I don’t have to worry about it.”

If you go through the strategic planning process once, don’t think you won’t have to do it again. The strategic plan is a living document - it should change over time. It’s not uncommon to create a strategic plan and revisit the document. Reviewing and evaluating your strategic plan regularly will help to keep you accountable and on track to achieve your goals and objectives.

V. STRATEGIC PLANNING AS A PROCESS

At the outset, it should be emphasized once again that strategic planning is not only about the creation of a document containing the goals and methods of operation of the organisation for the coming years. This is the entire analytical process that results in the document. The work of people dealing with strategy begins much earlier, at the stage of research and characterisation of the current positioning of the organisation in various aspects. These activities are extremely important, even more important than building the strategy itself, since the mistakes committed

at that moment will significantly affect the value of the entire process potentially leading to a breakdown in the development of the organisation.

Therefore, you will find below a brief outline of the thought flow that is universal for any strategic planning process. These are obligatory considerations because without these conclusions there is no strategy.

1. ROLE OF THE VISION AND MISSION

Every well-structured organisation has **a vision and mission**, and ELSA is no exception. There is, however, a problem with distinguishing the two concepts, which are often used interchangeably when in fact referring to completely different topics.

A vision is always about the future, **it focuses on tomorrow**. It is a place where **the goals and aspirations** of the organisation are indicated, as well as **the values** that it wants to implement in the world. It is an expression of **striving for something**. The vision is characterised by questions such as:

- What are our hopes and dreams?
- What problem are we solving for the greater good?
- Who and what are we inspiring to change?

Visions are usually created to **a relatively high degree of generality**; they are often the idea behind a specific activity, but everything depends on the type of organisation and assumptions of the people who create it. The vision of a company looks different than that of a non-governmental organisation.

Examples:

- *Amnesty International*

Amnesty International's vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

- *Amazon*

To be Earth's most customer-centric company, where customers can find and discover anything they might want to buy online.

- *TED*

We believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and, ultimately, the world.

In the case of ELSA, it is of course "*A just world in which there is a respect for human dignity and cultural diversity*". Our motto, driving force and goal to achieve at the same time. The Association will fulfil its role when we all live in this kind of world, but before we can achieve it, we must work for the appropriate changes.

A mission, on the other hand, **relates to the present**, the current activities of the organisation. Describes **the purpose and the primary objectives** of its implementation. Its task is to communicate to recipients easily what they can expect from the activity of a given entity. This is the answer to the questions:

- What do we do?
- Whom do we serve?
- How do we serve them?

The mission is generally **more specific and closely related to the vision**, indicating what the organisation does daily to achieve the vision.

Examples:

- *Amnesty International*

In pursuit of this vision, Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of these rights.

- *Amazon*

We strive to offer our customers the lowest possible prices, the best available selection, and the utmost convenience.

- *TED*

Spread ideas.

At first glance, ELSA does not have a mission. However, this is a wrong assumption, as our Philosophy Statement characterizes the mission of the Association, although without the use of this term. In the Statutes, you will find "Purpose" and "Means". It is clear from them that this organisation on a daily basis "contributes to legal education, fosters mutual understanding and promotes social responsibility." Means are a more accurate description of the steps we take to achieve our vision.

It is necessary to remember that in any strategic planning process, **we should start by outlining the vision and mission**. Regardless of whether we are planning a complete change of the type of activity, or it is just another strategy of one and the same organisation, reference to the vision and mission must take place. In this way, we set **the main direction for further work**. We need to know what we are striving for and how, in general, we want to achieve it. Working on the vision and mission of our strategy also requires **an in-depth analysis of the market** in which we operate and **the reality that surrounds us**, because the goal of each organisation is to stand out and ensure a specific change in the world. Referring to the example of ELSA, the obligation to establish the mission and vision should not be neglected either. If we work on the development strategies of National or Local Groups, it is necessary to take into account the vision and mission of the Association, but this does not prevent us from developing our own, more individual concepts adjusted to national or local conditions.

When creating your own visions and missions, you can use the following formulas:

Vision

Our vision is a *(community/world)* where *(you no longer have the problem that your association fixes)*.

Mission

Our mission is to *(verb)* *(your audience)* by *(actions you want to accomplish)*.

The table below presents the basic characteristics of a well-structured vision and mission.

VISION	MISSION
Explains your “why” – proves that you have a reason to act	Makes you stand out of the crowd – describes your unique proposition
Justifies your purpose – everyone can see a meaning behind your actions	Encourages people to join – it's interesting and appealing

Translates your values – describes what is important for your organisation	Clarifies your goals – inform the audience about the actions you take
Refers to behaviour – set of actions linked to a set of values	Presents your “winning idea” – general idea of what your success looks like
Both concepts should be concise, simple, inspirational and clear.	

2. ANSWERING THE NEEDS, NOT THE WANTS

The second important thought process leading to the creation of an effective strategy, apart from establishing a vision and mission, is **recognising the needs of the target audience**. However, it is necessary to distinguish the needs from what our recipients want, because it is precisely responding to the needs that brings the best results.

The classic way of obtaining information about what we expect from an organisation and its environment is **to conduct market research**. By means of various methods, e.g. surveys, interviews and discussion groups, we check **what is in the area of interest** of entities related to our organisation, what they like, what they want, how they see the future. The scope of the study depends on an individual decision of the people working on the strategy and is related to the choice of the type of strategy as well as the vision and mission. Once the results are obtained, it seems natural to develop a strategy based on them, which is true but does not convey the full picture. These **results should be analysed** and the factors influencing them should be considered. Simply put, ask yourself **"why did the audience give such answers?"**

At this stage, it is helpful to explain the difference between what people want (“wants”) and what they need (“needs”). **Wants** refer to wishes, something we **desire to possess or do**. **Needs**, on the other hand, define **the elements essential for us** for various reasons, the lack of which we significantly feel. This type of reasoning in a strategic planning perspective leads to key conclusions. If people know that you are aware of what they want, they expect you **to conform to this "wish list"**. Expectations appear naturally, they are often contradictory, impossible to meet at the same time, and thus easy to fail. In the case of needs, however, the opposite happens. If people know that you treat them well, considering their needs, they will be motivated **to give you what they have best in return**. In this way, from the psychological point of view, a sense of belonging and group identity is created, which are the best fuel for the development of any organisation.

Therefore, when analysing the results of market research, you should consider **whether what our recipients want is what they need**. This can be done with a simple chain of **"but why?" questions**, which usually get us to the heart of the problem. These activities often lead to the conclusion that there is a significant difference between "wants" and "needs" and this is another key moment in strategic planning. It requires you to have the courage to make a decision that may result in including in the strategy something seemingly unrelated to the expectations presented or even being the opposite of them. This may lead to doubt and misunderstanding at first, resulting in resistance, but this is the task of properly communicating the strategy. It is necessary to convince all interested parties to this idea, and this can be done mainly by demonstrating the rightness of such action, because the long-term positive effects are worth "enduring" the initial difficulties. Moreover, wants can easily change when the needs are usually

more stable and predictable. Thus, if you create a strategy based on needs, there is a bigger chance for it to be successful and to avoid frequent amendments.

In addition, as Officers of the Association, you take **responsibility for running an organisation** that is closely related to decision-making. You work with your members, different teams, and partners on a daily basis. You have the perspective of both the participant and the organiser. You know the realities of your National or Local Group functioning best of all. In a nutshell - you know what is needed, what is missing and how your organisation can fill these gaps. Therefore, you are entitled to start any activities aimed at helping the organisation, even if its surroundings are not aware of it yet. Looking for a metaphor, this process can be compared to **raising children**, where you play the role of a parent. It is not always possible to fulfil every wish of the child, sometimes it is necessary to refuse it firmly, for its sake, because it is the parent who has life experience and is able to predict the consequences. Therefore, you are to act in such a way that, thanks to your strategy, the organisation, like a child, gains new skills and safely navigates towards adulthood.

3. CREATING A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY

The last and most extensive element is the work on creating a strategy in the form of transforming mission and needs into specific actions within a given time. How to do it step by step is discussed in the next chapter, but here we will mention the basic principles and external factors that must be considered unconditionally.

Each good strategy should comply with the rules of "3 golden C".

- **Clarity**

Even the best ideas will not have a chance to be implemented if they are not effectively developed. Your strategy should be understandable not only to you and other people involved in its creation but above all to third parties. It is necessary to logically divide competencies, establish rules of responsibility for the performance of tasks, and indicate all stages necessary to go through in achieving a given goal. There is no room for shortcuts, understatements or leaving individual tasks in the so-called meantime. Everything must have its time, place, purpose, and method of execution. It is also important to establish a mechanism to check the effectiveness of the strategy. Each action must be evaluated, therefore, already at the stage of creating ideas, it is necessary to consider how the success of a given solution can be measured.

- **Communicate**

Strategic planning is closely related to working on proper communication. At each stage, we process a lot of information and create specific messages. Remember that the strategy is first about listening and then speaking. You need data, research, and feedback. On this basis, you build solutions that you later pass on, convincing others about their rightfulness. And this sequence - we listen first and then speak - cannot under any circumstances be changed because then we would be dealing with one-way planning made by the management and not creating a strategy for the organisation.

- **Cascade**

This principle applies to anticipating the effects of implementing the strategy. It is obvious that executives are responsible for its creation, but its operation will affect all aspects of the organisation's functioning. It is, therefore, necessary to consider cultural, social, and environmental conditions and to adjust solutions to the individual characteristics of the organisation. Acting by analogy or being inspired by the ideas of other entities must be carried out carefully. Strategic planning always takes into account the analysis of the effects, because sometimes individual factors can make the result of our work completely different from the assumed one.

Abiding by the above principles can be problematic at times. It is easy to lose the originally established direction in the course of work, because the intense flow of information, brainstorming sessions and working with people focused on creative thinking and producing a lot of ideas, results in confusion and inability to make choices. The recipe for these difficulties is the mechanism of the strategy's evaluation immediately after its creation. This is an activity that we often forget about. Evaluation is associated with checking the results of implementation after a certain period. However, the strategic planning methodology recommends pre-evaluation to test the logic of planned activities and the reception of the closest target groups. In practice, it is one of the most important activities in the entire strategy development process, which is based on asking 3 key questions.

- **Are people convinced by your suggested direction?**

Strategic planning is not an art for art's sake. All actions assume a positive impact on the activities of the organisation. However, every organisation, and certainly the non-governmental ones, consists primarily of people who create it. You must be sure then that your ideas and the indicated direction of development are accepted by the people who will be affected by these changes. Without support, and general awareness of the rightness of such an action, no strategy achieves success, which is why the appropriate communication described above and relatively quick verification of the recipients' trust in the strategy are so important.

- **Can you measure your predictable impact?**

Each action has its effect, and strategic planning is built on the idea of anticipating maximum benefits and implementing changes to achieve them. If your strategy does not provide you with information on how you can evaluate the gains and losses, it means that your task has not yet been completed. Evaluation modalities are as important to any plan as the specific activities they contain.

- **How is your strategy linked to your values, objectives or vision/mission?**

The strategy is to help with development. Even if it involves a revolution in the minds of recipients, it must be properly grounded in the values represented by a given entity. This type of analysis will let you know if you have managed to stay true to the assumption you made at the beginning. It seems quite obvious, but practice proves that with a whole lot of different ideas and attempts to reconcile the often-conflicting interests of the recipients, it is relatively easy to sail in a different direction. All elements - vision, goals, ways of achieving them and evaluation - must interact with each other and constitute a logical whole.

If after asking these three questions you have no problem with the answers, and your analysis gives positive results, then you have created a good strategy that has a great chance of success, no matter how groundbreaking or controversial it may be.

VI. ON THE WAY TO CREATE A STRATEGY – STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTION

1. ASSESSMENT (WHERE ARE WE?)

It is critical that before an organisation maps out its future there is **some consensus around where things currently stand**. During the Assessment step, an analysis of the current internal and external environments is completed. As part of this step, organisation develops or re-validates high-level strategic elements (e.g., mission, vision, values, market assessments, enablers & challenges, primary and secondary stakeholder needs analysis and others) needed for context in strategy formulation.

What?

- Gather your team and make a detailed analysis of your Local/National Group's activities. Consider all areas, not only Key Areas, but also financial issues, human resources, market positions, external and internal image, quality of communication, relations with partners etc.
- Enable critical thinking! The fact that certain solutions have been functioning for many years does not mean that they are appropriate and help in development. Consider all the advantages and disadvantages, look for even the smallest shortcomings and make two lists: things that need or worth changing, and things that are your benchmark and your greatest pride.
- Don't forget about multiple perspectives. Depending on what strategy you are creating, it is necessary to involve all interested parties in the analysis. Offer such research to your members, partners, University authorities, all students of your faculty, because only in this way will you get a full picture of the situation.
- If you already see possible risks related to introducing changes at the assessment stage, also describe them in detail.

When?

- Remember that assessment is an extremely time-consuming step. If you are planning to create a strategy, try to start as early as possible. You are dependent on the waiting time for the results of the conducted research, and this stage cannot be artificially shortened or accelerated by abandoning the implementation of certain elements. This would adversely affect the sense and quality of further work.

How?

- Adapt the form of collecting information to specific entities.
- Remember that the following rule applies: Any method is right if it is effective.
- Schedule separate strategic meetings for the work of your Board: during regular Board meetings there are many other important topics for discussion. Additional meetings will allow full attention to the strategy and give a clear signal that this is a hugely important issue that cannot be ignored.

- Make a dedicated strategy meeting with partners to discuss their conclusions. E-mails asking for this can be easily ignored or take much longer.
- Schedule discussions on this at all team meetings.
- Create surveys for students who are not your members.

2. CREATING A VISION AND MISSION (WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?)

The outcome of the assessment is a detailed, multi-faceted analysis of the organisation. This is the basic material for building a strategy. Therefore, the knowledge of successes and failures, areas requiring improvement and those that are the greatest asset, now allows us **to define the final goal of the strategy**. It depends directly on the decisions of the team working on the strategy. However, it should **be oriented towards relatively dynamic development and correspond to the needs identified in the assessment**. The strategy must contain both the vision, that is what the organisation is striving for, and the mission, that is, what actions it undertakes to achieve this goal. Work on these elements also becomes the foundation of the strategy evaluation mechanism in terms of its implementation.

What?

- Plan an interactive workshop session for your team based on creative thinking, e.g., using the design thinking method. Try to be as objective as possible and avoid standard solutions.
- Familiarise yourself with the results of the assessment beforehand, as the lack of knowledge will prevent you from correctly completing this task.
- Be sure to consider the ideas of young members, as they are the future of the organisation, who will also be responsible for the implementation of this strategy.
- Remember that as part of the international ELSA Network you cannot go against the vision and mission of the Association as a whole, but that does not mean that every vision and mission is identical to the general one.

When?

- Necessarily after receiving assessment outcomes, otherwise the whole task becomes meaningless.
- Do not assume that one workshop session will provide a satisfactory result at once. Plan your time so that you have room for reflection and return to the discussion, especially if your team is not only working on this task at the time.

How?

- Please, take a look at [point V.1](#) of this Handbook.

3. STRATEGY BUILDING (HOW DO WE GET THERE?)

A. STRATEGIC GOALS

Building on the assessment, organisation formulates/clarifies a strategy. The development of the strategy includes **developing or clarifying your member value proposition** and **decomposing the high-level strategic direction**, meaning vision and mission, **into three to four Strategic Goals** (or Themes). Strategic Goals are those focus areas in which the

organisation must excel in order to fulfill its mission and achieve its vision, given the enablers it can leverage, the challenges it must overcome, and the member value proposition it must deliver upon.

Additionally, **organisations are viewed, internally and externally, through perspectives**, which frame the organisation as a system of defined elements and capabilities that work together. One of the examples are: Financial, Customer/Stakeholder, Internal Process and Organisational Capacity (or Learning and Growth). The perspectives work together **in a series of cause and effect** (or drivers and results), creating value from the internal to the external. When combined, the Strategic Goals and Perspectives frame and **define an integrated strategy**.



What?

- Together with your team, choose 3 to 4 thematic areas on which your strategy will focus, e.g., International engagement, Financial Management, Internal Governance.
- Remember that prioritising is imperative because you can't fix everything at once without compromising quality. Therefore, choose your battles.
- Try to ensure that your Strategic Goals offer benefits in all or most of the perspectives mentioned in the beginning.

When?

- Designation of strategic areas of activity can be done simultaneously with the establishment of the vision and mission, because after completing the first two stages, the general conclusions emerge almost automatically.
- Remember, however, that you can always leave a little more time for the team to reflect so that the decision to prioritise is understood and accepted by all.

How?

- Analyse the list of areas for improvement made during the assessment part and identify those that require the most serious changes.
- Do not be guided solely by the urgency of the problem, as strategy, by definition, involves creating systemic solutions that require time and effort.

- If there are more than 3 to 4 serious structural problems, make your choice again. Remember that new Officers will come after you, who can take the baton from you. Strategy cannot be overloaded.
- Consider the distribution of Strategic Goals between the areas of activity of the Local or National Group, e.g., if you focus only on improving the financial situation while ignoring the problem with human resources, after 3 - 5 years there will be no one to celebrate big money in the bank account.

B. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

In the Strategic Objectives step, the building blocks of strategy are developed. Strategic Objectives are **the linchpins of a successful strategic planning** and management system and are the key to implementing strategy. Objectives are **qualitative, continuous improvement actions (outcomes) critical to strategy success**. Objectives are developed on the strategic goals level first and then merged together to form organisation-level Objectives.

What?

- Divide selected strategic areas into smaller units, within which you will be able to designate specific actions enabling implementation.
- Their number does not matter. However, it is important that their joint implementation achieves a given Strategic Goal.

When?

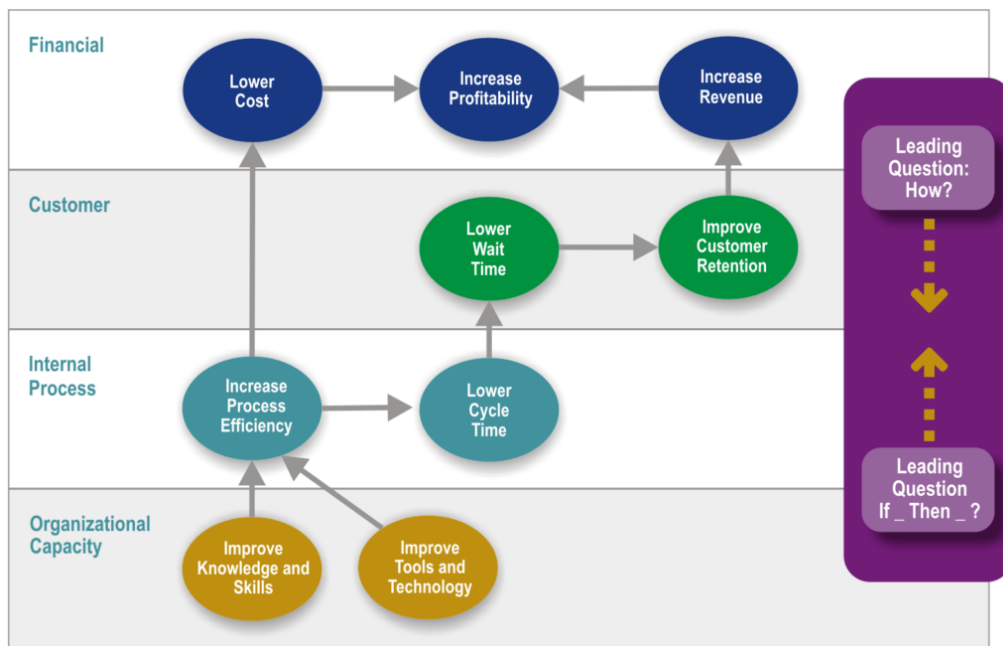
- This is one of the more time-consuming tasks, so take it into account when planning your work.
- Remember that without creating a Strategic Objectives structure, you cannot move on to the next point, because it is easy to lose the strategy balance.

How?

- Remember to consider the characteristics of your resources available, for example, it is not worth planning dynamic development of grant applications if you know in advance that it will not be possible to create a team that could focus on it.
- Ask your team members to set objectives individually, then compare your work and together choose the ones that were selected by the majority.
- Objectives must form a logical whole together, so regularly return to the goals indicated in the vision and the ways of achieving them given in the mission.
- Refer also to the perspectives described in the previous point and analyse the impact of your choices on each of them.

C. STRATEGY MAPPING

In the Strategy Mapping step, **cause-and-effect links are developed between the Strategic Objectives**, creating a “value chain” of how members and stakeholders are satisfied by the organisation’s products and services. Strategy Maps are developed for each Strategic Goal to ensure a complete strategy to achieve each strategic result and then those are merged into a final organisational Strategy Map. A Strategy Map is a graphic that shows the cause-and-effect relationships of objectives across the four perspectives, **telling the story of how the organisation will achieve the results desired**.



What?

- Create Strategic Maps reflecting the relationships between Strategic Objectives highlighted in each of the Strategic Goals.
- The task is to check the logic of your thinking and its impact on the organisation at the time of implementing the proposed solutions.

When?

- This task can be performed in conjunction with the creation of Strategic Objectives to immediately check the quality of links between them.

How?

- Use the template presented above and create maps that suit your goals.
- On perspectives, replace "Customer" with the term "Member" due to the characteristics of our organisation.
- Finally, combine all maps into one whole and conduct step by step dependency analysis to detect any inaccuracies.

D. PERFORMANCE MEASURES (MECHANISM OF EVALUATION)

Performance Measures (KPIs) are critical to **tracking progress of an organisation's strategy**. It's possible to indicate different types of performance measures. **Operational measures** focus on the use of resources (inputs), methods of processing them and production (outputs). These measures **"drive" the outcomes an organisation desires**, with some outcomes being more intermediate than others. Our process gets at these relationships, so you can identify the most meaningful outcome measures to determine if **your actions are leading to the strategic results** you desire. Performance measures are developed for each of the Objectives on the Strategy Map. The emphasis in this step is on helping you **develop the critical leading and lagging measures** needed to manage strategy execution.

What?

- Develop an internal evaluation system for your Strategic Objectives based on customised quality measures.
- Measures must be strictly related to the scope of the objectives and be relatively easily measurable.

When?

- Remember not to postpone this task, because by working on evaluation at such an early stage in the strategy, it is possible to take into account every element of its content and create a more efficient checking system.

How?

- Analyse each of the Objectives in terms of the resources that are necessary for its implementation, the processes that must be carried out for this purpose and the expected results.
- Based on this, make a list of performance measures that will allow you to check the progress of all these activities.
- Collect the measures you wrote down and identify or create those that will help you evaluate your progress towards the implementation of the entire Strategic Goal.
- It is useful to divide the measures into those that you will use on a regular basis throughout the strategy implementation process and those that will be used in the final evaluation.

E. STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

In the Strategic Initiatives stage, **the projects that are critical to success of the strategy**, are developed, prioritised, and implemented. Initiatives help to close performance gaps and to hit targets. It is important to focus the organisation on **the execution of the most prioritised strategic projects versus creating a long list of potential actions** and projects. Without this disciplined focus, organisations struggle to execute their strategy.

What?

- Create the last level of your strategy's activities by adding a list of specific projects and initiatives and translate your values into an action plan.
- Do not forget to use the principle that says it's better to answer our recipients' needs than wants while planning initiatives. Go back to [point V.2](#).
- During this work, it is necessary to take into account a detailed analysis of the possible risks of introducing changes and to develop ways to reduce the probability of their occurrence.

When?

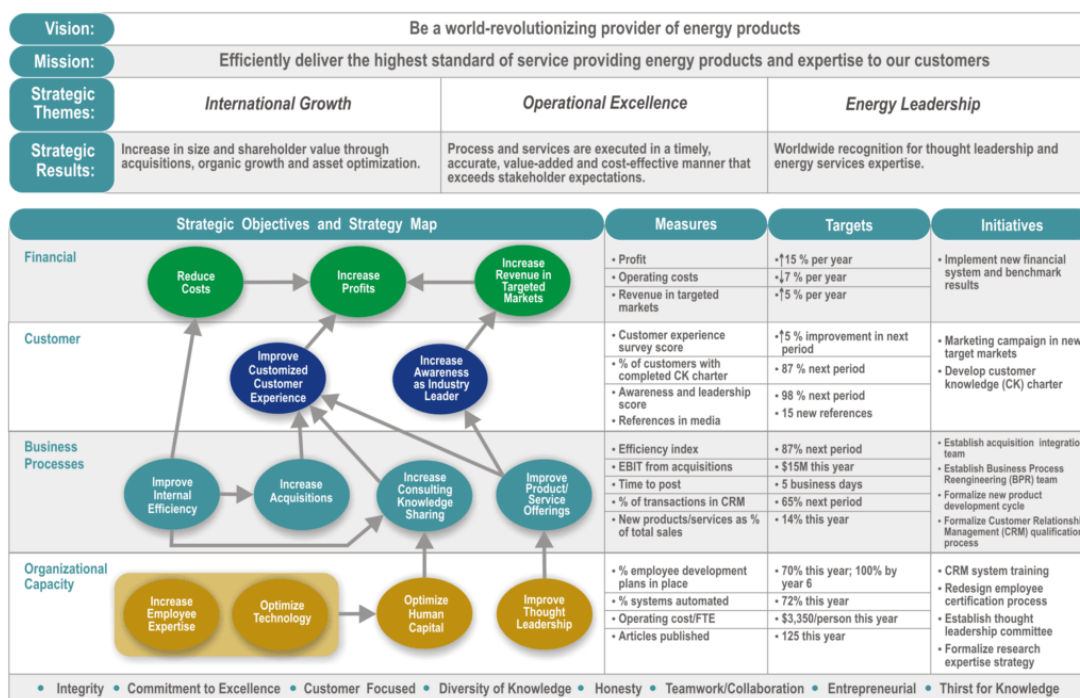
- This is one of the more time-consuming tasks, so consider it when planning your work.

How?

- The gradual elimination method is the recommended approach.
- Remember to work again in stages on individual Objectives within the next Strategic Goals.

- Make a list of all the activities and projects that you are currently organising or performing on a daily basis with the necessary improvements to enable Objectives to be realised.
- Then, if you see gaps, develop activities and ideas for new projects to complete the implementation process.
- From the resulting sets, select the most strategic activities, that is, those that provide the maximum number of benefits to the strategy vision.
- Remember to take into account the state of the resources of your Local or National Group, the established period of strategy implementation, possible risks, etc., when choosing.
- Re-eliminate based on the economy of time and resources.
- Repeat the process for the remaining Strategic Goals.
- After completing the full set of activities, check if any of them play a role in multiple Objectives and focus on them.
- Make another elimination, if necessary, so that the strategy is guaranteed to be implemented and at the same time its implementation does not paralyse the current work of the Local or National Group.

Once this step is complete, a first draft of the strategy is ready to be rolled out to your members. The goal of this part of the process is to create more internal fans and build a coalition of members and Officers to start thinking more strategically and using the system to better inform decision making. The graphic, shown below as an example, is a key deliverable and brings all the strategic elements of strategy formulation and planning together in one simple to understand graphic that becomes the heart of the process of communicating the organisation's strategy to all interested parties. It's a one-page document that tells the value creation story by summarising the organisation's strategy in a simple, easy-to-use format.



CONGRATULATIONS! YOUR STRATEGY IS READY TO KICK OFF!

4. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

However, it's not the end of the strategic planning process. In the Performance Analysis step, **data is transformed into evidence-based knowledge and understanding**. Effective analysis helps people make better decisions that will drive improved strategic outcomes. This step focuses on **measuring and evaluating performance** to identify what works well and what doesn't, taking corrective action and becoming a high-performance organisation.

What?

- Regularly analyse the performance of your strategy.

When?

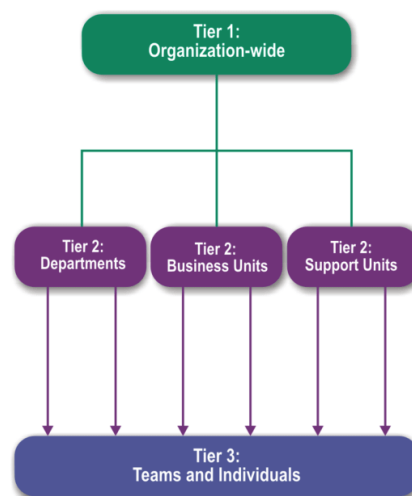
- At specified intervals throughout the implementation of the strategy.

How?

- Schedule evaluation meetings with your team to discuss progress.
- Use the KPIs you have set.
- For the evaluation, you can use the opinions of a wider group of entities that are affected by the strategy.
- Pay particular attention to the occurrence or escalation of risks that you have previously identified.
- If a problem is detected, it must result in the development of a corrective action.

5. ALIGNMENT

Here, strategy is transformed **from something only executives worry about to something everyone supports** by cascading high-level management strategy to first business and support units and then to individual Officers and members. Cascading communicates how organisation level strategy (Tier 1) is supported by department/unit strategy (Tier 2), and then ultimately how Officers and members or teams (Tier 3) contribute to the strategy with specific actions, projects, and tasks.



What?

- Create an effective plan for the cascading communication of your new strategy.
- Develop training plans for the new strategy.
- Prepare all necessary materials for members and Officers to understand and exercise their role in implementing the new objectives.

When?

- The plan may be ready before the announcement of the strategy, but its implementation must take place as soon as possible, after the decision to start implementing new solutions is made.
- Consider the "life cycle" of the Association and adjust meetings, talks and publications to the characteristics of the work of individual groups, e.g., Officers can be trained on the content of a new strategy during the National Officers Meeting or one of the open calls.

How?

- Decide with your team what types of messages you want to send to your Local or National Group.
- Develop a communication and training plan taking into account all the possibilities in your Local or National Group, e.g., Officers' meetings, national meetings, training days etc.
- Decide who will be responsible for managing the communication and preparing the necessary materials.
- Prepare presentations, reports, implementation handbooks, and any other materials needed to help your members adapt to the new situation.

6. EVALUATION

Evaluation is **an opportunity to review and refresh**. During this step, leaders and managers evaluate how well the organisation has accomplished desired results and how well the strategic management system improves communications, alignment, and performance. It ensures that the strategic planning and management system is dynamic and **incorporates continuous improvement into day-to-day operations and management**.

What?

- Make a periodic thorough evaluation of the entire system.
- Adapt the solutions provided for in the strategy to the changing conditions.

When?

- Set a periodic evaluation period, e.g., every 6 or 12 months, depending on the length of the implementation period.

How?

- Analyse the actions taken and their results in a given period through the prism of the established quality measures.
- Take into account the results of regular performance analysis.
- Be critical! If something went wrong, you need to find the cause of the problem and fix it.

- Remember to evaluate not only the strategy itself, but also the ways of its implementation, e.g., the work of people who are responsible for it on a daily basis.
- Consider whether any problems are due to poor communication rather than a content error.

SOURCES:

1. <https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-planning-and-strategy.html>
2. <https://balancedscorecard.org/strategic-planning-basics/>
3. <https://balancedscorecard.org/about/nine-steps/>
4. <https://sba.thehartford.com/business-management/what-is-strategic-planning/>