



The European Law Students' Association

FUNDRAISING HANDBOOK COMPETITIONS

2025/2026



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Preamble

Dear Network,

At the heart of ELSA lies the commitment to provide law students with unique opportunities for self-development. Moot Court Competitions represent the pinnacle of this mission. They are more than mere academic exercises, they are transformative experiences that bridge the gap between theory and practice.

However, the transition from a visionary concept to a high-caliber competition is paved with logistical and financial challenges. Since Covid, costs in general have been rising at high rates. Therefore, it has gotten more difficult to participate in or to organise Moot Court Competitions. In most cases, organising a Moot Court Competition without extensive fundraising is not possible anymore and many projects have to be canceled due to budgetary constraints. Also, the expenses that are to be made when participating in a Moot Court Competition sometimes surpass the financial possibilities based on one's income, making Moot Court Competitions less accessible.

Therefore, this Handbook is designed to give a comprehensive guide and overview on how to approach Fundraising for Moot Court Competitions. Whether you are a participant trying to raise funds for your travel expenses, or a part of an Organising Committee in charge of Fundraising for a Regional Round for a Moot Court Competition of ELSA, this Handbook will explain what Fundraising is, guide you through fundraising step-by-step while also giving you examples for E-Mails, tips on what not to do while fundraising and how to sell your (participation in a) Moot Court Competition.

In any case, you are always welcome to contact the External Relations Team of ELSA International or the Vice-President in Charge of Competitions of ELSA International for more support.

Kind regards,



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What is Fundraising?

Fundraising is the systematic analysis, planning, execution, and control of all activities aimed at securing needed resources (money, in-kind goods, and services) for the lowest possible consideration. As a non-profit association (like ELSA), we are eligible to conduct fundraising, ensuring all resources gained must fulfill our statutory purpose.

Success requires combining strategy and methodology. Approaching potential partners including private individuals, companies, foundations, or public institutions must be systematic and tailored to their distinct needs and interests.

Fundraising is not only about acquiring financial resources. Moot Court Competitions require more resources than money. In order for you to e.g. host a Moot Court Competition, you need venues, judges (in extent maybe an Academic Board), merchandising, print goods etc.. Although most of these resources can be acquired by paying for them, the companies behind some of these services can also be contacted in order to raise them without the need of spending money.

For a comprehensive overview on how to approach External Relations in general, you can find the External Relations Chapter in the Officer's Portal [here](#).

The 5 Steps of Fundraising

Step 1: Research

Before you start fundraising, you need to do your research. First, you need to identify what your needs are and what you want to raise. Fundraising is not only about raising money, but about raising all kinds of goods and services. When you have identified your needs, you can then start researching who could help you with your needs and who you want to contact. To do this step, locate institutions, organisations or companies in your city that you think could help you with your identified needs. Once you have identified those organisations etc., find out a way to contact them. This could be through an "info@"-Email-adress or through a phone number. Also try to find out who exactly you are contacting. Is it going to be someone from the HR-department or even a potential partner at a law-firm? If possible, also try to find out information about this person online by for example looking for them on social media (e.g. LinkedIn).

Also, read up on the potential organisation's history. If they have an online presence, they usually have a page about their history. In any case, make sure you get acquainted with their business. If you can't find potential partners or sponsors on your own, look out to alumni, other students, coaches or professors. Another idea is to look out to the ones that have organised or participated in previous editions of your Competition, they might have useful information for your fundraising project.

Once you have gathered the information you need, be sure to log it into a document in order for you to get back to it and refresh your memory upon it in the next steps.

The goal here is to get to know who you are contacting and what organisation stands behind it.

Step 2: Preparation

Before you start contacting any potential partners you have researched, it is important to prepare in order to come across professionally. Your goal is to have a smooth and low stress sales pitch about your project for the potential partner you will be contacting later on.

You can prepare the meeting by writing down, or making a short presentation about the key aspects of your project; What can you offer the potential partner? What do you expect from them? What are the positive gains for both sides? It is important to create a presentation that captivates the essence of your project and makes the potential partner eager to work with you.

When you make a powerpoint for a partner to see, don't make it longer than 8 slides because then you are no longer presenting the core idea of your project. Try to stand out with your project by being creative, but stay professional, as it should still be formal in the end. When making a powerpoint you are using to convince a partner you are highly encouraged to use the ELSA colours as you can find in the brandbook of ELSA to ensure consistency and harmony.

Another thing you can use is a sponsor package deal with for example a bronze, silver and gold package where each category has different or more benefits for a higher prize. You can also add a platinum package where the partner can mix benefits from different categories for a price you can negotiate. Be creative with these sponsor packages if you use them, don't forget potential partners can sometimes provide you with locations as well, you don't need to make it all about money.

The goal here is to prepare everything you need in order to contact the potential partner.

Step 3: Contacting

Once you have researched and prepared everything you need, you can then proceed to contact the potential partner or sponsor. As said, this can be done by Email, regular Mail or by a phone call. Regarding Emails, you should keep them short, precise and appealing. This means that you should not get too creative and the partner should be able to know exactly what you need by just reading the mail. Usually, directness regarding your needs is appreciated. The golden rule here is to take as much space as you need, but don't make it too long for the partner to read. When drafting your Email, you should answer the 4 Ws:

- **Who are you?**

What is your name? What position do you have in ELSA or on the Organising Committee? On whose behalf are you contacting?

- **What project are you organising?**

Shortly describe ELSA and what project you are organising. Is it a regional round of a Moot Court Competition? Is it your very own Moot Court Competition? What separates your Competition from others? Are you participating in a Moot Court Competition?

- **What are your needs?**

Are you in need of financial support? Do you need Human Resources? Describe shortly why you are contacting. As mentioned, be direct at this point, don't beat around the bushes.

- **What can you offer?**

Here, describe what you can offer in return for the support? The benefits differ from every situation. This is where you can place your values that you are trying to sell to the partner.

If some of these questions can not be answered, don't worry, just answer the ones you can. To make it look more appealing you can also highlight **key-words** that give a summary of your Mail by themselves. If you have prepared a media card, don't explain your competition and your needs too thoroughly and rather refer to your media card for more information. Also, don't copy/paste 100 Emails, personalise each one individually. This minimises inadvertent mistakes. You can reuse abstracts from other Emails that contain general information. This is also the first time your research from Step 1 will pay off, because here you can use your researched information. Do not send over any contracts with the contacting Email. If you didn't manage to find a direct person to contact, but rather a "info@"-Email-address and got a response from this Email-address also going back to Step 1 and researching the person that has answered you might help.

The goal here is to make the partner know who you are, what project you organise, what you need and what benefits you could offer (the 4 Ws).

Step 4: Meeting

After you successfully made contact with the potential partner, if it is deemed necessary, set a meeting. For this meeting, prepare yourself thoroughly. Go over previous conversations in order to know what you last discussed if anything or if there are already points you both agreed on during your email conversations. It can also help to check your research data you did about this partner in the first step: what are the values of this partner, what is this institution working on.. In order to maybe use this information throughout the meeting. Revisit LinkedIn profiles of potential partners or the people you were in contact with throughout the contacting phase. If you know you will talk to another person during the meeting, it might be useful to also check their LinkedIn profile.

During the meeting try to find common ground with the person you are talking to, be open in the conversation and if you don't find anything regarding personal information you can talk about, you can certainly talk about their business.

When you are negotiating it is advised to keep it short and simple; The time of the person representing the potential partner is valuable. If you set up a meeting it is convenient to do it online so the both of you don't have to move. However, if the potential partner is open to an in-person meeting in for example one of his offices, take this chance since it gives it a personal touch that you can use to your advantage.

When having a meeting, whether this is online or in person, you should also think about your appearance. There is no dress code per se, but dress to the attire, not too formal, but as formal as you need to be. This may vary from each country to the next or from partner to partner.

Also consider bringing pre-made contracts to the meeting, and a couple adaptable contracts in order to make it official on the spot, or you can negotiate the terms during the meeting and send the final contract in the follow-up. For reference, it can also benefit bringing printed materials to the meeting, such as a competition booklet or your media card to provide additional information when needed.

As a last point, don't forget your goal during the meeting! This is the chance to get to know the potential partner and his needs and present your own demands, which you can afterwards turn into a contract if all goes well.

Step 5: Follow-Up

After you have successfully conducted your meeting with the partner, if applicable, send over any contracts or other materials that your contact requested. With that, send over a short, polite and thanking Email after the meeting. The contact may request some time to consider/think about the potential partnership. They may ask for a week or an unspecific time-period. If the partner does not reply or contact you in time, send a polite Email asking for a response. One tip would also be to add the people you have talked to on LinkedIn/professional social media in order to stay in touch with them.

Once you have finished the cooperation, if possible, ask the partner for feedback, or, if you think the partner would be open to a future cooperation, and if the partner is interested, ask for a follow up-meeting to evaluate the cooperation. In this meeting, go over the whole duration of the cooperation with the partner. Keep the meeting as short as possible, this is a step that the partner might not be too keen on doing, so don't take too much time out of their schedule. Once you have finally finished the cooperation, be sure to log all the information you have gathered over the whole duration in a document and evaluate the cooperation internally. Write down specific information, contact information etc.. This will help your successors in their fundraising undertakings a lot.

The goal here is to give future organisers documentation and feedback on the partnerships from previous years.

FUNDRAISING TIMELINE

1

RESEARCH

STEP 1

- Identify specific project needs and target goals.
- Locate relevant organisations and find contact people.
- Log all gathered information into one document.

STEP 2

PREPARATION

2

- Create a media card for your project.
- Develop sponsor packages with various benefits.
- Prepare a short pitch to ensure professionalism.

3

CONTACTING

STEP 3

- Draft personalized emails using the four Ws.
- Keep messages direct and highlight key information.
- Avoid generic templates to minimize potential mistakes.

STEP 4

MEETING

4

- Review previous research and emails before the meeting.
- Dress appropriately and find common personal ground.
- (If applicable) bring contracts to finalize the deal quickly.

5

FOLLOW-UP

STEP 5

- Send a thank you email.
- Connect on social media for future networking.
- Document all feedback to help future organisers.

What not to do while fundraising

The following abstract contains a non-exhaustive list of things not to do while fundraising. These should give you a guideline on what to keep in mind when conducting your fundraising undertakings:

Sloppy research:

When doing your research, be precise and double check information. Especially when you are using AI, be sure to confirm the information the AI gives you. Also, log your information gathered. It is very unprofessional to a partner if you appear at a meeting with bad information. Furthermore, don't mix up information from one potential partner with another.

Being impolite or informal:

Whenever you're in contact with a potential partner, be sure to use a polite and formal tone/language. If you are impolite or informal, the partner might lose interest in keeping in touch with you and might drop out of the negotiation just because of that.

Inadvertent mistakes

When communicating with a potential partner try to limit inadvertent mistakes like grammatical or spelling errors to a minimum. Always double check your Emails before sending them. There are also tools to check your grammar for free on the internet, don't hesitate to use them. Also, double check your attachments before sending the Email.

Bad appearance

Dress to the attire. As said before, you are negotiating a contract with a potential partner who is willing to give you money or other compensation, and thus you should be on your best behaviour and dress accordingly formal to the meeting. Respect the time of the potential partner, don't be late.

Don't neglect previous non-compliance with the agreement

If there were troubles with this partner in the past, he was not happy with how it was managed or turned out disappointed in the outcome of the project, you should address this during negotiations in order to not make the same mistakes again and have a fruitful partnership for both sides.

How to sell your participation in the Competition?

First thing first: you are here. You are participating in a global Competition and entering the world of International Trade Law, congratulations! With this in mind, it is important to show it to the third party you are aiming to contact and to tailor it to each one of them.

Secondly, there are different selling points of your participation in the Competition according to the third party envisioned. It is important to identify them.

If you are contacting your University/applying for a grant in your University, then you should focus on the Academic side of the Competition and the prestige of representing your University! The Competition starts with a rigorous Written Submissions phase, where teams will need to draft Written Submissions both for the Complainant and for the Respondent, which is mandatory to be eligible to participate in the Competition, and that will be scored in two different phases by experts in the field! Additionally, the Written Submissions will be counted and relevant through your whole participation in the Competition.

As per the Regional Round, and the Oral Pleadings, you will prepare yourself thoroughly for months for the moment where you finally plead orally both on behalf of the Complainant and of the Respondent for the Eliminator Rounds and, hopefully, for the Semi-Finals and Grand Final. You will not only be addressing the arguments you spent months researching and practicing, you will be answering questions directly from an expert bench of panellists, proving yourself orally!

Bonus points to all of this if you are qualified for the Final Oral Round! You will then be amongst the best 24 Teams of 6 Regional Rounds! You will be carrying the name of your university, of your country and a legacy behind you!

If your aim is to reach a law firm, you should focus on the stage given to it and the network of this Competition. The John H. Jackson Moot Court Competition is sponsored by several law firms with presence worldwide and other institutions with expertise in the field. Supporting a team to take part in this Competition is simultaneously achieving a stage and being recognized by several other law firms and institutions as a contributor to a bigger cause. Additionally, it can also serve as a means for institutions to fulfil their social responsibility goals, it's a double edged sword!

Lastly, do not underestimate the importance of fundraising individually - make sure you are heard, you are seen and the people around you are engaged with your participation in the Competition - and that every amount can count and it doesn't need to be only financial, it can also be in kind! Gathering discounts to flights, to meals in restaurants, access to books/important resources for the preparation for the Competition can also help you go further in the Competition. And, last advice: use social media! A lot! Don't be shy to show your journey in this Competition.

(Last second) Dropout of a partner

Scenario:

Your local group is hosting its annual Regional Human Rights Moot Court Competition. You've organized a big event with 12 teams, 18 volunteer judges, and one full day of in-person rounds followed by a small awards reception and a social event to end the day. You have raised a budget

of €8,000 that you spend on Venue, Catering, Printing, etc.. The main sponsor, a local law firm, pledged €2,000, covering a fourth of the expenses. Two weeks before the moot, the firm emails your local group:

“Due to unexpected financial constraints, we regret that we must withdraw our sponsorship this year.”

What now?

Step 1: Immediate Internal Assessment

During the first 24-48 hours you should:

A. Confirm the facts

If you did not receive it yet, get written confirmation of withdrawal from the partner. If necessary, clarify whether it is partial (reduced funding) or a full withdrawal from the partner. Furthermore, identify any contractual obligations (notice periods, branding removal, etc.).

B. Financial Impact Review

Calculate the total pledged amount vs. the received amount and your budget shortfall. Also calculate your fixed and variable cost. Lastly, identify which expenses are non-refundable (e.g. venue deposits, printing, technical setup) and which expenses are adjustable (catering scale, merchandise, social events, etc.).

C. Risk Prioritization

Once you have done your Financial Impact Review, prioritise your expenses into 3 categories:

- **Critical** (venue, judges, core competition logistics)
- **Important** (catering, awards, networking reception)
- **Optional** (photography upgrades, premium décor)

Step 2: Stabilize the Core Event

Next, try to stabilize the competition itself by altering the budget according to the new situation. Secure the venue, judges and problem materials. If necessary, do this by scaling down catering, replace printed materials with digital versions (if possible/allowed) and simplify awards by switching them out with printed certificates.

Step 3: Sponsor Replacement

Acquiring a new sponsor for the Competition when one drops out is not easy, especially when a deadline is approaching or the partner drops out close to the Competition itself.

First of all, create a shortlist of local law firms, alumni that could help out last second, Bar associations, legal-tech companies and your local law school alumni offices. Contact each potential partner that you've identified individually, such as you've done it during your regular fundraising. Alter your approach according to the new situation by playing with open cards and explaining the situation in the contacting E-Mail. Do not give up the name of the partner that dropped out. To sell your competition last second, focus on making the potential new sponsor a "Last-minute spotlight sponsor". Sell exclusive branding opportunities such as a named award sponsorship (e.g. "Best Oralist Award, sponsored by ..."). For this, you can create micro-sponsorship tiers (for example):

- €500 – Award Sponsor
- €1,000 – Round Sponsor
- €2,500 – Reception Sponsor
- €5,000 – Headline Replacement Sponsor

The goal is to make it easy to say yes for the sponsor by giving the sponsorship a name or a focus point during the competition.

Step 4: Activate Internal Support Channels

As another resort, you can try to activate internal support channels. For example, you could try to contact your law faculty directly, maybe they have discretionary funds. Furthermore, don't hesitate to reach out to alumni. Also, this is the ideal moment to open the emergency funds of your local group; maybe you have money set aside or even specific Moot Court monetary reserves. As a final resort, it is also possible to make a minor adjustment to the registration fees. This should only be done a fair amount of time in advance to the competition and transparent to the participants.

Communication Strategy

Throughout the whole process you should maintain a uniform communication strategy. Internally, be transparent with the situation. Involve as many people as necessary and assign clear responsibilities, especially on who is reaching out to whom. Externally (Participants, judges and other partners), only inform them if it matters to them. For example, participants and judges need to be informed about potential format changes, prize changes and schedule changes. If you message them, do it confidently.

Legal and Reputational Considerations

Only once your project is funded again you should turn your thoughts to legal considerations. Usually it is not recommended to take proceedings against a (former) partner in general, therefore you need to tread very carefully when doing so. This step is totally optional and should only be taken in situations where no other option is feasible.

Regarding reputational actions, first of all, remove the branding of the former partner respectfully and promptly. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in regards to talking to new partners, don't criticise the former partner publicly. Also avoid talking about the partner with your friends in an inconsiderate manner. Lastly, even if the current agreement was lost, try to remain in contact with the partner in order to have the possibility to go into an agreement in the future about other projects.

Scenario Planning (Decision Matrix)

The matrix below outlines potential response options to consider when facing a sudden reduction in sponsorship. In some cases, the organisation may be able to absorb the loss without significant changes. In other situations, it may be necessary to adjust certain elements of the competition to remain financially sustainable.

How much is the financial shortfall - what is the right response?

<10%	Absorb via reserves of the Competition/ELSA group
10–25%	Cut non-essential costs + minor replacement sponsor if possible
25–50%	Major sponsor push (if possible at the time) + scale event appropriately
>50%	Consider a hybrid format or date adjustment of the Competition

Long Term Prevention Strategy

To avoid rescheduling or scaling down a competition due to a withdrawn sponsorship, it is essential to plan for uncertainty. Do not assume that everything will go according to plan. Even if no issues arise this year, they may occur in the future. A proactive, long-term strategy will help protect the continuity of your competition. Consider the following four approaches:

First of all, avoid relying too heavily on a single sponsor. A diversified sponsorship model reduces financial risk and increases stability. As a general guideline, no single sponsor should contribute more than 40% of the total competition budget.

A second idea is to negotiate a phased payment schedule with sponsors. For example, 50% could be paid upfront and 50% closer to the event date. This ensures you have sufficient cash flow to begin organizing the competition while limiting exposure if circumstances change.

Thirdly, maintain a contingency reserve to safeguard against unexpected setbacks. Setting aside approximately 20% of the total budget as a reserve fund can provide a financial buffer if a sponsor withdraws or unforeseen costs arise.

Lastly, try to get multi-year agreements with sponsors. Whenever possible, negotiate sponsorship agreements that span two to three years. Multi-year commitments provide greater financial stability and support long-term planning. After each competition, follow up with sponsors to evaluate their satisfaction and strengthen the partnership to encourage continued support.

Draft E-Mail

Following, you can find a draft E-Mail that you can use to inspire yourselves when contacting potential partners/sponsors. This is by all means not applicable to all scenarios, but is a small guideline on how you can approach a potential partner. The following E-Mail is drafted to the needs of a regional round of a Moot Court Competition. Change out parts to the needs of your project. Writing E-Mails is like training a muscle, the more you do it, the more routine you have, the easier it will get over time.

One remark beforehand: when contacting by E-Mail, always make sure to use meaningful subject lines, for example:

Cooperation *Partner* | ELSA *Groupname* | *Name of Project*

Inquiry | Cooperation *Name of Project* | ELSA *Groupname*

Also, as mentioned previously, always double check your E-Mails before submitting and use online grammar-checking tools.

To: ...

Subject: ...

Dear Mr. X,

My name is *Firstname Surname* and I am contacting you as *your position* on behalf of ELSA *groupname*. ELSA is the world's greatest association for law students and young lawyers with *current number of members* members all over Europe.

ELSA offers numerous opportunities for self-development for law students, including a vast amount of academic competitions. For this year's edition of the *name of competition*, we have been selected to host a regional round in *name of country/city*. For this undertaking, we are looking for a partner that would be open to supporting the regional round financially (or other ways).

Insert Part explaining your project.

To get a better understanding of the *name of competition*, you can find a media card attached to this E-Mail. I would be very delighted to discuss your participation in this year's regional round of the *name of competition*, also happily over a call or video-meet.

Kind regards,

Firstname Surname