



The European Law Students' Association



INTERNATIONAL
FOCUS
PROGRAMME

LAW AND SECURITY OUTLINE

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS PROGRAMME

2025/2026

OUTLINE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL FOCUS PROGRAMME ON LAW & SECURITY

ELSA International
2025/2026

FOREWORD

Dear Network,

We are proud to present the **Outline of the International Focus Programme (IFP) on Law and Security** for the period from **1 August 2025 to 31 July 2028**.

The IFP is one of the most interesting concepts in ELSA's history, uniting the Network around a common theme. For the next three years, our focus will be Law and Security. Following extensive discussions across the Network regarding the role of the IFP, we hope that this new topic and outline will provide an opportunity for the programme to expand further.

The aim of this Outline is to serve as both an organiser's guide and an implementation tool for the ELSA Network, offering guidance to engage members in one of ELSA's most dynamic initiatives.

Through the IFP, we strive to continue the tradition of standing united under a common theme while exploring innovative ways to positively impact the lives of law students, young lawyers, and civil society. Today's law students and young lawyers are shaping the legal frameworks of tomorrow and ELSA seeks to support them in creating a just world. This IFP cycle aims to reaffirm ELSA's goals while connecting them to the dynamic and evolving challenges in the field of Law and Security.

Happy reading!

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I. About the IFP

1.1 What is the IFP?

1.1.1 Definition

The International Focus Programme (IFP) is ELSA's initiative aiming to raise awareness on a specific theme for the ELSA Network during a fixed period of time. In this way, ELSA creates a forum where law students and young lawyers can combine their efforts, discuss and participate in various activities on a topical area of law.

1.1.2 How does it work?

The IFP can be implemented in all Areas of ELSA by incorporating its topic into events, activities and initiatives organised by the Network. When implemented consistently throughout the Network through projects on a common theme, the IFP can impact the general opinion and mindset of law students and young lawyers. In short, with the programme, ELSA can have an impact on students, young lawyers and civil society and increase the dialogue between different actors. Furthermore, the IFP consolidates the work and achievements of all ELSA Groups and amplifies the opinions and ideas of law students.

The IFP topic is chosen by the International Council of ELSA. The topic should be versatile, internationally relevant, academically interesting and have an impact on civil society. The International Council also chooses the duration of the programme, which is usually two or three years.

The main objectives of the IFP are to:

- Make use of the unique ELSA Network to create awareness amongst today's law students and young lawyers across borders;
- Create forums where law students and young lawyers can gather and discuss a contemporary theme;
- Set out a common goal for all groups to work towards;
- Give law students and young lawyers all over Europe a voice by gathering their diverse opinions and ideas on a set topic;
- Contribute to ELSA's vision: "A just world in which there is respect for human dignity and cultural diversity".

IFP events should be promoted using the IFP Marketing Kit. The Marketing Kit can be found in the Officers' Portal, as well as [here](#).

1.2 History of the IFP

The IFP was adopted in 1995 and is therefore one of ELSA's oldest initiatives. Originally, the IFP was intended to unify scientific conclusions and research outcomes of projects across the Network. Later, it was generalised to a “topic for the whole Network”.

Since its introduction, the IFP has touched upon the following topics:

- “A Just World: A new role for lawyers, legal education and law in development” (1995–1997)
- “The Law of Peace in the Year 2000 – current violations and effective enforcement of international law; the reform of international organisations” (1997–1999)
- “Information Society – the Legal Challenges: Application of New Technologies, Protection of Individuals and the Legislative Response.” (2000–2002)
- “Trade Law – a Way for Sustainable Development” (2003–2005)
- “25 Years of Legal Development” (2006–2007)
- “Intellectual Property Law” (2007–2010)
- “Health Law” (2010–2013)
- “Media Law” (2013–2016)
- “Environmental Law” (2016–2019)
- “Law and Technology” (2019–2022)
- “Law and Sustainability” (2022–2025)

Historically, the IFP was concluded with an international conference and/or publication. It was previously also regulated that the outcome of the IFP would be a Final IFP Report, which would reflect the work done by the ELSA Network during the implementation period.

In 2011, there were multiple international projects on IFP, such as an IFP Opening Conference and an IFP Essay Competition. Additionally, an IFP Handbook was published. In 2013, the IFP was included in the Strategic Goals of ELSA, with a goal to have at least one IFP event per country per year, and a goal to include the IFP topic in the academic programme of e.g. Study Visits.

In 2019, for a brief period of three years (one IFP cycle), ELSA Day became a part of the IFP. The goal was to highlight the human rights aspect of the IFP topic. However, this created confusion between ELSA Officers, considering that we have other projects with the same objectives. Afterwards, the Annual Human Rights Campaign grew on to become an even stronger project of its own.

1.3 Recent discussions and reforms

During the term 2024/2025, with the selection of a new IFP topic taking place at the Spring ICM in Malta, the future of the IFP as a whole became a topic of discussion.

Over the past years, the Network has detected recurring challenges related to the IFP, such as a lack of engagement with the initiative. This caused repeated discussions revolving around the same problems from one year to another. Some problems which the Network found with the programme were a lack of interest in the topic, three years being too long as a duration, but two years being too short, the topic being too broad for some but too narrow for others, and groups prioritising other projects and events.

At the 87th ICM Malta, a proposal to remove the IFP from the Decision Book sparked debate. Some argued it had fulfilled its purpose, and repeated discussions were counterproductive. Others stressed it remained relevant in many countries and relied on internationally. However, a need to deregulate in some form was generally recognised.

The International Council decided to keep the IFP in the Decision Book, but it was significantly deregulated. Most obligations were removed, allowing the programme to be used flexibly by those who benefit from it, without requiring anyone to organise IFP events. The reformed framework encourages innovation and lets each ELSA Group adopt the IFP in ways that best suit their work, aiming to reignite the Network's enthusiasm for it.

II. Connection with the Strategic Goals and DB

2.1 Decision Book

The IFP is regulated under Academic Activities in the Decision Book, more specifically, part 6. Chapter 7. The Decision Book sets out the aim of the IFP, the implementation of the IFP, as well as the responsibilities of the International Board of ELSA and the ELSA Groups.

Article 1. states the aim of the IFP, while article 2. states how the IFP should be implemented. It is the International Council of ELSA that decides on the topic, duration and outcome of the IFP. As the IFP is regulated under Academic Activities, it is the Vice President in charge of Academic Activities of the International Board of ELSA who is in charge of coordinating the execution of the IFP initiatives.

Article 3.1. states the responsibilities of the International Board of ELSA. They should coordinate the research for finding the topic and sub-topics for the IFP and make sure that a topic is proposed to the Council at the International Council Meeting. The International Board of ELSA is also responsible for creating an IFP Guide and providing the Network with

necessary information and assistance. The National Groups are responsible for forwarding relevant information to the Local Groups.

The 4th and last article states the topic of the IFP and what the Association should focus on during the period of this topic. According to the regulations, the Association should focus on raising interest and academic knowledge about Law and Security, as well as raising awareness regarding problems in the development and application of the IFP.

2.2 Strategic Goals

Strategic Planning should always be an ever-present part of planning in ELSA. The Strategic Plan of ELSA envisions fulfilling the Philosophy Statement of ELSA. The Strategic Plan is therefore a central part of all work throughout the Association.

With this chapter, we want to shortly illustrate how working with the IFP aligns with our Strategic Goals. The IFP was included in the previous Strategic Plan as a means of strengthening ELSA's identity and promoting its overarching vision.

2.2.1 Goal 2: Structure

The second goal regards structure and is divided into six parts. Out of these six parts, three parts are closely connected to the IFP. The Association should strive to embrace technological innovations and be compliant with data protection. While striving to achieve set goals, ELSA must make sure that the implementation of new technologies is safe for both the provider and the users. This can mean, among other things, that viruses do not spread to our platform users. Gathering of new knowledge is followed by knowledge management, meaning saving knowledge in a format that can be forwarded to others.

The implementation of new technologies is closely connected with data protection. Data protection itself aims to ensure the safe administration of individuals and their personal information. It is therefore an important part of our work to be data protection compliant and make sure that user information is not misused. Being compliant with data protection is not only a legal obligation but also a strategic advantage that builds trust, enhances data security, and promotes transparency.

The third goal that should be mentioned is public relations, striving towards continuously improve our public relations. As we are seeking to improve public relations, we need to protect the reputation of the Association. Therefore, we should make sure that potential partners have values that align with ELSA's values. The IFP could even be a way to find external partners and help reach the goal of improving public relations.

2.2.2 Goal 3: Direction

The third and final goal consists of three parts, which can all be connected with the IFP. The first part aims for the Association to increase its advocacy engagement. The IFP can easily be

used to advocate for different matters within the topic of Law and Security. The first part can even be combined with the second part, which is the Association's commitment to human rights, as security is a meaningful part of human rights. By advocating the importance of securing human rights and the security of people, you can combine the two goals. Working with the IFP could also be a great selling point while searching for a human rights partner, as this period's topic is connected with human rights.

The aim to continuously improve ELSA's legal education projects is the final part of the Strategic Goals that have a close connection with IFP. The IFP's broad topic and with a variety of subtopics, is a perfect match with legal education and the goal to promote a diversity of topics.

III. Law and Security

Law and Security is an important topic today as legal systems around the world face new challenges such as cyber threats, political tensions, false information, and emergency powers. By addressing this topic, the ELSA Network helps train future lawyers to handle these complex challenges and ensure that security measures remain lawful, balanced, and rights-based. Addressing challenges within the topic of Law and Security directly reflects ELSA's commitment to enhancing understanding of legal principles while promoting justice, human rights, and the rule of law.

3.1 Definition

“Law and Security” is not a set area of law. Rather, this topic seeks to explore how Security interacts with law and how Security can be secured with the help of law.

Security itself is defined as “protection of a person, building, organisation, or country against threats such as crime or attacks by foreign countries”.¹ Security is a feeling of safety and freedom from worry.² Despite the definition, security is a subjective concept and therefore varies depending on the subject. There are several perspectives on security, and during this IFP cycle, we will be focusing on its correlation to law.

Two main things have always been important in how the idea of security has developed. First, people want to protect what they care about from danger and feel less afraid. Second, they use different ways to keep themselves safe and calm. Because of this, laws and regulations are strongly connected with security. Laws and regulations about property, territory and the right to defend them have been central to how we understand and try to achieve security.³

The rule of law is a vital part of ensuring security. As the rule of law guarantees rights and freedoms, it is the basis of a secure society. Strengthening the rule of law and security institutions

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/security>

² <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/security>

³ <https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e399>

contributes to both short-term objectives of conflict prevention and long-term aims of achieving sustainable peace. Breakdowns in law and order, as well as weaknesses within these institutions, can trigger conflicts. Effective justice and correctional systems, supported by transparent and accountable law enforcement institutions that uphold human rights, are therefore essential for the restoration and maintenance of peace and security.

One of the purposes of the United Nations is to maintain peace and security. The Security Sector Reform Unit coordinates and guides the United Nations system in implementing the Security Council resolution 2151 (2014) concerning security sector reform. The Security Sector Reform Unit provides political, strategic, and technical support to Member States and UN entities involved in security sector reform. It assists with national policy development, coordination of international support, and resource mobilisation. The Unit also leads the creation of UN-wide policies and guidance on Security Sector Reform, including defence reform, and serves as the secretariat for the UN Inter-Agency SSR Task Force.

Recently, new threats to peace and security, including terrorism and transnational organised crime, have emerged alongside traditional armed conflicts, undermining the rule of law. The United Nations addresses these challenges by reinforcing the rule of law as a foundation for preventing such forms of violence and fostering more resilient and secure societies.

3.2 Yearly focus

As the purpose of the IFP is to unite the Network, yearly focuses are proposed. These serve as suggested topics that the Network can concentrate on each year within the full cycle of Law and Security. The aim is to provide guidance and make it easier for officers to begin working with the IFP. Each year's focus is divided into two parts: the main topic and suggested subtopics. This structure maintains the broad scope of the IFP while also offering inspiration and practical direction, helping the Network engage more effectively with the IFP.

3.3.1 Legal Challenges of Cybersecurity in the Digital Era

Rapid technological development has introduced numerous challenges for law enforcement and legal systems. Among these are the vast and increasing volume of digital data, the risk of data loss, and ongoing barriers to accessing crucial information due to legal and technical restrictions. To address these issues, new legislative initiatives have been introduced to enhance the fight against cybercrime. Recent EU instruments, such as the e-Evidence Package, the Digital Services Act, and the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, hold potential to mitigate some of these challenges.

3.3.1.1 Data Protection and Cybersecurity: The role of GDPR and Other Regulations

All around the world, we can see how personal data is being leaked from all sorts of companies. It is therefore important that data protection principles are integrated at every stage of the development of technologies that process personal data. Many companies try to battle this by letting AI assess the data protection risks. Although the use of AI can be very effective, it is not

flawless. AI develops by saving and learning from already processed data. If this data is not secured and processed correctly, the use of AI could be a breach of data protection.

Interesting reading:

https://www.edps.europa.eu/press-publications/press-news/press-releases/2022/eu-wide-cyber-security-requirements-protect-privacy-and-personal-data_en
https://www.edpb.europa.eu/our-work-tools/our-documents/topic/cybersecurity-and-data-breach_en

3.3.1.2 International Cooperation Against Cybercrime: How Effective Are Current Laws?

As a response to the increasing exposure to cyber threats, NIS2 (Directive 2022/2555) was implemented and replaced its predecessor NIS1 (Directive 2016/1148). NIS2 provides a harmonised legal framework aiming to strengthen cybersecurity across 18 critical sectors within the European Union. It further requires Member States to develop national cybersecurity strategies and to cooperate with EU institutions to ensure effective cross-border coordination and enforcement.

NIS2 establishes a network of CSIRTs (Computer Security Incident Response Teams) to facilitate the information exchange on cyber threats and to coordinate incident responses. These teams play a vital role in maintaining situational awareness and providing technical and operational support. The EU also established a Cybersecurity Strategy and Key Policies to strengthen security and resilience.

Interesting reading:

<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/nis2-directive>
[EU cybersecurity: strategy and key policies - Consilium](#)

3.3.1.3 The Responsibility of Tech Companies in Preventing Cyber Attacks

Tech companies have a critical responsibility to safeguard the personal information of both customers and employees. This includes identifying potential cyber risks, implementing measures to reduce those risks, and ensuring they can respond quickly and effectively to security incidents. They must also stay compliant with relevant laws and industry regulations, which are continually evolving. When organisations fail to take these responsibilities seriously, the consequences can be severe - ranging from personal data breaches and loss of user trust to substantial financial penalties and long-term reputational damage.

Major cyberattacks corporations have encountered:

- [Equifax Breach \(2017\)](#): Exposed the data of 147 million Americans due to a missed vulnerability patch.
- [SolarWinds Attack \(2020\)](#): A sophisticated supply chain attack compromising multiple government agencies and corporations.

- **Colonial Pipeline Attack (2021):** Ransomware disrupted fuel supplies on the U.S. East Coast.

3.3.1.4 State-Sponsored Cyber Warfare: A New Battlefield?

In recent decades, suspicion has grown around the extent of state involvement in sponsoring cyber operations. Most of these activities are linked to espionage, often targeting government institutions, critical infrastructure, or private companies. The Digital and Cyberspace Policy Program's Cyber Operations Tracker provides a consolidated view of this landscape by compiling data on publicly known, state-sponsored incidents dating back to 2005. This resource highlights not only the scale of such operations but also the increasing complexity of state-led activity in cyberspace.

Interesting reading:

[Cyber Operations Tracker](https://www.cisa.gov/topics/cyber-threats-and-advisories/nation-state-cyber-actors)

<https://www.cisa.gov/topics/cyber-threats-and-advisories/nation-state-cyber-actors>

3.3.2 International Security and Humanitarian Law

International security and humanitarian law are closely intertwined in promoting peace and protecting human life during conflict. International security focuses on maintaining peace, preventing armed conflict, and managing threats that affect global stability. International Humanitarian Law governs the conduct of armed conflicts and seeks to limit the effects of war by protecting civilians and those no longer participating in combat. Together, these frameworks aim to balance legitimate security interests with safeguarding human dignity, even in times of crisis.

3.3.2.1 The COVID-19 Pandemic: The Rule of Law Under Pressure

While designing and implementing measures to address the challenges arising from COVID-19, States Parties are obliged to consider all social rights-holders, giving particular attention and priority to individuals and groups who are socially most vulnerable. State Parties must ensure that adopted measures do not result in discrimination in terms of social rights enjoyment, whether direct or indirect.

The restrictions introduced during the pandemic risked affecting (and in some cases did) civil and political rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights. The rule of law can be at risk, and prosecution services must be wisely considered.

Interesting reading:

[COVID-19 and Social Rights: Statement by the European Committee of Social Rights - Human Rights and Rule of Law](#)

[Protecting human rights in pandemics and other emergencies: challenges faced by prosecutors - Human Rights and Rule of Law](#)

3.3.2.2 Climate Crises and Legal Responses: When Do Human Rights Get Restricted?

While human rights form the foundation of individual dignity and freedom, most rights may be subject to certain limitations in order to protect the rights of others or to safeguard significant societal interests. In some cases, rights may come into conflict with one another. The exercise of one person's rights may conflict with those of another or with broader public concerns. Although certain rights are absolute and cannot be restricted under any circumstances, not even by the state in case of emergency.

Within the human rights framework, duty bearers are obligated to uphold and protect these rights from harm arising from environmental degradation. OHCHR advocates for a human rights-based approach to climate action in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Climate change is threatening the effective exercise of a selection of human rights, including the rights to life, water and sanitation, food, health, housing, self-determination, culture, and development.

Interesting reading:

[Human rights restrictions — Human Rights Guide](#)

<https://wmo.int/media/news/climate-change-undermines-human-rights>

[OHCHR and climate change | OHCHR](#)

3.3.2.3 Rules of Engagement and War Crimes: International vs. National Law

Rules of Engagement (RoE) serve as essential guidelines defining how and when military personnel may use force during armed conflict. RoE ensures that soldiers act within legal and ethical boundaries, maintaining discipline and accountability in complex and high-risk situations. RoE are designed not only to achieve military objectives but also to safeguard civilians and minimise unnecessary harm. As these rules are grounded in both national legislation and international law, breaches of RoE can lead to criminal prosecution.

Serious violations, known as war crimes, include acts such as murder, torture, looting, or deliberately targeting civilian populations, humanitarian workers, or protected sites such as hospitals, schools, and places of worship. While national courts hold the primary responsibility for prosecuting war crimes, such proceedings are not always possible during or immediately after a conflict. In such cases, jurisdiction may fall to international, mixed, or hybrid tribunals, as well as to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC plays a crucial role in ensuring accountability for the gravest violations of international humanitarian law.

Interesting reading:

[Military Rules of Engagement: A Comprehensive Guide](#)

[International law: Understanding justice in times of war - United Nations Western Europe](#)

[FAQ: Rules of war | ICRC](#)

3.3.2.4 The Role of International Human Rights in Security Policies

Human rights form a central pillar of the Security Sector Reform (SSR), as reflected in the resolutions and policies of the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), and other regional and international organisations. Many states have established mechanisms to promote accountability and to guarantee that security actors protect the rights of individuals. The consistent implementation of human rights obligations strengthens the legitimacy of security institutions and contributes to sustainable peace, conflict prevention, and long-term stability.

The EU Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Due Diligence Policy (EU HRDDP) on Security Sector Support to third parties was approved by the European Union Foreign Ministers on the 19th of February 2024. This policy represents a major step forward in reinforcing the EU's enduring commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) within its external actions.

Interesting reading:

[An-introduction-to-human-rights-and-security-sector-reform.pdf](#)

[EU adopts due diligence policy to anchor human rights systematically into its security sector support | EEAS](#)

[| OHCHR](#)

3.3.3 Disinformation and the Law: Security and Freedom of Expression

Disinformation presents a growing challenge at the intersection of security and freedom of expression. The deliberate spread of false or misleading information can undermine democratic processes, erode public trust in institutions, and threaten national and international security. Legal frameworks, therefore, face the difficult task of countering disinformation while preserving the fundamental right to freedom of expression, as protected under international human rights law. Finding an appropriate balance between safeguarding security and protecting free expression remains one of the central legal and ethical challenges of the digital age.

3.3.3.1 Government Surveillance: Security Measure or Privacy Violation?

The right to privacy is increasingly threatened by digital technologies with powerful surveillance and monitoring capabilities. Although often justified as tools to combat terrorism or crime, such technologies are misused to suppress dissent and target journalists, opposition figures, and human rights defenders. Advances in data collection and analytics have further enabled large-scale monitoring of online activity, raising serious concerns for privacy, freedom of expression, and democratic accountability.

The emergence of whistleblowers like Edward Snowden brought renewed attention to the need for transparency and accountability in government surveillance practices. These disclosures sparked global debate on the balance between national security and individual privacy. As the legal framework is evolving, a clear understanding of government surveillance and its implications remains vital to foster an informed public dialogue and protect democratic values.

Interesting reading:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/spyware-and-surveillance-threats-privacy-and-human-rights-growing-un-report>

[Government Surveillance: Overview | Research Starters | EBSCO Research](#)

3.3.3.2 Counterterrorism vs. Civil Liberties: How Far Can Governments Go?

Over the past two decades, governments have increasingly blurred the distinction between counter-terrorism and broader national security concerns. This is often done by using this conflation as a justification to suppress dissent and restrict fundamental freedoms. These violations include extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture, and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Such actions represent not only abuses of power but also breaches of States' positive obligations to prevent, investigate, and remedy human rights violations.

The broad and often ambiguous definitions of “terrorism” and “violent extremism” contained in many national laws and policies further intensify these risks. These vague legal standards create room for governments to misuse counter-terrorism measures to target civil society, silence dissenting voices, and undermine human rights advocacy.

Interesting reading:

[Global Study on the Impact of Counter-Terrorism Measures on Civil Society and Civic Space | OHCHR](#)

[The Human Target - Global Study on Counter-Terrorism & Civic Space](#)

3.3.3.3 Legal Frameworks for Balancing Freedom and Security

The digital age is an era of unprecedented connectivity, promising effortless, borderless, and instantaneous communication. These technological developments have transformed modern life, offering vast access to information, innovation, and opportunities for social and economic progress.

However, this digital transformation is followed by significant challenges. The rapid spread of surveillance technologies, the rise of cybercrime, and the increasing capacity for data exploitation have raised serious concerns regarding privacy, security, and the protection of fundamental human rights. Navigating the digital landscape requires a careful balance between safeguarding security and preserving individual freedoms. Achieving this balance demands robust legal frameworks, transparent oversight mechanisms, and sustained dialogue between governments, private actors, and civil society.

The creation of the area of freedom, security and justice is established under Title V of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Articles 67–89). The Treaty aims to remove internal border controls while ensuring a high level of protection for EU citizens.

Interesting reading:

3.4 Interaction with other areas of Law

3.4.1 Human Rights

Human rights are essential to ELSA, being a core part of ELSA's philosophy statement. In ELSA, human rights are understood as those provided under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights, ECHR), as well as those provided under national laws.

Human rights are often considered as a precondition for security – e.g. by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the Helsinki Final Act⁴. Additionally, the focus can be on security as a right in itself. However, human rights also pose limitations on security. Human rights law makes it clear that security objectives cannot override fundamental guarantees: measures must be lawful, necessary and proportionate. However, during certain emergencies, human rights such as the right to freedom of movement and the right to privacy can sometimes be restricted by security measures. Derogations from treaty-based human rights obligations are provided by Article 15 of the ECHR and by Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The derogations provided by the two articles are expressed in very similar terms. They permit derogation in times of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation, however, with certain conditions.⁵

Further reading:

https://ks.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr-ks/guide_art_15_eng

3.4.2 Constitutional Law

The interaction between security and constitutional law revolves around balancing the state's responsibility to protect national and public security with its obligation to uphold constitutional principles and individual rights. Security concerns often lead governments to expand powers in areas such as surveillance, detention, and emergency governance, which can test the limits of constitutional safeguards. Constitutional law, in turn, provides the legal framework that defines, restricts, and legitimises such actions through mechanisms of accountability, judicial review, and rights protection. This dynamic relationship highlights how security can both justify temporary

⁴ https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501_1.pdf

⁵ <https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-PI%282020%29003-e>

restrictions of rights and be recognised as a right in itself, requiring careful legal calibration to ensure that the pursuit of safety does not erode the rule of law or democratic values.

3.4.3 Economic Law

Economic law and security are becoming increasingly intertwined. International economic linkages both support resilience by enabling diversified supply and investment options and generate vulnerabilities by creating dependencies that can be weaponised. In particular, trade and investment regimes must grapple with protecting critical sectors – such as semiconductors, energy, and digital infrastructure – through measures like investment screening, export restrictions, and rules to ensure supply chain integrity, all while balancing commitments under trade law (e.g. WTO disciplines) to openness, non-discrimination, transparency, and proportionality.⁶

3.4.4 Criminal Law

The relationship between criminal law and security reflects a deep transformation in how modern societies govern risk, order, and state power. Traditionally, criminal law was designed to respond to wrongdoing after it occurred, grounded in principles like legality, due process, and individual responsibility. In contrast, security focuses on prevention – anticipating and managing potential threats before they materialise. As these two domains increasingly overlap, criminal law has adopted preventive and risk-based logics, expanding its reach through measures such as anti-terrorism laws, surveillance, and pre-emptive offences. This convergence blurs the line between punishment and precaution, challenging long-standing distinctions between liberty and protection, and between past harm and future risk. While this interaction allows states to address complex global threats, it also raises critical questions about legitimacy, accountability, and the preservation of fundamental rights within a legal system that is becoming ever more oriented toward control and security.⁷

3.4.5 Environmental and Climate Law

Climate change must be understood not only as an environmental challenge but also as a profound and accelerating national security threat. Climate change acts as a “threat accelerant” and “catalyst for conflict”, exacerbating risks such as territorial loss from sea-level rise, resource scarcity, displacement, and humanitarian crises. In this new “climate–security nexus,” environmental and national security law, traditionally separate and sometimes in tension, are increasingly intertwined. Environmental law focuses on protecting ecosystems and human health through regulation and sustainability, while national security law often provides exemptions in emergencies. Climate change forces these legal regimes into alignment, as both aim to safeguard collective stability and survival.⁸

⁶ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/09/economic-security-in-a-changing-world_78f3b129.html

⁷ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1748895814541901>

⁸ https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty_scholarship/2101

3.4.6 Migration Law

The interaction of migration law and security reflects one of the most contested areas of contemporary governance, where states' sovereign interests in controlling borders intersect with international legal obligations to protect migrants and refugees. Over the past two decades, migration has been increasingly “securitised,” meaning that movement across borders is framed not primarily as a social or economic process, but as a potential threat to national security, public order, or cultural stability. This shift has deeply influenced the design and implementation of migration law, embedding security logics into legal frameworks that were originally grounded in rights and protection. Measures such as biometric registration, AI-driven border surveillance, and fast-track deportation procedures exemplify how legal tools once used for regulation are now instruments of control. Yet this convergence also raises significant ethical and legal tensions: how to uphold principles like non-refoulement, due process, and human dignity while responding to perceived security risks. The challenge is to rebalance this relationship – ensuring that migration law supports legitimate security objectives without eroding the international norms that safeguard mobility, diversity, and human rights.⁹

IV. How to implement the IFP

4.1 General

4.1.1 The cycle explained

The IFP on Law and Security is to be implemented throughout the three-year IFP cycle. The current cycle started on the 1st of August 2025 and is running until the 31st of July 2028.

As previously mentioned, each year of the cycle will have a specific yearly subtopic under the broader theme. The yearly subtopics serve as further inspiration and guidance, however, they are not mandatory to follow – projects on other IFP subtopics count as IFP events as well.

The yearly subtopics for the IFP on Law and Security are the following:

2025/2026: Legal Challenges of Cybersecurity in the Digital Era

2026/2027: International Security and Humanitarian Law

2027/2028: Disinformation and the Law: Security and Freedom of Expression

⁹ <https://doi.org/10.1017/elo.2024.55>

4.1.2 Local Groups

As Local Groups have direct contact with members and civil society, they perform the most important part of the IFP implementation by organising projects on the IFP topic. Because they are the ones organising the majority of the IFP events and usually are able to reach the target audience the best, their efforts are directly connected to the success of the programme.

4.1.3 National Groups

The IFP concerns the Local Groups first and foremost, yet the Local Groups are sometimes unaware of its existence. Thus, National Groups of ELSA are responsible for awareness-raising about the IFP and its current topic, at least by forwarding all relevant information from ELSA International to their Local Groups.

National Groups can inform and engage the Local Groups inter alia by presentations on the IFP at National Meetings, providing training on the IFP as well as the necessary basic understanding of the topic, running an internal IFP competition (for the best IFP event), and other initiatives keeping the Local Groups updated throughout the term.

Of course, National Groups can additionally conduct their own events and projects on IFP. Additionally, for National Groups without Local Groups, their role is the same and as important as for Local Groups.

4.1.4 Areas of ELSA

Even though the IFP's coordination responsibilities are placed primarily on AA, all of the Areas are included in its implementation. In practice, IFP events have often been AA and S&C events, which is why S&C is also included in IFP discussions. This, however, does not prevent the other Areas from engaging with the IFP as well.

The focus of the implementation is naturally on the Key Areas. However, Supporting Areas can also take the IFP into account in their work, in addition to supporting the organisation of the Key Area projects.

If each Key Area of an ELSA Group organises an IFP event/s on the same topic or topics linked together, it can also help materialise the **Educational Cycle** of ELSA, making the IFP a great opportunity for achieving it. According to the Educational Cycle, through S&C, participants gain knowledge; through AA and C, they get to apply the knowledge; and through PD, they get to utilise the knowledge in a real-world setting, e.g. a Traineeship, and/or gain insights into how lawyers work within the topic in the professional life.

4.2 Implementation in Key Areas

4.2.1 Implementation in Academic Activities

Through AA projects, participants get the opportunity to deepen their knowledge on the IFP topic by researching and actively applying their knowledge. AA projects can also impact society through various campaigns and initiatives. Thus, AA projects likely have the highest potential to encourage and facilitate discussions and to have an impact on a wider audience.

AA projects on IFP might be:

- **Legal Writing** on the topic of Law and Security, enabling law students and young lawyers to practise their legal writing and analytical skills, pivotal while working as a legal practitioner. Examples of such Legal Writing initiatives include:
 - **Legal Research Groups** on the topic of Law and Security or its subtopic, enabling comparisons on the regulatory developments in different countries;
 - **Law Reviews** focusing on Law and Security or relevant subtopics;
 - **Essay competitions** on subtopics.
- **Social Responsibility:** ELSA promotes social responsibility by encouraging members to actively contribute to society and raise awareness about legal issues. The IFP is an excellent tool to implement SR initiatives. When planning your campaign or event, define a clear societal goal and measure the impact of your initiative. Examples of possible SR events :
 - **Legal awareness campaigns:** Organise webinars or workshops on topics such as cybersecurity, data protection, or counter-terrorism measures and their impact on fundamental rights.
 - **Access to justice initiatives:** Hold clinics or online sessions to inform marginalized groups about their legal rights and procedures, e.g., victims of online harassment or discrimination.
 - **Non-formal education trainings:** Explore the balance between security measures and civil liberties, involving experts, students, and local communities.
 - **ELSA4schools:** different topics of IFP can be used to create educational materials for the students and educate them about important topics of Law and Security.
- **Advocacy** campaigns and/or events related to relevant subtopics or to events falling under the topic of the IFP.

4.2.2 Implementation in Seminars & Conferences

S&C events are some of the most commonly organised events across the Network. The high potential to improve the knowledge of participants makes them exemplary projects for providing legal education and raising awareness on the IFP topic of Law and Security.

S&C projects on IFP might be:

- **ELSA Webinars or ELSA Webinars Academy** on relevant subtopics – perfect for awareness-raising, as they have the opportunity to reach a wide audience. They are also a great and relatively easy way to collaborate with ELSA Groups from other countries in working with the IFP;
- **ELSA Law Schools** on Law and Security or a relevant subtopic (a subtopic is recommended). An ELSA Law School, concentrated on the topic of Law and Security, gives an opportunity for its participants to learn about the topic from speakers from all over the world. It also facilitates networking with peers from different countries, sharing the same passion towards the topic;
- **International Conferences of ELSA** on relevant subtopics. Organising a conference academically focused on a topic related to Law and Security is a great way to gather law students, legal academics and professionals in the field to facilitate awareness-raising and networking;
- **Lectures/seminars** on relevant subtopics. They are easy to organise and especially accessible to newer members of Local Groups wishing to engage with ELSA;
- **Institutional Visits** to relevant institutions and organisations, as the topic of Law and Security is very relevant for multiple institutions, and thus these visits have a lot to offer;
- **Study Visits** with an academic programme focused on the topic or a subtopic – an excellent way to learn about the topic from a new perspective in a new country. Bilateral or multilateral Study Visits would also enable comparisons between different countries.

4.2.3 Implementation in Competitions

It all comes to put your knowledge and passion into practice! Competing in moot courts, negotiating, interviewing, and debating enable participants to expand their knowledge on a particular topic while exploring multiple points of view and being open to understanding the problem fully. It is also the opportunity to encourage critical thinking and analytical reasoning while developing oral advocacy skills.

Competitions inspired by the IFP topic of Law and Security will help participants to deepen their understanding – possibly previously gained through e.g. S&C and AA projects – of the topic in question.

C projects on IFP might be:

- **Moot Court Competitions** exploring the (sub-)topics falling under Law and Security;
- **Legal Debates** debating e.g. fundamental issues related to Law and Security, such as the balance between freedom and security.
- New formats such as **Model of United Nations/Model of the European Union**, allowing participants to take on the roles of diplomats, policymakers, or government officials and gaining a deeper understanding of international decision-making and the legal frameworks that shape global and regional security!

4.2.4. Implementation in Professional Development

The Professional Development Key Area gives students and young lawyers the opportunity to see how Law and Security interact in professional life, giving the IFP a new dimension and linking PD events to the other Key Areas. PD events both showcase career opportunities related to the topic and develop the relevant professional skills of participants.

Different ways to implement IFP in Professional Development Projects can be:

- **ELSA Traineeships** by focusing on Job Hunting in Law Firms or Organisations that focus on security, and provide legal work. This way, PDers can indirectly support the IFP Topic through the continuation of a flagship project;
- **Career & Job Fairs**, by inviting employers who work within relevant fields, in order to present a wide range of possible legal career opportunities within Law and Security. Through Career and Job Fairs, it is possible not only to promote the IFP Topic, but simultaneously showcase different aspects of it, by inviting partner companies that work in different parts of legal security;
- **Lawyers at Work** events to engage ELSA members directly in how legal professionals operate in the field(s) covered by the topic of Law and Security. Relevant fields for companies and law firms can be, e.g. Cybersecurity Law, as well as Economic and Trade Law;
- **Legal Tandem** events, focusing on cross-national legal and security questions, and giving our members a cross-national and cross-cultural understanding of how security and law intertwine on an international level;
- **Professional Development Workshops**, focusing on soft skills that improve our members' ability to tackle law and security. This can be, for example, data literacy, personal data protection measures, cybersecurity or other topics of relevance.

4.3 Implementation in Supporting Areas

4.3.1 Implementation in Board Management, External Relations and Expansion

Partnerships: BEE can work with the IFP by establishing partnerships with law firms, international organisations, and institutions specialising in security law and relevant fields. These partners can e.g. support the organisation of Key Area projects on IFP.

4.3.2 Implementation in Internal Management

Data security: IM can have a special focus on developing best practices for handling sensitive legal information and ensuring compliance with the GDPR.

4.3.3 Implementation in Financial Management

Granting: FM can work on securing funding and grants from e.g. relevant institutions, public funding programmes.

4.3.4 Implementation in Marketing

Podcasts and interviews: MKT can create a podcast or a podcast episode on the IFP topic, and/or interview knowledgeable speakers.

Interactive Q&A sessions, infographics, and short legal analysis videos on social media can be used to educate the Network.

V. External Relations

This section aims to guide you through contacting and securing partners, both long-term and short-term partners. Establishing partnerships is often essential to successfully carrying out a project. Below, we have created this guide based on the needs of the IFP, but we have also included links to External Relations Material in the Officer's Portal. As the information provided here is not exhaustive, it is recommended to consult the BEE Guidelines for further details.

5.1 Who should you contact?

External Relations is not solely about securing money from partners. While maintaining the financial stability of the Group is important, partnerships can address a range of other needs. Additional funding may not be necessary at all times, but partnerships can help increase visibility, attract more participants, or enhance the overall impact of a project.

Choosing the right partners is essential to ensure that collaborations are both effective and sustainable. When identifying potential partners, the first step is to consider whether the partnership aligns with, not only your but also ELSA's vision, purpose and strategic objectives. Shared values and compatible goals are key to fostering trust and long-term commitment. Try to

assess the partner's reputation, reliability, and track record in similar initiatives. A simple Google search can often give you a solid picture of who the partner is in relation to others.

When deciding on who to contact, you need to clarify what you want from the partnership:

- Bodies such as educational institutions and research centres specialised in your chosen topic can provide expertise, knowledge and human resources for webinars, lectures etc.
- Private firms can offer financial support as well as logistics in the form of venues.
- Associations specialised in your chosen topic can provide credibility to your campaigns.
- University professors can assist in moot courts, essay competitions, seminars etc.

Remember that thoughtful partner selection lays the foundation for meaningful collaborations and long-lasting impact.

5.3 IFP selling points

Your goal with External Relations is to build partnerships by convincing others to support your initiatives. To do this effectively, it is essential to focus on the needs and expectations of your potential partner. Take time to understand who your potential partner is and what their interests are. But don't forget your own objectives to please a potential partner. Maintaining this mindset throughout the partnership process is key. Always consider what the other party values and how you can create value for them.

A relevant topic

- Addresses some of the most pressing challenges in the world, such as cybersecurity, disinformation, the rule of law in crisis and terrorism.
- Contributes to current debates on balancing security and fundamental rights.
- A growing topic of importance for governments, organisations and citizens.
- Aligns with international framework, e.g. UN Sustainable Development Goals and EU security and justice policies.

Academic and professional value

- Strengthen critical legal thinking and practical skills.
- Offers opportunities to network and collaborate with legal professionals, institutions, law students and young lawyers.

Social impact

- Promotes respect for human rights and accountability.
- Encourages a human rights-based approach to national and international security.
- Supports the development of the complex challenges that come with new technologies.

Innovation and future outlook

- Explores the legal implications of emerging technologies.

- Encourages forward-looking dialogue on the evolving relations between security, freedom and the rule of law.
- Contributes to shaping the next generation of legal professionals.

5.2 How to initiate contact?

There are different ways to contact a potential partner. The most common one is via email. Be mindful when using a general email found on their website, as organisations tend to have different emails for different departments within the organisation. Make sure that you choose the one that best fits your initial proposal. But don't let this scare you, if you end up choosing the wrong email address, they are often able to guide you to the correct department.

5.2.1 Initial contact

When writing an initial email, it is important to capture the reader's attention from the very beginning. It is therefore important to clearly state your purpose in the first few lines. Keep your email concise and focused, but provide enough context to show genuine interest and professionalism. Ensure that your message is easy to understand and that the reader immediately grasps why you are contacting them. If you would like to share additional information, you may include one or two short attachments to support your proposal.

In addition to clearly stating your purpose, it is essential to explain why you are reaching out to that specific organisation. Describe why you believe a partnership would be valuable for them. Highlight how your goals align and how both parties could benefit from a partnership. By demonstrating that you have done your research and see potential for mutual value, you and your proposal become more compelling and increase the likelihood of a positive response.

A good email is structured as follows:

- Introduction of yourself and purpose of contact;
- Presentation of ELSA, both Local/National and International;
- Explanation of the purpose of contacting the organisation;
- Conclusion.

You can read more about the structure of a good email on the Officers Portal, [How to approach and what to prepare](#).

When contacting a potential partner, it is important to have in mind that formalities may be important. Be aware of them and respect them when addressing a potential partner.

If you are interested in starting a more complex partnership, starting off slow and smaller can be better. A good start can be to invite the organisation to be a speaker or panellist at one of your events.

5.2.2 If you don't receive a response

It is not uncommon for organisations not to respond immediately to your email. In such cases, sending a polite reminder can be an effective way to follow up. A good rule regarding reminding emails is to not send it too close to the original email and not too long after it either, to avoid being forgotten. A general guideline is to follow up one to two weeks after your first email.

If you still don't hear from them after your first reminder, you can send one final reminder. If they still do not respond, it is better to put your resources elsewhere. You can try to contact a different person within the organisation or leave it altogether.

5.2.3 Contact Approval Form

In accordance with the Decision Book, all ELSA Groups must comply with the External Relations Procedure in order to contact a third party. In short, this means that you must submit a CAF before contacting a third party.

You can find a guide to the External Relations Procedure [here](#).

You find the Contact Approval Form [here](#).

5.4 Partner Packages

Creating partner packages can significantly simplify the process of securing partnerships. Having packages prepared in advance allows you to discuss them with your board and reach an agreement on what can be offered to potential partners. This preparation makes negotiations smoother and more efficient, as you avoid starting from scratch each time and can present consistent, well-structured proposals.

Regardless of whether the partnership is general or project-based, there are usually three main categories of benefits that can be offered.

Visibility: Permanent or static exposure of the partner's brand (e.g., through websites or printed materials).

Promotion: Active and periodic visibility (e.g., through social media posts, newsletters, or event mentions).

Network Engagement: Direct opportunities for the partner to engage with your members or audiences (e.g., participation in events, projects, or workshops).

The first step in creating these packages is to identify the tools and resources available within each category. A tier of packages is often the preferred approach, as each level can build upon the previous one, providing flexibility and options during negotiations.

It is important to remember that partner packages should serve as guidelines. Use them as a framework that can be adjusted to suit the interests and needs of your potential partner. Always ensure fairness and proportionality between what you offer and what you request. Maintain the same conditions across partners. Offering different prices or terms for the same package can

damage your credibility and trust. Transparency and fairness build stronger, long-term partnerships.