

WEBSITE MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

INTERNAL MANAGEMENT 2024/2025



The European Law Students' Association

WordPress Basics: A Beginner's Guide

Provided by ELSA

Why We Created This Guide and Chose WordPress?

Building a website can feel overwhelming, especially if it is your first time. Recognizing this, we developed this guide to empower ELSA Groups to independently and confidently build and manage their websites sustainably. This guide aims to provide a clear, structured, and ELSA-tailored roadmap that requires no coding skills. Our decision to focus on WordPress is based on the results of the IT Survey 2025 conducted across the Network, which showed that most National and Local Groups already use this platform. Despite its widespread use, many reported receiving little to no formal handover or training, leaving them to manage or rebuild websites without sufficient support. By documenting essential processes and providing step-by-step instructions, this guide addresses that gap and serves as a self-help resource specifically designed for the ELSA context.

This handbook guides you through crucial aspects such as selecting a theme and customizing it to reflect ELSA's identity, structuring and creating pages for your local or national group, installing valuable plugins for contact forms, backups, and more, as well as configuring key settings related to privacy, security, and site visibility. Beyond the basics, it provides practical and strategic advice, supplemented with relevant ELSA examples and optional tips for advanced users. Let us get started!

ELSAfully yours,

Mie Tveit

Secretary General | International Board of ELSA 2024/2025

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Table of Contents

I. Before You Start: Hosting & Domain Basics.....	2
I. Installing WordPress.....	3
II. Accessing Your WordPress Dashboard.....	5
III. Setting Up Your Website — WordPress Settings in a Nutshell.....	6
IV. Building a Clear and Professional Website Structure.....	10
V. Creating Menus & Navigation.....	11
VI. Choosing and Customising a Theme.....	13
VII. Using Plugins to Enhance Your ELSA Website.....	17
VIII. Create and Manage Your Content.....	19
IX. Accessibility in Web design.....	23
X. Compliance, Data Privacy & Site Protection.....	24
XI. Backups.....	25
XII. Final Words and Further Guidance.....	27

I. Before You Start: Hosting & Domain Basics

Building your website with WordPress starts with two essentials: securing a domain name and choosing a reliable web hosting provider. These foundational steps ensure your site is accessible, secure, and ready to grow with your ELSA Group.

What is a Domain Name?

A domain name is your website's unique address on the internet — what people type into their browser to find you. Examples include elsa-example.org, elsa-frankfurt.de

How to Choose Your Domain Name:

- Use a domain name that matches your ELSA Group's official name.
- Prefer country-specific domains (e.g., .de, .se, .pl) when available to build local trust and consistency.
- Keep the domain short, simple, and easy to remember.
- Avoid numbers, special characters, or complicated spellings.
- Register the domain for at least one year; consider multi-year registrations to ensure continuity.
- Use lowercase letters only for simplicity and to avoid confusion.

Where to Register:

Domains can be registered via hosting providers or dedicated registrars. Choose a reputable provider that supports easy management and renewal.

Recommendation for Groups Without a Website Yet:

If your group doesn't have a website yet, we recommend discussing the overall web strategy within your national group. In many cases, it is more efficient and sustainable for Local Groups (LGs) to be represented via a sub-page on the National Group's (NG's) website. This simplifies technical maintenance, ensures visual consistency, and strengthens unified communication under one national domain.

What is Web Hosting?

Web hosting is the service that stores your website's files and makes them accessible online. Without hosting, your WordPress site cannot function.

Hosting options vary: some providers offer beginner-friendly services with one-click WordPress installations, while others offer more advanced flexibility with manual setups. Choose a provider that fits your group's needs and technical comfort level.

When selecting a host, ensure they provide:

- Access to **cPanel** or a similar control panel for easy file and backup management
- An **SSL certificate** to enable secure https:// connections
- Support for **PHP** and **MySQL**, which are required to run WordPress
- The ability to create **email addresses** linked to your domain (e.g., info@elsa-example.org)
- Compliance with the **minimum WordPress technical requirements**, including:
 - **PHP version 8.0 or higher**
 - **MySQL version 5.7 / MariaDB 10.4 or higher**
 - **At least 512 MB memory limit** (recommended: 1 GB or more for smoother performance)

You can always find the latest requirements at wordpress.org/about/requirements.

Next Steps Once You Have Your Domain & Hosting:

- Install WordPress, often achievable with a single click from your hosting dashboard
- Log into your new WordPress site at yourdomain.org/wp-admin
- Begin customizing your site confidently with the help of this guide!

Note:

If your group already has a domain and hosting but lacks access credentials, reach out to past board members or check your Local or National ELSA Drive. If no access can be recovered, contact the ELSA International IT Team for further assistance.

I. Installing WordPress

Once your hosting and domain are in place, the next step is to install WordPress. Most hosting providers offer streamlined installation options, so no advanced technical knowledge is required.

There are two main ways to install WordPress:

- One-Click Installation (recommended for beginners)
- Manual Installation (for cases where one-click options are unavailable)

1. Option A: One-Click Installation (Recommended)

Many hosting providers include tools such as Softaculous, WordPress Manager, or 1-Click Installer, enabling you to set up WordPress in just a few minutes.

Steps to Follow:

1. Log in to your hosting control panel (often called “cPanel”).
2. Locate the WordPress installer under “Softaculous” or “Apps Installer.”
3. Click “Install.”

4. Complete the form by:
 - o Selecting your domain (e.g., elsa-example.org)
 - o Entering your Site Title (e.g., “ELSA Example”)
 - o Choosing an admin username, password, and email address
(Important: Save these credentials carefully, as you will need them to log in to WordPress.)
5. Click “Install Now.”
6. Once the process finishes, access your WordPress login at <https://yourdomain.org/wp-admin>.

You’re all set! You can now log in and start building your website.

2. Option B: Manual Installation (Advanced)

If your hosting provider does not support automatic installation, you may need to install WordPress manually. This method requires some prior experience.

What You’ll Need:

- Access to your hosting control panel (cPanel or similar)
- A MySQL database
- File Manager or FTP access

Simplified Manual Steps:

1. Download the latest WordPress package from wordpress.org/download.
2. Upload the WordPress files to your hosting account’s public_html folder.
3. Create a MySQL database and user within your control panel.
4. Open your website in a browser and follow the WordPress setup wizard.
5. Enter your database details, site title, and admin credentials as prompted.
6. Complete the installation and log in at yourdomain.org/wp-admin.

Please note, manual installation is recommended only if you have previous experience or cannot use one-click installation tools.

Important Recommendations:

- Always store your login credentials securely.
- Avoid using “admin” as your username to enhance security.
- Use a group or board email address for the admin account rather than a personal email.

II. Accessing Your WordPress Dashboard

After installing WordPress, the next step is to log in and familiarize yourself with the dashboard—the central hub where you manage your entire website.

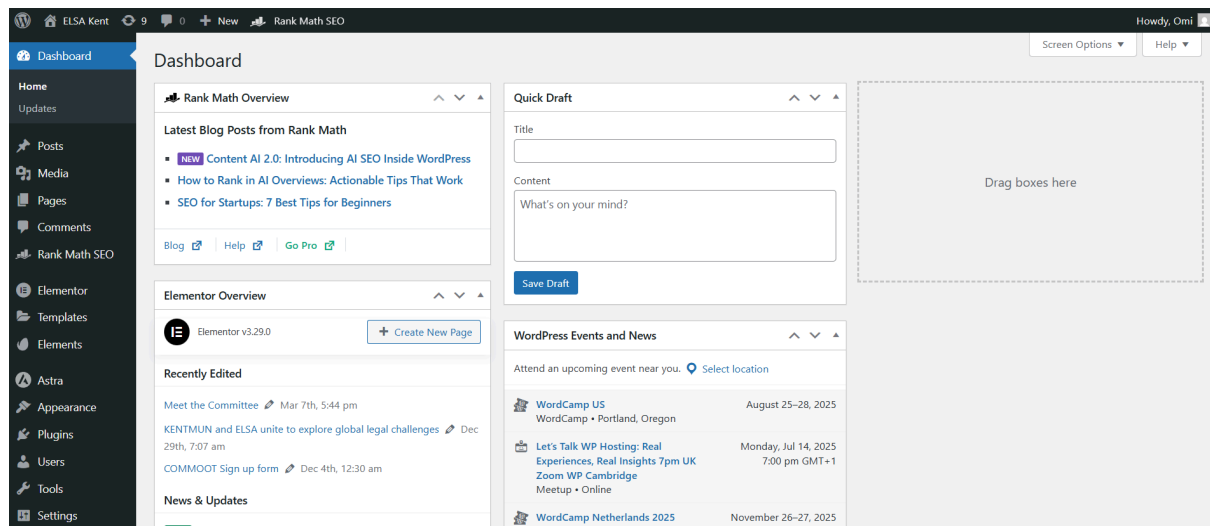
How to Log In

Access your website's admin area by navigating to: <https://yourdomain.org/wp-admin>

Enter the username and password you created during the installation process.

Tip: Bookmark this page—it will be your primary gateway to managing your site.

Welcome to the Dashboard



Upon logging in, you will see the WordPress Dashboard. While it may seem complex at first glance, focus on a few key areas to get started confidently.

Main Menu Overview (left sidebar):

- **Dashboard** – Quick overview of your site and important updates
- **Posts** – Manage blog articles or news updates
- **Pages** – Create and edit essential pages such as About, Contact, Events
- **Media** – Upload and organize images, PDFs, videos
- **Appearance** – Customize themes, menus, widgets, and overall design
- **Plugins** – Add functionality like contact forms, backups, or sliders
- **Settings** – Configure site name, language, timezone, and other options

First Steps After Logging In:

1. Change your password to a strong, secure one (Users > Profile)
2. Set your site language and timezone (Settings > General)
3. Create your first page (Pages > Add New)
4. Install your theme (Appearance > Themes > Add New)

Take your time—focus on one step at a time rather than trying to do everything at once.

User Access and Roles

By default, the person who installs WordPress is assigned the “Administrator” role, which grants full

control over the site. You can add additional users as needed under:
Users > Add New

Common user roles include:

- **Administrator** – Full access (recommended only for the IT team, your Secretary General)
- **Editor** – Can manage and publish all content
- **Author/Contributor** – Can write and manage their own posts
- **Subscriber** – Typically for registered members, with limited access

Helpful Tips:

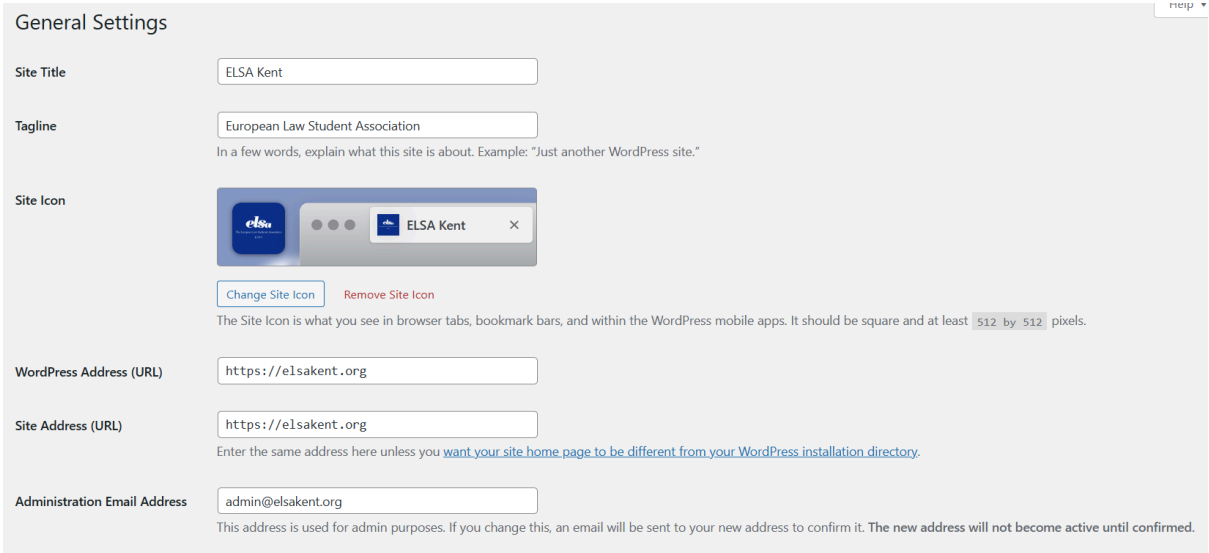
- WordPress autosaves your work regularly, but it is wise to manually save drafts frequently.
- Preview pages or posts before publishing to ensure everything looks right.
- No coding skills are necessary; WordPress allows you to manage content visually and intuitively.

III. Setting Up Your Website — WordPress Settings in a Nutshell

The **Settings** section in WordPress is where you configure the essential details that shape your website's identity, functionality, and user experience. This guide will walk you through the key settings you need to know, helping you make informed decisions to set your site up properly from the start.

General Settings

Located at **Settings > General**, this section defines your site's core identity and operation



The screenshot shows the 'General Settings' page in WordPress. It includes fields for Site Title (ELSA Kent), Tagline (European Law Student Association), Site Icon (a blue square with 'elsa' text), WordPress Address (URL) (https://elsakent.org), Site Address (URL) (https://elsakent.org), and Administration Email Address (admin@elsakent.org). The page also features a 'Change Site Icon' button and a 'Remove Site Icon' link. A note at the bottom states: 'This address is used for admin purposes. If you change this, an email will be sent to your new address to confirm it. The new address will not become active until confirmed.'

. It contains:

- **Site Title:** This is your website's name. Depending on your theme, it may appear in your site header, menus, and browser tab.
- **Tagline (Short Description):** A brief description of your site's purpose, often shown below the title or in the browser tab.

- **WordPress Address (URL):** The location of your WordPress installation. If installed in the root folder, it usually matches your main website URL (e.g., <https://yourdomain.org>).
- **Site Address (URL):** The public URL visitors use to access your site. Usually the same as the WordPress Address unless your site runs from a subdirectory but you want visitors to use the root domain.
- **Administration Email:** This is where important system notifications are sent (updates, alerts, registrations). Use a group email to ensure continuity across board transitions.
- **Membership:** Enable only if you want users to register on your site (e.g., for forums or member areas). Otherwise, keep it unchecked to prevent unwanted registrations.
- **New User Default Role:** Determines what permissions new users have upon registration. Usually, "Subscriber" is appropriate for most sites.
- **Site Language:** Set the default language for your dashboard and system messages.
- **Timezone:** Choose your local time zone for accurate timestamps.
- **Date and Time Format:** Customize how dates and times display across your site (e.g., "11 April 2025" or 24-hour clock).
- **Week Starts On:** Typically set to Monday, this controls calendar displays.
-

Reading Settings

Found at **Settings > Reading**, these options control how your homepage and content lists appear to visitors.

Reading Settings Help ▾

Your homepage displays

☐ Your latest posts

☒ A static page (select below)

Homepage: European Law Students Association Kent (UK) ▾

Posts page: — Select — ▾

Blog pages show at most posts

Syndication feeds show the most recent items

For each post in a feed, include

☒ Full text

☐ Excerpt

Your theme determines how content is displayed in browsers. [Learn more about feeds.](#)

Search engine visibility

☐ Discourage search engines from indexing this site

It is up to search engines to honor this request.

[Save Changes](#)

It contains functions as:

- **Your Homepage Displays:**
 - **Your Latest Posts:** Shows your most recent blog articles (ideal for blogs or news sites).

- **A Static Page:** Choose a specific page as your homepage (recommended for most groups for a professional, structured look). You can also assign a separate page for blog posts.
- **Blog Pages Show at Most:** Controls how many posts appear per page (default is 10). Adjust to balance content volume and readability.
- **For Each Article in a Feed:** Choose between full text or an excerpt. Excerpts are recommended to encourage visitors to read full articles on your site and protect your content.
- **Search Engine Visibility:**
 - Check “Discourage search engines...” only during site development or maintenance to keep your site hidden from search engines.
 - Uncheck this when ready to launch so Google and others can index your content. Register with Google Search Console to boost visibility.

Comment Settings

Located under **Settings > Discussion**, this area controls user comments.

- For static sites such as all ELSA sites, it is best to **disable comments** to avoid spam and unnecessary clutter.
- Key options include:
 - Allow link notifications (pingbacks and trackbacks): Disable to reduce spam.
 - Allow people to comment on new posts: Disable if your site is not a blog or discussion platform.

Permalink Settings

Permalinks Settings — Optimized for a Static ELSA Website

Permalinks define the URL structure of your website. For a static site like an ELSA group’s online “business card,” clear and simple URLs are essential. They enhance professionalism and improve search engine visibility.

To configure, go to your WordPress dashboard under **Settings > Permalinks**.

Permalink Settings

WordPress offers you the ability to create a custom URL structure for your permalinks and archives. Custom URL structures can improve the aesthetics, usability, and forward-compatibility of your links. A [number of tags](#) are available, and here are some examples to get you started.

Common Settings

Select the permalink structure for your website. Including the `%postname%` tag makes links easy to understand, and can help your posts rank higher in search engines.

Permalink structure

☐ Plain
`https://elsakent.org/?p=123`

☐ Day and name
`https://elsakent.org/2025/05/26/sample-post/`

☐ Month and name
`https://elsakent.org/2025/05/sample-post/`

☐ Numeric
`https://elsakent.org/archives/123`

☐ Post name
`https://elsakent.org/sample-post/`

☒ Custom Structure
`https://elsakent.org/`

Available tags:

WordPress offers several URL formats. For a static website, here's what matters most:

- **Plain (?p=123):** Not recommended. URLs are hard to read and offer no SEO benefit.
- **Day and name** or **Month and name:** Designed for blogs or news sites, unnecessary for a static page.
- **Numeric (/archives/123):** Like “Plain,” this format is not user-friendly and should be avoided.
- **Post name (/about-us, /contact):** The best choice for static sites. Clean, simple, and easy to remember.
- **Custom Structure:** Allows more control, e.g., `/category/%postname%/`, but usually better suited for larger, more complex sites with multiple content categories.

Recommended option for your ELSA website:

- Select **Post name** as your permalink structure. This will create concise URLs like `/about-us` or `/events`, which visitors can easily understand and recall.

Important:

Set your permalink structure before publishing your pages. Changing it later can break existing links and negatively impact SEO.

IV. Building a Clear and Professional Website Structure

A successful ELSA website is simple, well-organized, and user-friendly, ensuring visitors can quickly access the most relevant information. Below is a list of essential pages that every local or national ELSA group should consider including, along with recommendations for content and layout.

Homepage: Your homepage serves as the first point of contact with visitors. It should be inviting and clearly communicate who you are and what you do. Recommended content:

- Brief introduction to ELSA and your local or national group
- ELSA Vision Statement
- Highlights of past activities (e.g., Moot Courts, Study Visits, Human Rights projects)
- Clear call-to-action (e.g., “Join Us,” “See Our Events”)

Tip: Use a static page as your homepage for greater control over the layout (see “Reading Settings”).

About Us: Provide visitors with a deeper understanding of your group’s purpose and people. Suggested content:

- What is ELSA? (Brief summary with a link to elsa.org)
- Overview of your local or national group (city, country, or region)
- Contact email & introduction of your team members
- Link to legal Documents

Events / Projects: Showcase your group’s recent and upcoming initiatives and ELSA Project portfolio.

Includes:

- A portfolio & explanation of all applicable ELSA Projects
- Event calendar or timeline of activities
- Registration links or relevant documents
- Recaps of past events with photos, reports, or videos

Contact: Make it straightforward for visitors to reach you. Key elements:

- Contact form (e.g., via Contact Form 7 or Forminator plugin)
- Official email address and social media links
- Physical address (if applicable)

Legal Pages (Required): To comply with GDPR and legal requirements, include the following:

- **Privacy Policy:** Clear explanation of how user data is collected and handled
- **Legal Notice:** Mandatory in many European countries, especially if personal data is processed or tracking tools are used

Optional but Useful Pages: Depending on your group's activities, consider adding:

- Blog or News section for announcements and updates
- Join Us / Membership details explaining how students can become members
- Partners / Sponsors page with logos and links
- FAQ section addressing common questions about events, applications, or ELSA itself

Pro Tip: Keep It Simple

Quality over quantity. A focused website with 5 to 7 well-crafted pages is more effective than a cluttered site with many incomplete sections. Prioritize clear navigation and relevant content to make a professional impression.

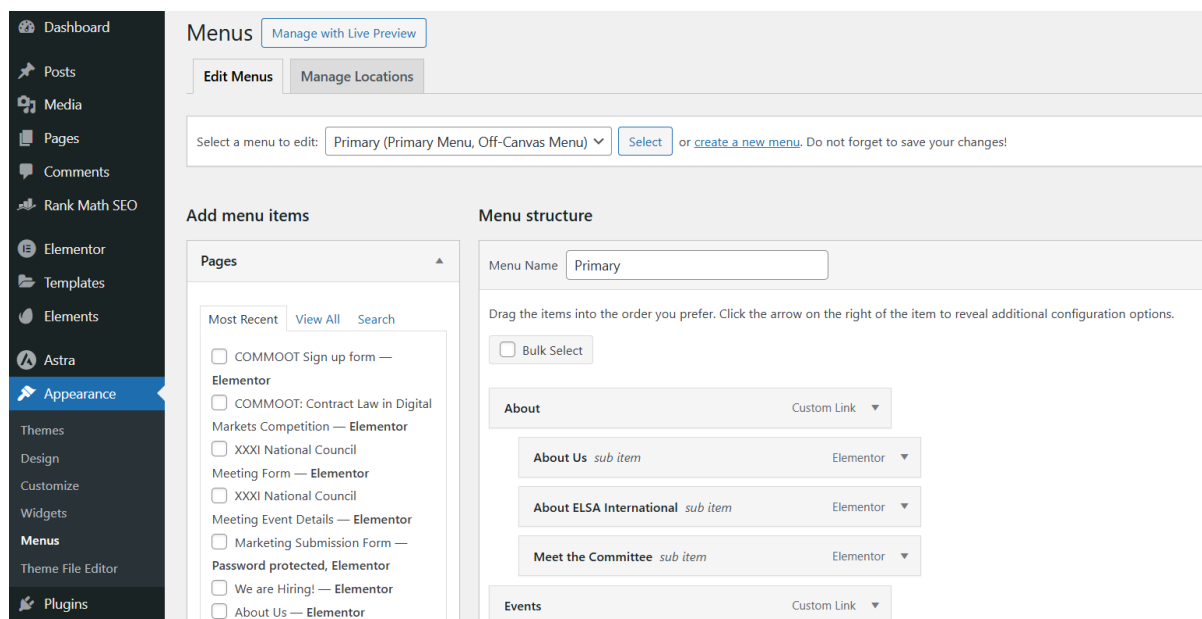
V. Creating Menus & Navigation

A clear and intuitive navigation menu is essential for any ELSA website. It allows visitors to quickly find relevant information and helps convey the structure and professionalism of your group. This chapter guides you through the process of creating and customizing menus in WordPress, with practical tips and best practices tailored to local and national ELSA groups.

Accessing the Menu Editor:

To manage your website's navigation structure, log into your WordPress dashboard and go to:

Appearance > Menus



Here you can create new menus, assign items, and define where and how your menu appears.

Creating and Configuring a Menu:

To create a main navigation menu, follow these steps:

1. Navigate to **Appearance > Menus**.
2. Click on **Create a new menu**.
3. Give your menu a descriptive name (e.g. *Main Menu*) and click **Create Menu**.
4. Use the panel on the left to select and add the pages you want to include.
5. Click **Add to Menu**.
6. Use drag-and-drop to arrange the menu items in your preferred order.
7. To create sub-menus (dropdowns), indent items by dragging them slightly to the right under a parent item.
8. Assign your menu to a display location—typically marked as *Primary Menu* or similar, depending on your theme.
9. Click **Save Menu** to finalize the structure.

Once published, your menu will appear on your website according to the layout and location specified by your theme.

Best Practices for ELSA Menus:

To ensure clarity and usability, consider the following:

- **Keep it concise:** 5 to 7 main items are usually sufficient.
- **Use intuitive labels:** Avoid complex or overly long titles.

- **Group similar content:** Combine related topics under shared headings (e.g. all events under *Events*).
- **Prioritize key pages:** Place important links like *About*, *Events*, and *Contact* early in the menu.

Adding Other Types of Content:

WordPress menus support more than just standard pages. You can also include:

- **Custom Links** – e.g. external websites, forms, or documents.
- **Post Categories** – useful for organizing blogs or updates.
- **Individual Posts** – e.g. news, highlights, or special announcements.

These options are available in the left-hand panel of the menu editor and can be added the same way as pages.

Design Features and Enhancements:

Depending on your theme, additional menu features may be available:

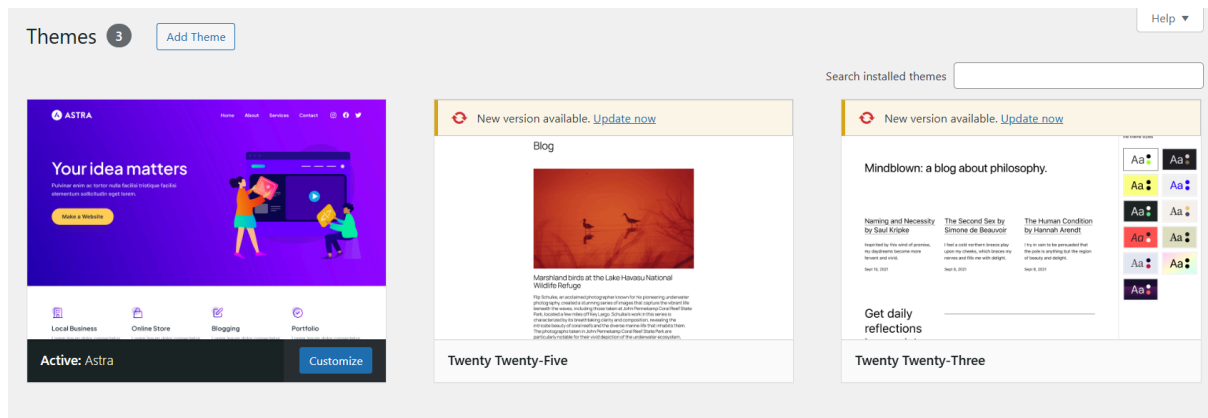
- **Menu icons** can be added using plugins such as *Menu Icons*.
- **Sticky menus** keep navigation visible while scrolling.
- **Responsive design** ensures menus work well on mobile devices, which is standard in most modern themes.

VI. Choosing and Customising a Theme

A WordPress theme defines the overall design and appearance of a website by combining styles, colours, images, fonts, and layout elements. While the website content, such as posts, pages, and categories, remains the same, themes allow you to present this content in multiple ways. For ELSA groups, choosing a theme that aligns with the organisation's brand identity is crucial for a consistent and professional look.

Accessing and Managing Themes

To manage themes in WordPress, navigate to **Appearance > Themes** in the dashboard menu.



From here, you can:

- Activate or deactivate themes
- Configure theme-specific options
- Edit theme files (if permitted)
- Install new themes by uploading a .zip file or browsing the official WordPress theme directory

It is recommended to select themes from the official WordPress repository, as these tend to be reliable, regularly updated, and fully compatible with WordPress core updates. Click **Add New** to browse available themes, and consider popular options that receive frequent updates and offer good support. Recommended themes include:

- OceanWP
- Astra
- GeneratePress
- Hello Elementor

Customising Your Theme

Once a theme is activated, you can customise its appearance by going to **Appearance > Customise**, which opens the WordPress Customizer.



Here, you can:

- Upload your group's **logo** and **favicon**
- Set the **colour scheme** aligned with ELSA's brand palette
- Choose fonts and adjust text sizes
- Define layout options for the homepage, menus, and sidebars
- Add header images or backgrounds if supported by the theme

Colour Scheme

A well-chosen colour scheme is essential to create a visually appealing and user-friendly website. For ELSA, the colour palette should be consistent with the official brand identity as described in the ELSA BrandBook 2024/2025. The recommended approach is to use three complementary colours:



RGB: 10 48 135
CMYK: 100 85 0 0
HEX: #0a3087



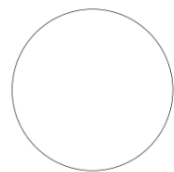
RGB: 255 116 0
CMYK: 0 64 94 0
HEX: #ff7400



RGB: 0 0 0
CMYK: 0 0 0 100
HEX: #000000



RGB: 102 102 102
CMYK: 0 0 0 60
HEX: #666666



RGB: 255 255 255
CMYK: 0 0 0 0
HEX: #ffffff

- **Primary Colour:** This dominant colour should be the basis of your site's design. For ELSA, this is a deep blue (#0a3087).
- **Secondary Colour:** Use this to differentiate sections such as navigation menus, footers, or text. A muted or darker shade of blue works well.
- **Highlight Colour:** This colour is used sparingly to attract attention to important elements like buttons, links, or categories. For ELSA, a vibrant orange (#ff7400) or an alternate shade of blue is recommended.

Maintaining a balanced design involves adjusting brightness or intensity between these colours. Refer to the ELSA BrandBook for detailed guidance.

Fonts

The website should use **Lato** only, in line with our Brandbook. It is a clean, modern font that ensures readability and a professional look.

Font weights should be applied as follows:

- **Lato Black** for main headings (H1)
- **Lato Bold** for subheadings (H2)
- **Lato Regular** for body text
- **Lato Light** for captions and smaller text

Recommended font sizes for accessibility:

- **H1:** 32–36 px
- **H2:** 24–28 px
- **Body text:** 16–18 px
- **Captions:** 12–14 px

Logo Design

Your website logo is a key element of consistent branding and should reflect the identity of your ELSA group. Use the official ELSA logo prominently in:

- Website headers
- Favicons (the small icon shown in browser tabs and search results)
- Social media graphics

If you do not have a logo for your local or national group, you may use tools like the ELSA Sweden Logo Generator to create one quickly.

Favicon

A favicon is a small icon shown next to your website's title in browser tabs, bookmarks, and history. For ELSA groups, it acts as a quick visual identifier of your local or national group's website, helping members and visitors recognize your site easily among multiple tabs or saved links.

How Does It Look?

Favicons appear as tiny images—usually 16x16 pixels—in browser tabs. Higher resolution versions are used on bookmarks and mobile devices to ensure clarity.

How to Create a Favicon: Your favicon should be a version of your group’s logo. This ensures consistent branding and immediate recognition. You can create one using free tools like Canva or Favicon.io by uploading your logo and adjusting it to fit the small size.

Recommended Size and Format

- Recommended size: at least **512x512 pixels** for high quality on all devices (WordPress generates smaller sizes automatically).
- File format: **PNG** with transparent background is preferred to maintain visual clarity.

Adding a Favicon in WordPress

In WordPress, upload your favicon via **Appearance > Customize > Site Identity > Site Icon**. WordPress will handle resizing and ensure your group’s logo appears correctly as a favicon across browsers and devices.

VII. Using Plugins to Enhance Your ELSA Website

Plugins are add-ons that extend the core capabilities of your WordPress website, allowing you to add new features and improve user experience without needing to write any code. With thousands of plugins available, you can tailor your ELSA website to your group’s specific needs—whether that means creating dynamic pages, managing events, or collecting membership information.

Installing and Managing Plugins

The screenshot displays the WordPress 'Add Plugins' dashboard. At the top, there's a search bar and a 'Help' dropdown. Below the search bar, there are tabs for 'Featured', 'Popular', 'Recommended', 'Favorites', and 'For Elementor'. The 'Featured' tab is selected. The dashboard shows a grid of four plugin cards. Each card includes a plugin icon, name, description, 'Install Now' button, 'More Details' link, star rating, number of active installations, last update date, and compatibility status.

Plugin Name	Developer	Rating	Active Installations	Last Updated	Compatibility
Elementor Website Builder – More Than Just a Page Builder	By Elementor	★★★★★ (7,048)	10+ Million	1 week ago	Untested with your version of WordPress
Contact Form 7	By Takayuki Miyoshi	★★★★☆ (2,131)	10+ Million	2 months ago	Compatible with your version of WordPress
Yoast SEO	By Yoast	★★★★★ (27,762)	10+ Million	2 weeks ago	Compatible with your version of WordPress
Classic Editor	By WordPress.org	★★★★★ (1,204)	10+ Million	6 months ago	Untested with your version of WordPress

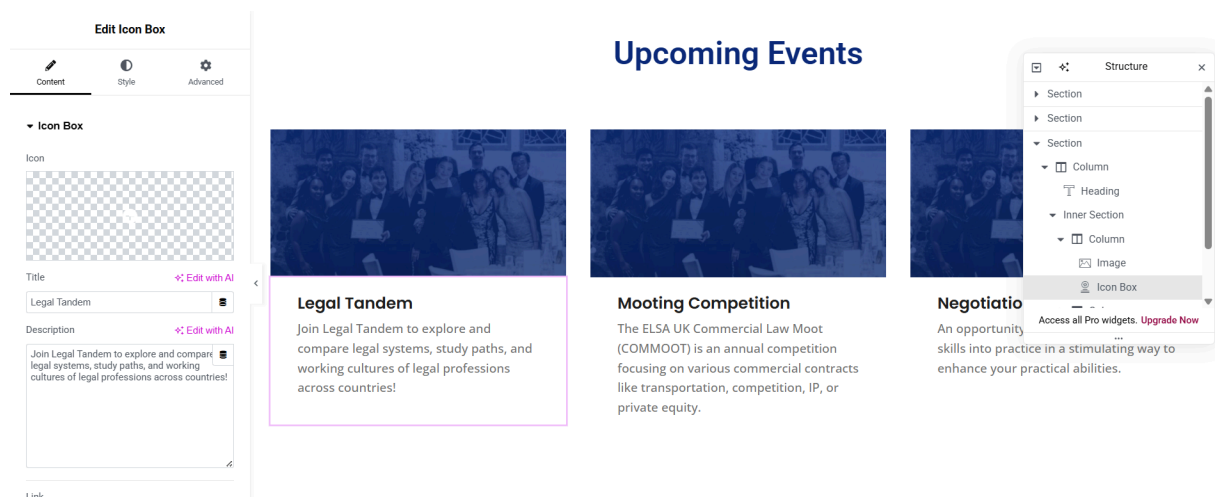
To add or manage plugins, go to **Dashboard > Plugins**. Here you can:

- Search for new plugins from the official WordPress repository
- Install plugins by clicking “Install Now” and then “Activate”
- Update existing plugins to ensure security and compatibility
- Deactivate or delete plugins that are no longer needed

Only install plugins from trusted sources and keep them updated to maintain site performance and security.

Recommended Plugins for ELSA Websites:

- **Elementor – Page Builder:** Elementor is an intuitive drag-and-drop page builder that allows you to create professional and visually appealing layouts without programming. It lets you edit and arrange content elements such as text, images, and buttons flexibly and in real time.



- **Form Plugins:** Form plugins enable you to easily add contact forms, registration forms, or feedback forms to your website.

- **Contact Form 7**

Contact Form 7 is one of the most widely used free plugins for creating forms. It offers great flexibility and can be embedded into any page or post via shortcode.

How to create a form with Contact Form 7:

1. Install and activate the plugin via **Dashboard > Plugins > Add New**.
2. Go to **Contact > Contact Forms**, edit the default form or create a new one.
3. Customize or add form fields in the editor (e.g., name, email, message).

4. Under the “Mail” tab, set the recipient email address where form submissions will be sent.
5. Save the form and copy the generated shortcode.
6. Paste the shortcode wherever you want the form to appear (e.g., in a page or post).
7. Test the form on the frontend to ensure it works correctly and emails are delivered.

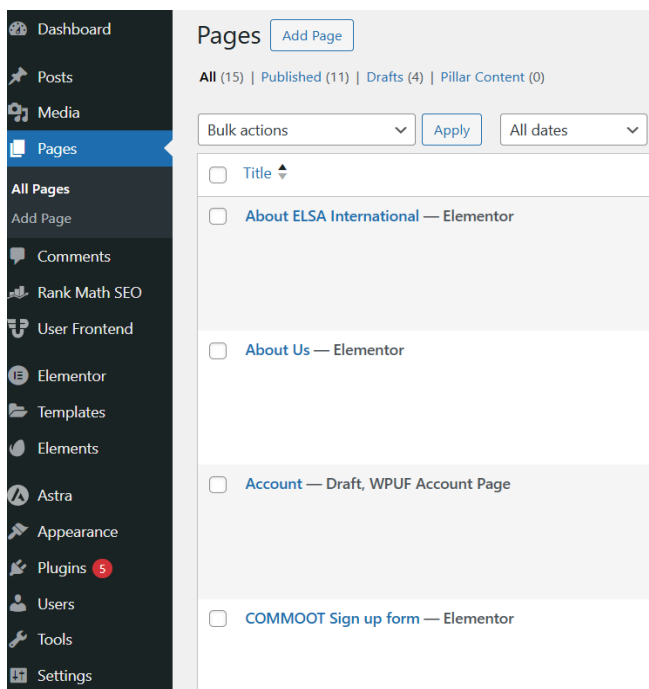
Contact Form 7 is ideal for quickly and easily integrating functional contact and registration forms.

VIII. Create and Manage Your Content

When building your website, it is important to understand the difference between posts and pages, as they serve different purposes. This section will guide you through creating and managing both, using tools like Elementor to design your content effectively, and navigating the publishing options to control when and how your content goes live.

Post and Pages: Understanding the Difference:

In WordPress, posts and pages serve distinct but complementary purposes.



- **Posts:** are time-based content entries mainly used for blog articles, updates, or announcements. They appear with the most recent posts first and can be organised with categories and tags.

- **Pages:** are intended for timeless content such as “About Us”, “Contact”, “Privacy Policy”, or any information that forms part of the site’s core structure.

Creating a New Post or Page

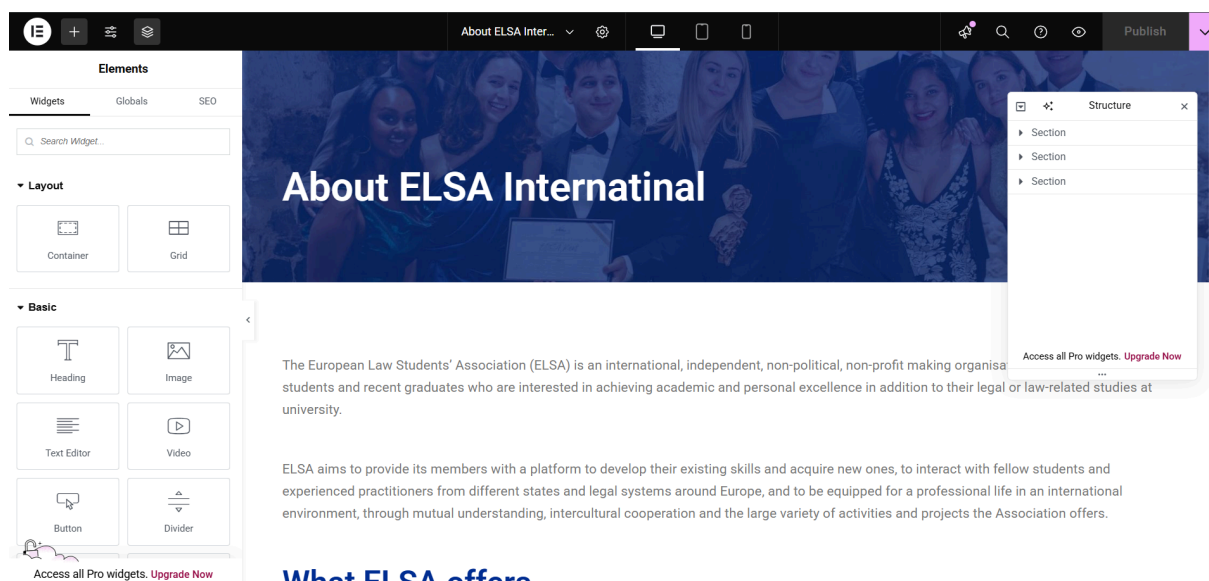
To create a new post or page, go to the WordPress dashboard and select either Posts > Add New or Pages > Add New.

You will be taken to the WordPress Block Editor where you can:

- Add a title
- Write and format your content
- Insert media such as images, videos, or audio
- Use blocks to structure content like headings, paragraphs, lists, quotes, buttons.

Designing Pages Visually with Elementor:

Elementor is a powerful drag-and-drop page builder plugin for WordPress. It allows you to design pages visually—without writing code—making it especially useful for building attractive, custom layouts for static pages like the homepage, About, Events, or Contact.



To get started with Elementor:

1. Go to **Pages > Add New** or choose an existing page to edit.
2. Click the **Edit with Elementor** button at the top of the page editor.
3. Use the left-hand panel to add **widgets** like text, images, videos, buttons, or forms.
4. Create layout sections and columns by dragging elements into place.
5. Click **Preview** to view the layout in different screen sizes (desktop, tablet, mobile).
6. Click **Update** or **Publish** when you're satisfied with the design.

Elementor includes:

- **Pre-designed templates** for quick layout building
- **Custom fonts and colour settings** to match your branding
- **Responsive design tools** to optimise content for mobile

Tip: Before building a page in Elementor, it can be helpful to sketch a wireframe or create a simple layout prototype. This helps clarify the page’s structure and content flow, making the design process faster and more consistent—especially when aligning with ELSA’s branding standards.

Publishing Options in WordPress:

Before making your post or page publicly visible, WordPress provides several publishing controls to help you manage when and how your content goes live:

- **Save Draft:** Allows you to save your content without publishing it. Ideal when the page or post is still in progress and you want to return later.
- **Preview:** Lets you see how your content will look on the site before making it live. This is useful for reviewing formatting, layout, and design.
- **Publish:** Immediately makes the content visible to site visitors.
- **Schedule:** Choose a specific future date and time for your content to be published. This is especially helpful for coordinating announcements or maintaining a consistent posting rhythm.
- **Visibility Settings:**
 - **Public:** The content is visible to everyone.
 - **Private:** Only visible to administrators and editors.
 - **Password Protected:** Visitors must enter a password to view the content. Useful for member-only updates or internal documents.

Tip: You can always return to any post or page to update its content, change its visibility, or adjust the publishing schedule. WordPress also keeps a **revision history**, so you can restore earlier versions if needed.

Featured Images and Excerpts:



KENTMUN and ELSA unite to explore global legal challenges

From 8–10 Nov 2024, ELSA Kent and KentMUN hosted a dynamic conference at Kent University, UK, exploring global legal challenges such as universal jurisdiction. Highlights included awards for exceptional delegates, a keynote by Andrew Flagg (Coordinator at the World Bank), and impactful debates, empowering participants with skills in law, diplomacy, and collaboration! #MUN2024

When creating blog posts in WordPress, you have the option to enhance your content with **featured images** and **excerpts**, which play a key role in how your posts appear across your site and in external previews.

- **Featured Image:** A featured image serves as a visual summary of your post. It typically appears:

- o In blog listings or category pages
 - o On the homepage if blog posts are displayed
 - o In social media previews, when the post is shared
- Choose high-quality images that are relevant to the topic of your post. Most themes display featured images prominently, so this visual element can significantly influence user engagement.
- **Excerpt:** An excerpt is a short custom summary of your post. It helps give readers a quick overview before they click to read more. Excerpts are especially useful when:
 - o Displaying a list of posts (e.g., in a blog feed or search results)
 - o Creating newsletters or automated email digests
 - o Improving readability by replacing lengthy introductions with concise summaries
 If you don't write a custom excerpt, WordPress will automatically use the first few lines of your post, which may not always be ideal.

Tip: Write your excerpts like a mini pitch—clear, engaging, and informative. Combined with a compelling featured image, they can significantly improve click-through rates and content discoverability.

What Is SEO and Why Does It Matter?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) refers to a set of simple techniques that help your website appear more prominently in search engine results. For ELSA Groups, effective SEO means that students, academic partners, and other visitors can discover your initiatives without needing a direct link. It increases your reach and makes your group's work more visible.

Basic SEO steps for your ELSA website:

- Use clear and descriptive page titles (e.g. "ELSA Munich – Legal Workshop" instead of "Event 2025")
- Add short meta descriptions that summarize each page's content (these appear in search results)
- Structure your content using proper headings (H1 for titles, H2/H3 for sections)
- Include relevant keywords such as "ELSA Delegations", "Law Student Conference", or your city/ country name
- Link internally between pages (e.g. from "Our Board" to "Join Us") to guide users and improve navigation

Recommended Plugins to support SEO:

- [Yoast SEO](#): Yoast is one of the most widely used SEO plugins for WordPress. It provides real-time content analysis as you write, highlighting areas where your pages can be improved—for example, by suggesting better keyword placement, sentence clarity, or metadata settings.
- [Rank Math](#): Rank Math is a newer alternative that has gained popularity for its clean interface and flexible setup. It offers many of the same core functions as Yoast—such as content analysis, keyword optimization, and sitemap creation—but with slightly more advanced features included in the free version (e.g., multiple focus keywords). It is particularly suitable for beginners who want a lightweight, modern tool with helpful onboarding wizards.

IX. Accessibility in Web design

Ensuring your website is accessible means making it usable for as many people as possible, including those with disabilities. This not only improves the user experience for all visitors but also aligns with legal requirements and ethical standards, particularly in many European countries.

Why Accessibility Matters?

Web accessibility removes barriers that might prevent people with visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive impairments from fully engaging with your content. An accessible website can be navigated using assistive technologies such as screen readers, voice commands, or keyboard-only navigation.

In addition to inclusivity, accessible design often leads to better overall usability and can improve search engine rankings.

Key Principles for an Accessible Website:

- **Clear and Consistent Navigation:** Menus and links should be easy to find and use, with a logical structure.
- **Text Alternatives:** All images, videos, and non-text content must have descriptive alt texts or captions.
- **Keyboard Accessibility:** All interactive elements, including forms and menus, must be operable without a mouse.
- **Readable Content:** Use sufficient contrast between text and background, simple fonts, and avoid overly complex language.
- **Responsive Design:** Ensure the site works well on all devices and screen sizes.
- **Avoiding Time Limits:** Where possible, allow users enough time to read and interact with content.

Implementing Accessibility in WordPress: Most modern WordPress themes follow basic accessibility standards, but it is important to verify and customize them according to your needs. Use

accessibility-ready themes and plugins that support these standards. Popular plugins like **WP Accessibility** can help identify and fix common issues.

Testing and Continuous Improvement: Regularly test your website using accessibility evaluation tools such as **WAVE** or **axe** and seek feedback from users with disabilities. Accessibility is an ongoing process that benefits from periodic reviews and updates.

By prioritizing accessibility, your ELSA website will be welcoming and usable for everyone, reflecting the association's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

X. Compliance, Data Privacy & Site Protection

Creating a website for an ELSA group involves more than just content and design – it also requires attention to legal, ethical, and technical responsibilities. This section outlines the key compliance measures that every ELSA website must observe to meet data protection laws, ensure user trust, and maintain a secure and professional online presence.

From GDPR requirements and cookie policies to legal notices and access control, implementing these standards will help your website operate safely, transparently, and in line with European legal frameworks. Whether you're launching a local group site or maintaining a national page, these practices are essential for long-term credibility and sustainability.

GDPR and Data Privacy: applies to any website that collects, processes, or stores personal data of individuals within the EU or UK. This includes common functions such as contact forms, event registrations, analytics tools, and embedded content. To ensure GDPR compliance, several core practices must be implemented:

- o A clearly written **Privacy Policy** must be included on the website and be easily accessible from every page. It should inform users about the types of personal data collected (e.g., names, email addresses, IP addresses), the purposes of processing this data, how long it is stored, and with whom it may be shared. The policy should also explain how users can exercise their rights to access, correct, or delete their data.
- o Websites must also display a **cookie consent banner** when any tracking technologies (such as Google Analytics or embedded social media content) are used. This banner must appear on the first visit and give users the option to accept or reject non-essential cookies before any data collection begins. Plugins such as Complianz or CookieYes are reliable tools for implementing this functionality in WordPress.
- o **Contact forms** on the website must include an unchecked checkbox asking for the user's explicit consent to process the submitted data. This checkbox should be accompanied by a clear reference to the Privacy Policy.

WordPress also provides built-in tools to manage personal data requests. Under *Dashboard > Tools > Export/Erase Personal Data*, administrators can respond to user requests to access or delete stored personal data in accordance with GDPR requirements.

Legal Notice / Imprint: In many European countries, including Germany, Austria, and others, websites are legally required to publish a **legal notice** or **imprint**, especially if operated by an organization or association. This page typically includes:

- The name and address of the responsible organization or individual
- Contact information, such as an official email address and phone number
- Registration details, if applicable (e.g., association number or VAT ID)

Even if not legally required in your jurisdiction, including a legal notice adds transparency and can be considered best practice for ELSA websites. Check with your national board or legal officer to ensure compliance with local laws.

Passwords and Access Control: To maintain the integrity of your website, secure user access is critical. All admin accounts should use **strong, unique passwords** and, if possible, **two-factor authentication (2FA)** to prevent unauthorized access. The number of users with full administrator rights should be limited, and other contributors should be assigned roles based on their responsibilities (e.g., Editor, Author).

Web Security: Technical measures are essential for protecting both your website and its users. Keeping **WordPress, themes, and plugins regularly updated** is one of the most effective ways to prevent security vulnerabilities. It is recommended to install a **security plugin** such as Wordfence or Solid Security, which provides features like firewall protection, malware scanning, and login monitoring. In addition, every ELSA website should use **HTTPS encryption** by activating an SSL certificate. Most hosting providers offer SSL certificates for free or as part of their service packages. This ensures that all data transmitted between your website and its users is securely encrypted.

XI. Backups

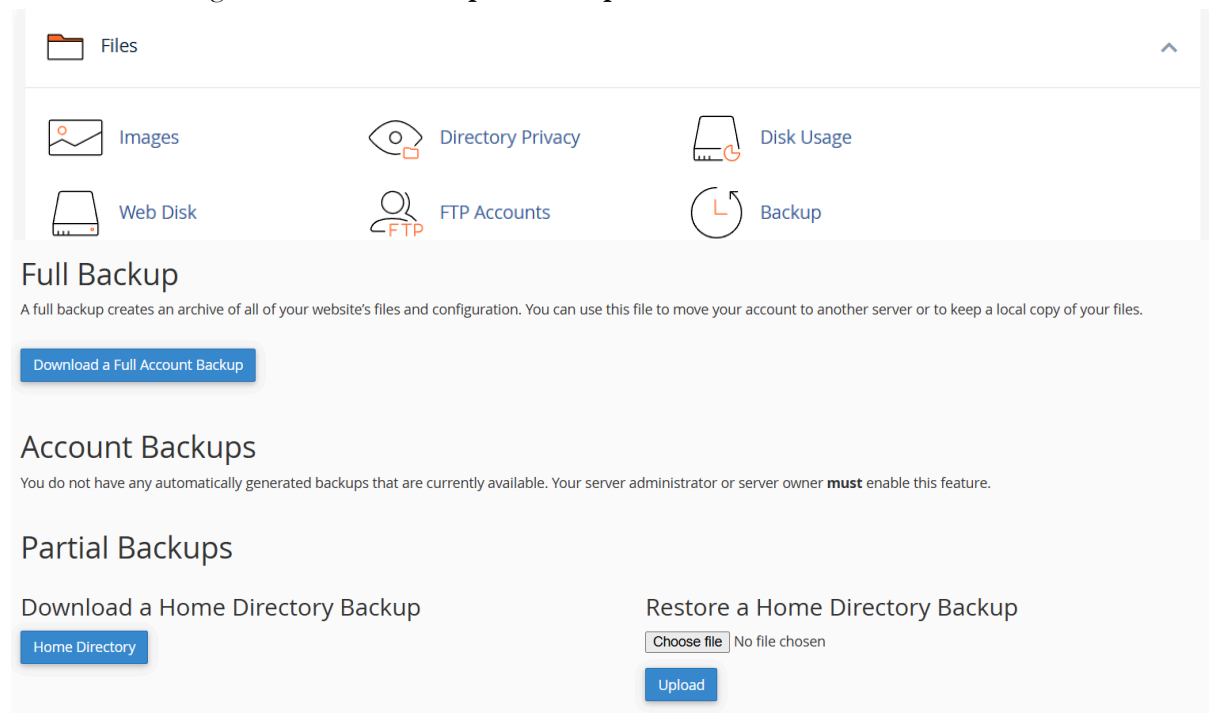
Maintaining regular backups is a critical part of managing a secure and reliable website. Whether due to technical errors, plugin conflicts, accidental deletions, or security breaches, having a recent backup ensures that your site can be restored quickly with minimal disruption. There are several ways to back up a WordPress website, depending on your hosting provider and internal workflows.

Manual Backups via cPanel

If your hosting service includes access to cPanel, you can create full backups directly from the control panel. cPanel is a commonly used interface that allows website administrators to manage server-side resources, including files, databases, and email accounts.

To perform a manual backup:

1. Log in to your cPanel account.
2. Navigate to **Files > Backup** or **Backup Wizard**.



3. Select **Download a Full Website Backup**.
4. Choose your preferred destination: either your Home Directory (local server) or a remote location via FTP.
5. Once the backup is generated, download the .tar.gz file and store it securely.

This method creates a full snapshot of your website, including content, database, and configuration files.

Automated Backups with WordPress Plugins

For regular and automated backups, WordPress offers several plugins that can schedule backups, send copies to cloud storage services, and simplify the entire process. Plugins such as **UpdraftPlus**, **BackWPup**, or **Jetpack Backup** allow you to define backup intervals and destinations (e.g., Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive). These solutions are especially useful for non-technical users and reduce the risk of human error.

Cloud Storage and Collaboration

Cloud platforms like **Google Drive** and **OneDrive** offer additional benefits for backup management and team collaboration. Backups created via cPanel or plugins can be uploaded to these platforms to ensure offsite security and redundancy. Moreover, it is good practice to draft important website content—such as blog articles, policy statements, or event descriptions—in shared cloud documents before publishing. This not only helps prevent data loss due to unsaved drafts but also enables collaborative editing, internal reviews, and transparent content workflows.

XII. Final Words and Further Guidance

With this handbook, we hope to make web design and management in WordPress more accessible and manageable for all ELSA groups. Drawing on the collective knowledge and experience of the IT team, this guide was developed to simplify and clarify the website-building process. We understand that frequent board turnovers and varying levels of technical expertise often lead to fragmented knowledge and challenges in maintaining a consistent, professional online presence.

By offering a clear, step-by-step resource tailored specifically to the needs of ELSA groups, we aim to empower every team—regardless of background or experience—to confidently create, manage, and update their websites. This handbook is designed to be a reliable companion that helps break the cycle of lost knowledge and supports continuity across years and transitions.

Should you face any questions or technical difficulties, ELSA International provides dedicated support through the Secretary General and the IT Team, reachable at it-team@elsa.org, ensuring that you receive timely help whenever needed.

Together, we look forward to seeing your group's website thrive as a proud, consistent, and effective representation of ELSA.



elsa

The European Law Students' Association