

TRANSITION MANUAL

INTERNAL MANAGEMENT
2019/2020



elsa

The European Law Students' Association

Foreword

Dear Network,

Key to a successful term in ELSA is a well-planned and organised transition. The transition contributes to continuation and sustainability of the association, which are crucial for the well-being and constant development of our Network!

There is no need to reinvent the wheel if the knowledge and experience gathered throughout the term in office is transferred to our successors and they can continue their work from the point where we stopped being active officers.

The transition might be your last task as a Secretary General but it is a first step for your successor in their term, thus it is essential. “What feels like the end is often the beginning!” Make sure that this beginning is smooth.

ELSAfully yours,

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Introduction

What is a Transition?

The transition is the process through which we assure the transfer of the strategic direction, knowledge, information and experience from the current board to its successors.

In order for a transition to be successful, both the current board and the new board have to do their part. The current board needs to thoroughly plan the transition, and the new board must actively participate, and ask questions, in order to get the best foundation possible to stand on as they enter the beginning of their term.

When the new board has an insight in what the old board has been working on, they can easily continue their work. Therefore, it is important that the boards use the transition as an opportunity to talk about past successes, as well as past obstacles.

The transition is also a perfect opportunity for team building for the new board. Giving the new board a “team feeling” at the very beginning of their term will help them throughout the entire year and make cooperation easier - which will lead to less conflicts.

The Role of the Secretary General

The Secretary General is the board member responsible for the planning and preparation of the transition. Planning the transition means that you will have to set the date, find a location, prepare all the needed materials, and - most important of all - make sure everyone on your board is fully involved in the transition.

It is important to remember that while the Secretary General is responsible for the logistics of the transition, it is the responsibility of the entire board to make sure that the material presented at the transition is up-to-date and covers everything the new board needs to know. This means the planning needs to start early, to ensure everyone has time to prepare in the best way possible.

Communication is a key component in assisting a smooth transfer of knowledge. Therefore, the Secretary General needs to have a clear communication with the entire board throughout the term, to get everyone on the same page and the preparations to run smoothly. The easiest way to organise the transition is to prepare an agenda for the whole period.

Transition Checklist

Things that should be included in the transition are (but not limited to):

General Knowledge

- The founding of ELSA;
- The purpose of the association (*Philosophy Statement*);
- Structure (*of the board and the entire network*);
- National Meetings;
- International Meetings (*i.e. Area Meetings (IPM, SAM, KAM), Regional Meetings (SOM, NOM), International Council Meetings*);
- Abbreviations (*i.e. IM, STEP, SELS, NCM, etc.*);
- Flagship Projects of ELSA;

Specific Information about the National Group

- E-mail addresses/login data;
- Regular events;
- Evaluation of events organised;
- Typical challenges and problems;
- Contact information of partners;
- International contact information (*i.e. Facebook groups, mailing lists, how to contact the international board, etc.*);
- Information about alumni network;
- The “know-what” and “know-how”;
- General Information about GDPR.

Transition of Materials

- Handbooks;
- Statutes/Standing Orders/Decision Book of the National Group;
- Statutes, Standing Orders and Decision Book of ELSA;
- Online Forms (*i.e. State of the Network Inquiry (SotN), EDF application, NCM applications, etc.*);
- Officers Portal.

International Council Meeting

- Activity Report;
- Pre-ICM Skype Calls with the International Board;
- Voting Rights (Financial Obligations, State of the Network Inquiry, Local Group Report and Letter of Authorisation/Proxy);
- Deadlines to send proposals and input papers (Statutes, Standing Orders and Decision Book);
- How to prepare for the plenaries and workshops.

General and Area Transition

There are two types of transitions in ELSA - General Transition and Area Transition. The General Transition covers information every board member should know about ELSA and its current state in the specific National Group. It is where we continue working on the professional image of ELSA as a whole, and where the team building begins. The Area Transition, on the other hand, covers the specific ELSA-areas corresponding with the different board positions. It is where each board member gets the knowledge, they need to do their individual work. In order to plan individualised transition having a questionnaire regarding expectations for a new board might be very helpful.

General Transition

The General Transition is meant to be given to the whole new board at the same time by the whole preceding board. This ensures that the new board receives the same knowledge and basic information regarding all areas. The aim is to make sure that the team starts with the same level of knowledge about the association, so that they are ready to make decisions concerning any type of ELSA matter *together*.

The General Transition should include (but not be limited to):

- An overview and evaluation of the current state of the National/Local Groups;
- Specific information (i.e.: task descriptions, responsibility matrix, etc.);
- Practical information (mailing lists, databases, conducting a meeting, etc.).

Another important aim is to pass a feeling of confidence to the new board - they need more than just knowledge to manage a year of board work. They need to know how to act in a team, how to handle problems that may pop up, how to motivate (potential) members to become active in the association, and how to motivate each other.

The General Transition includes four elements:

1. Explicit knowledge;
2. Implicit knowledge;
3. Motivation;
4. Team building.

Explicit knowledge

Explicit knowledge is the hard facts, data and the “know-what”. These are the things you can write down in the transition package and explain during the general (and area) transition. The facts that belong in this category depends greatly on your own organisation. For the President, it is important to know who your general partners are and how to get in contact with them, while the Secretary General needs to know about the deadlines set up for working materials for the NCM, etc.

Implicit knowledge

During your term, you will have found the “best practices” for fulfilling your tasks. These experiences and the “know-how” might not be as easy to write down as the explicit knowledge, so the best way to pass on this knowledge might be to talk to your successors and explain with practical examples. Explain the situations you have faced, and how you got through them, to limit the repentance of mistakes already made in the past.

Motivation

ELSA is a non-profit organisation, and all of our officers are working for free, during their free time. Therefore, it is important to not only go through the technical, administrative parts of the board work, but also motivate the new board with all the fun things they will get to experience during their term in office. It might be fun to include funny things that happened to your board during ICMs, etc.

Team Building

The transition might be the first time the new board gets together, and the first experience they share as (future) National Board officers. The experiences they have during the transition will help them in their work during the coming term. This is why it is very important to include team building elements, and it is highly recommended to get help from a trainer for this part of the transition, as they will be experienced in this.

Along with trainings, having a social programme during the transition is also an important part of the team building. It can be as simple as having dinner together and playing “get to know each other”-games, or going to a local pub. Only your imagination stops you here! The most important thing is that everyone is comfortable and having fun.

Another important thing to remember during the transition, is to inform the new board about the One Year Operational Plan (what it is and how it is used), so they can start thinking about their individual and common goals for the upcoming term. A good way to do this is to show them the current boards' OYOP, while evaluating the previous term.

Trainings

One important aspect of the General Transition is team building - making sure the new board is equipped to handle eventual conflicts arising during their term and generally feeling like a team throughout their work. ELSA Training is a great tool to use for this. You can have Teambuilding training in order to help a new board to form a team with a lot of ice breakers and discussions about personal values of individuals and their understanding of a team. You can invite a trainer for an OYOP training to help them to create a One Year Operational Plan.

To request a trainer from the International Trainers' Pool (ITP), you go to <https://training.elsa.org/itp-training-request> and fill in the form. Remember to do this a few months in advance. If your National Group has a National Trainers' Pool, you can of course decide to use this instead.

At <https://training.elsa.org/>, you can find all the information you need about the trainers currently in the ITP, what a ELSA Training is, and what kinds of trainings we have within ELSA. Examples of topics that are especially suited to be given at a transition are:

- Team-building and Teamwork
- Communication and Communication Skills
- Motivation and Motivation Skills
- One Year Operational Plan
- Strategic Planning

Of course, you have to determine what your National Group has the biggest need of when deciding the topic of the training – maybe you even want to combine a few topics?

Area Transition

Unlike the General Transition, the Area Transition focuses on the individual tasks of each board member. In other words, the current Secretary General gives the Area Transition for the newly elected Secretary General, etc.

Here, the same four elements (explicit knowledge, implicit knowledge, motivation and team building) should be covered, but with focus on explicit and implicit knowledge.

Some areas work together more than others, so for some, it might be a good idea to have joint workshops with other board members. For instance, the President and the Secretary General, who often have overlapping responsibilities, should have a workshop outlining what responsibility lies with who, and how they would like to work together in leading the board. The Vice President in charge of Academic Activities and the Vice President in charge of Seminars and Conferences might have some projects together, and if so, should have a joint workshop on this, etc.

For the Area Transition, it is important that each member in the old board has been updating the transition materials throughout the term. This means an area handbook, and other similar documents, which outline the responsibilities of the board members and the best way to approach the different tasks.

Preparing and Giving the Transition

Preparing and Planning

The planning of the transition should start the first day of your term, and this is important for the entire board to keep in mind. The first weeks of your term, you will be confronted with difficulties you will not remember as such a few months later. You gain a lot of experience as the term progresses, and many times you forget about a lot of the things you have done - and how you did them. Therefore, during the first few months of your term, remember to write down the different obstacles you face, and how you handle them.

In order to prepare a good transition, you have to think about:

- The best place and time for the transition, and a timetable for your preparations;
- The materials and documents you want/have to hand over (documents, keys, passwords, etc.);
- The content of the General and Area transitions;
- The externals you might want to include, and the trainers you want to give trainings;

As mentioned above, you will have to think of the contents of the transition from the very beginning of your term. The planning of the transition period itself and the transition materials should start no later than 2-3 months before the change of term in office.

Plan at least a weekend for the transition, and make sure the date of it is announced in a timely manner, so everyone involved can make sure they will be able to participate. In regards to the internal preparations, the Secretary General can help its fellow board members by making a timetable for the planning, and setting deadlines.

A few weeks before the transition, you should work out an agenda of the General and Area Transitions with your board, and send it out to the new board, so they have time to get familiar with it and prepare potential questions.

Giving the Transition

When giving the transition, it is important to make sure everyone has understood everything discussed before moving on to the next topic. Double checking by simply asking “any more questions?”/”is anything unclear?” or having the recipient of the workshop summarise it, are easy ways to make sure of this. Also try to use appropriate tools, such as PowerPoint-presentations, or showing the actual documents/websites/etc. that are being discussed.

An important thing to remember is that the transition process doesn't end on the final day of the transition weekend. The new board members might need more than just knowledge to be ready for the year ahead, and while they may not have any more questions at the end of the weekend, questions are sure to arise as they start their work. Therefore, it is important that the old board members keep in touch with the new, in a way that suits all parties involved.

Failure in the Transition

Consequences of transition failure

Transition, when carried out well, can avoid communication mishaps and loss of important knowledge. A good transition contributes to the long-term perspective in ELSA operations, which of course is very important for any organisation.

If the transition fails, the effects can be that:

- The new board is disappointed and therefore not motivated to give their best during their term in office;
- The new board does not have the necessary knowledge, and may encounter problems they are not able to solve in an efficient way, since they were not prevented by a proper transition;
- The board did not write their own plan, and are not motivated to reach goals set by others.

The consequences of a failed transition might not show right away, some might show a few years later. If the transition fails over and over, the network will suffer, and in the end, it may even end up without any cohesion - meaning we would have to start all over again.

What can fail and how it can be prevented

Time is always a keystone in transition. The more time you spend on the transition - both preparing and giving - the more effect you will have. When you plan the transition, make sure *everyone* is able to attend, and make sure you have enough time to go through all you want and need to. Members of almost all National Boards of ELSA are geographically spread out in different cities, which is why it is of high importance to set the date and time for transition meeting long in advance, at a time suitable for everyone.

Transition can fail when the old board is *too hands-on*, and doesn't let the new board work with their newly gained knowledge themselves, but does everything for them. The old board members need to look at the transition as their last act in their term of office. They are responsible of leaving their positions to motivated people with all relevant knowledge.

Another potential problem is that the new board is *not motivated enough*. This can be prevented by a motivation/team building training, as well as having a motivational workshop during the transition, where you discuss all the fun parts of ELSA, and remind everyone of why the association started - to make the world a better place.

Sometimes, the new board members may feel like they already know enough about ELSA, because they may have been active for a few years when being elected to the National Board - they may feel they do not need a transition at all.

In these cases, it is important to stress that there *still are things the old board can teach the new board*, by talking through the problems faced in during their term in office, and make an evaluation of the old board's work. This way, the new board is less likely to make the same mistakes.

Lastly, the transition must be *structured*. This means giving the information in a logical order (for instance, having the General Transition before the Area Transition), as well as the old board members also having prepared handbooks before the transition, and the new board members taking notes during the transition, so that everything discussed is not forgotten directly after the transition ends.

To sum it all up: to prevent transition failure, make sure to:

1. Take your time, both in preparing the transition, and in giving it. Set a date and venue, think about the social program, write transition handbooks/working materials, contact trainers, etc.
2. Make sure that the things explained during the transition are completely clear before moving on to the next topic. Also make sure everyone stays motivated, that they have fun and get to know each other. In other words - create an atmosphere in which it is good to work, learn and have fun!
3. Make sure that the new board knows who to contact whenever they experience troubles, or when they are in need of clarification. Make sure to make it clear that you will be happy to help even after the transition, and your term, is over.

Evaluation of the Transition

There are different ways to evaluate a Transition. You can do it after the transition with the current and new National Board together in person or you can create an anonymous feedback sheet for the new National Board. Please evaluate with your successor Secretary General and go through the plan you have made and note what was good and what was not so good. By doing so, they can guarantee a better transition next year. Talk about the transition and ask them if their expectations are fulfilled. The outgoing board can also say some motivational words.

Keep in mind that you and your predecessors worked hard and experienced different things. Therefore, sharing the knowledge that you have is essential. A successful term always starts with a good transition!