PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

2022/2023

The European Law Students' Association

The European Law Students' Association

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Foreword

Dear PD Officers,

We are honoured to present to you the new handbook for the Key Area of Professional Development. With this Professional Development Handbook, we hope to provide you with an extensive overview of this exciting area and its activities.

Over the last few years, our Association has been discussing structural changes. It has been known for a long time that our management and division of responsibilities system is often not only ineffective but also makes it difficult for us to function as an association. Thus, the Strategic Goals of ELSA for the period 2019-2023 put a focus on the Good Governance of the association and the board reform is one of the means of achieving this goal. The first step towards a fully implemented board reform is the transformation of the Vice President in charge of the Student Trainee Exchange Programme (STEP) to the Vice President in charge of Professional Development.

On the pages of this Handbook, you can find a short guide through Professional Development in ELSA – *inter alia* what is Professional Development, what are the Professional Development projects and a practical guide for the Professional Development Officers in the Network.

We hope that this Handbook will serve as a guide and spark your enthusiasm to succeed in your year as a Professional Development Officer.

We wish you a pleasant read and we remain at your disposal should you have any questions!

Best wishes,

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1. Introduction

1.1. What is Professional Development?

Professional Development is a Key Area of ELSA that aims to guide and support law students and young lawyers in their path to their future careers by providing them with the necessary skills. The International Council Meeting Decision Book describes it as follows:

— "Professional Development is a Key Area of ELSA that aims to support law students and young lawyers in **developing and improving the necessary skills to access the professional world** by means of continuous education for individuals in regard to their future career and the skills needed therefore."

Previously, Professional Development was known as the area of the Student Trainee Exchange Programme (STEP). Following the Strategic Goals of ELSA regarding the Board Reform, the International Council of ELSA decided to implement a more logical structure for this organisation. Since April 2021, the new area of Professional Development consists of all the activities of STEP and the Professional Development section of the Academic Activities area. Nevertheless, the aim remains the same: supporting law students and your lawyers to dive into the professional world by providing several projects and activities:

- ELSA Traineeships
- Career Launch
- Workshops
- Career/Job Fair
- Lawyers at work events (job fairs, open days, legal workshops)
- Legal clinic

1.2. What is a Professional Development project?

The projects of both Professional Development and Academic Activities are interactive and a form of **active** learning. Instead, the difference between the areas lies in what the projects **aim** to do. Academic Activities projects aim to contribute to the **legal education** of law students, whilst Professional Development projects aim to help students in **developing and improving the necessary skills** to access the professional world. Academic Activities focuses on education, and Professional Development focuses more on the actual practical skills, clearing the path to their future career.

Having a better understanding of the difference between Professional Development projects with the other areas' projects, a detailed overview per PD project is given hereunder.

2. Project Management

2.1. Introduction

One of the most important parts of being part of ELSA and participating in PD is the opportunity to build up project management skills. However, the main obstacle to the development of these skills comes with our background – legal studies rarely touch on project management. This chapter of the PD handbook will provide you with basic definitions, structure, and stages of project management.

This information is recommended to be implemented for any PD projects at the international level; and it might be used, up to the discretion of the relevant national and local officers, for the projects on the other levels and/or other areas.

DISCLAIMER: Please, perceive this section as general guidance. ELSA International has no intention to force national and local officers to follow this guidance or produce more papers. It is up to the national and local boards to decide whether they want to follow these guidelines and whether they need written documents related to project management.

2.2. The job of a Professional Development Officer

Professional Development Officers of National Groups shall promote and support the Professional Development projects organised by ELSA International. Besides supporting and promoting the projects organised by ELSA International, Professional Development Officers of National and Local Groups have other various responsibilities. They are in charge of organising the projects that fall under the definition of a Professional Development project organised by their respective Local/National Groups, such as ELSA Traineeships, legal courses (e.g., Legal English and Legal Writing) and Lawyers at work events. As project managers, Professional Development Officers oversee the creation of all needed materials (e.g., material for the courses and cases for Legal workshops), the timeline of the project, the communication with participants, but also the external relations and the promotion of the respective project.
The beauty of the Professional Development area, and the Key Areas in general, is that there is no exhaustive list of projects that can be organised, hence Local and National Officers are encouraged to be creative and think outside of the box when planning Professional Development projects.

Finally, as Key Area Officers, Professional Development Officers sometimes tend to forget that they are not only project managers, but also part of the Executive Board of their respective ELSA groups. It is important that we, as project managers, maintain good communication and cooperation with the rest of the board and contribute to the success of our own projects, but also to the development of our National/Local Group.

2.2.1 Stages of project management

To effectively manage any project, we must understand the basic concepts of project management. Firstly, what are the stages of project management? There are five main stages of them:

1. **Project design.** This stage takes place when a team of interested people comes up with an idea to do a project. The task of this team is to think over the main elements and describe a project. Such a description should reflect the structure of a project and provide clarity on why this project is to be done, what resources are necessary for this project, and what value the project brings to the association. As soon as the description is developed, the decision to approve the project should be taken by the relevant officers (board members) to proceed to the next stage – implementation of the project.
2. **Implementation of the project.** Implementation of the project follows the approval of the relevant officers to implement the project. In fact, implementation of projects usually refers to the implementation of activities as provided in the description of a project. This stage is heavily interlinked with project monitoring.
3. **Project monitoring.** To be able to monitor the progress of the project, it is necessary to set up 'project milestones' – the significant events that provide evidence that the project is progressing in achieving its objectives. For example, conferences, or draft reports received could be considered as good milestones, as they provide sufficient evidence of progress in project implementation. As soon as all milestones are achieved, the project could go into the closure stage.
4. **Closure of the project.** This is the stage when all activities and outputs envisaged in the relevant project description have been completed. However, the project cannot be considered closed, if financial accounts are not closed (money not paid, belongings were not returned, etc.). As soon as the project has been closed, the evaluation phase can be launched
5. **Evaluation.** The purpose of this last stage is to reflect on what went right and wrong during all previous stages of project management – from project design to its closure. For example, questionnaires or surveys could be sent to participants to ask them about their experience in the project. After the results are received, the team in charge of this project together with the relevant officers should evaluate and interpret the results, to extract lessons from the project. The relevant officers, from their side, should establish the mechanism of keeping and passing this knowledge in a concise and structured way to their successors and future project teams. This stage is often overlooked in ELSA projects; however, its value should not be underestimated. We lose valuable information and feedback from participants of our projects (in different roles), and this hurdles our growth and hampers the speed at which we raise the quality of our projects.

2.2.2 Description of a project and main elements

The project description is usually done in writing, so it would be easier to keep the records and have conceptual discussions about the project. In fact, such a document constitutes an important piece of knowledge, which could be easily transferred to project successors (for example, when the organising team must change during one of the stages of project management) or to the teams of other future projects.

DISCLAIMER: The project description could consist of many different elements; however, there are a couple of essential elements that should be described. If the team considers it necessary to include more elements in the description, they are free to do so, but it is not advised to delete the parts of the project description provided below.

The level of detail in the project description may vary, depending on how discussions about project design are advancing in the organising team. However, the project description larger in volume does not necessarily mean that it will be better. Every part of the description should be concise and lead straight to the point. We recommend you write the project description like it will be read by a person who has no knowledge about the project at all, but has a task to coordinate the project.

There are eight essential parts of every project description.

2.2.2.1 Background Description

This is the first part of any project description. It should provide, in a concise manner, all information relevant to the project, as well as describe how it contributes to the general policy of the association (for example, one-year operation plans, IFP, etc.). The questions to be answered in this part:

- What is the relevant background information for implementing this project?
- What is the problem to be addressed by this project?
    - Were there any projects that addressed the same problem implemented before? If so, what was the outcome/impact of such projects? Were any lessons learned?
- How does this project correspond to the main strategic documents of the association (IFP, Strategic Plan, etc.)?

2.2.2.2 Objectives of the projects

This part is usually noticeably short (up to 7 – 10 lines) and states what is the objective of this project. The questions to be answered in this part: – What is the overarching goal of the project? – Why do you think it is necessary to implement [e.g. fund, if relevant] this project?

2.2.2.3 Indicative timeline

This section is usually built via a 'Gantt chart' and provides a visual representation of which activities are expected to take place at what moment of project implementation. It is also recommended not to put exact dates, because approval of the project by the responsible officer might take a while (or other delays might occur). Each activity from the previous section should be reflected here.

The questions to be answered in this part:

- What is the estimated timeframe for the project (from which date it is expected to begin and when it should end)?
- At what stage of the project a specific activity will be implemented?

2.2.2.4 Risks and Mitigating Measures

This is a section about risks and how to mitigate them. The organising group should think about the implementation of a project from different perspectives. For example, if the funding is needed and will not be granted or cut short – what will be done?

Identify the risks of your projects and think of measures that can be taken to eliminate or minimize the risks. This way, you are prepared if the risks end up coming true.

2.2.2.5 Stakeholders and modalities of cooperation

This section should provide a description of who is involved in the project and how they cooperate with each other to achieve the project objective. It is also extremely useful to make a distinction between the responsibilities of different actors, especially in case some of their tasks depend on the work of others.

In addition, it might prove useful to ask for contributions from your colleagues in supporting areas, who can provide you with inputs on how they can contribute to your project. For example, your secretary general can contribute to the preparation of the relevant privacy statement; while your marketing colleagues could develop for you the relevant promotional materials and help with promotion of the project on social media.

The questions to be answered in this part:

- What are the groups that will participate in the project (students, members of the association, academia staff, etc.)?
- What are the responsibilities of each group in this project? How they are expected to participate?
- How do they cooperate with each other (regular monthly calls, weekly status updates, etc.)?
- Are there any critical stakeholders who need a backup?

2.2.2.6 Making use of the results

This section should describe how the results of the project might be used in the future by the association. For example, if the result is a report, then it could be published and presented during negotiations with new potential partners. It could be also useful to think about how the project could help to attract new members or new partners/sponsors.

The questions to be answered in this part:

- How results of this project be used in the future after the closure of the project?
- Can this project help the association to recruit new members and/or to find new sponsors?

2.2.2.7 Monitoring and evaluation activities

This section should describe how the progress of the project implementation will be observed (monitoring) and how the lessons are expected to be learned after the closure of the project (evaluation).

The monitoring exercise could be performed in different ways – it could be specific internal deadlines for preparatory activities, progress reports, or meetings with the national/local boards (for large projects). The purpose of this exercise is to facilitate information exchange. In addition, monitoring helps to spot any signs of materialisation of risks and ensure that the mitigating measures are applied timely manner. The evaluation exercise refers to the collection of feedback and opinions from all stakeholders involved in the project at all stages. Any survey sent to the stakeholders must be easy to understand and must ask clear questions. To avoid any difficulties with the data protection rules, please ensure that the responses provided are anonymised and it is impossible to trace who provided an answer.

After the results were collected the project team must hold a meeting with the relevant officer to discuss and interpret the results. During this discussion, lessons could be learnt.

The questions to be answered in this part:

- How do we take stock of the progress in project implementation?
- What will be the main topics of the evaluation exercise?

2.2.3. Crisis management

Being a project manager is usually rewarding, however, a project management crisis occurs. Crisis management is the application of strategies designed to help an organisation deal with a sudden and significant negative event. Crisis always requires that decisions be made quickly in order to limit the damage to the project. When facing a project management crisis, the most important thing is to stay calm and to think of a backup plan.

If you want for your project to pass as smoothly as possible, it is important to think about how you can avoid a project management crisis. During the planning phase, identify risks and plan for the ways to minimise those risks, establish a monitoring or early warning system, and develop a crisis response plan (plan B, plan C, etc.). Make sure that you have an organising team that can help when a crisis occurs and **never hesitate to ask them for help.**

When a crisis occurs, communicate as much as possible, both internally (with your project team/OC) and externally (with external partners/participants). After the event, evaluate the project and crisis that occurred and share your tips and tricks with your successor in order to prevent new crises from happening.

2.3 PD checklist

Organising a PD project always requires the same steps:

- Choose the project and the topic and inform yourself about it
- Decide in which format you want to organise it
- Decide the dates of the event and find a venue/platform
- Prepare a list of professionals/partners you want to contact (use the CAF if necessary)
- Create an informative booklet to send to the professionals
- Send an email to your target people and organise meetings
- Decide on a price for the event and create a form
- Create a promotion strategy and marketing materials and promote the event on social media, alongside the to apply
- Verify everything is ready for the day and send more information to the professionals and participants
- Verify if everything is working (presentations, venue, platform, HDMI cable, microphones, etc.)
- Dress formally and welcome with a smile the people attending
- Send a “thank you” email to everyone

3. Career Launch

3.1. What is Career Launch?

Career Launch is a professional development project of ELSA which provides the opportunity to gain insight into various legal professions. The mission of Career Launch is to prepare law students for the professional world through webinar series, practical sessions, Career Fairs and mock interviews. It aims to provide law students and young lawyers with a real-life experience of the job market and knowledge about different career paths that are not part of the typical legal curriculum.

Career Launch is a new project within the Professional Development area and is organised by ELSA International. It consists of a theoretical part, meetings with professionals and usually revolves around specific topics. The participants also get to put their newly acquired knowledge to the test through mock interviews (simulation of a job interview) with a real professional. Afterwards, all participants will receive a certificate of participation.

3.2. Previous editions

3.2.1. 2021 edition - 1st edition

The project was created during the term 2020/2021, as a first step to change our area from STEP to Professional Development. It was a collaboration between STEP and AA. The sessions were divided into two topics: International Career Paths to Private Organizations during the first semester and International Career Paths to Public Institutions during the second semester. It was a mix of educational sessions and interactive workshops to show the different career paths in these two areas. Multiple sessions were organized during the two semesters including different partners related to the topics chosen.

3.2.2. 2022 edition - 2nd edition

During the second edition of Career Launch, ELSA International organised sessions and a Career Fair. The sessions were organised on Clickmeeting. There were 3 sessions of 45 minutes each per day, during 4 non-consecutive days. The Career Fair was organised online on the platform Coderblock which allowed to have a virtual environment for the participants to navigate between the professionals present. The latter took place a few days before the beginning of the sessions. Interviews were conducted between some candidates and professionals.

3.3.3. 2023 edition - 3rd edition

During the third edition of Career Launch, ELSA International decided to use the current structure we have for this project. The sessions were organised on Clickmeeting. We decided to organise 3 sessions of 45 minutes each per day for 3 consecutive days. For the Career Fair, which took place one week later, we decided to use the platform VFairs for one day (one afternoon). In addition to the booths, we also organised some webinar presentations including important organizations.

Additionally, we organised mock interviews with some professionals and we sent them some rules to apply to be sure it is equal for every participant.

Lastly, the big change of this year's edition was to involve the National Groups in the organization of the project. The way we proceeded was to send a survey to the Network to see if partners of National Groups would be interested in participating in the Career Fair. If this was the case, ELSA International was establishing a communication strategy with the National Group to contact the partner and then, if the partner accepted, they were present at the Career Fair having their own booth. The point of this strategy was to allow these partners to have an international event to participate in and give another reason for them to continue their collaboration with the National Group in question. This was not in any case the point of ELSA International to steal partners. Unfortunately, this idea didn't find great success and only one firm ended up participating in the Career Fair (8 were interested).

3.3. Current structure

3.3.1. Sessions

The goal of the sessions is to approach multiple legal careers in different fields of law and to explain to the participants which are the studies and training that are leading to it. The topics must be as international as possible and the professionals invited should come from different horizons (law firms, international organizations, universities, companies) to give as many different points of view as possible. It is the moment for students to have a better overview of all the future career possibilities a student can have. They can also ask questions to the professionals about their work life.

3.3.2. Career Fair

The goal of the Career Fair is to allow students to meet as many different professionals as possible and ask questions to them. They can navigate in an online format between the booths of the professionals and discover their website, flyers, and job offers, as well as talk directly with a representative. To have an accomplished Career Fair, it is important to have as many different kinds of professionals as possible, to have big names to attract more participants and to be focused on discovering multiple careers and places to work rather than searching for a job. This would be more the case of a Job Fair, which is a bit different.

3.3.3. Mock Interviews

Mock Interviews are a simulation of job interviews. It allows the participants to act as a real applicants in front of a professional playing the role of the employer. At the end, the company will give a personal feedback to the candidates in order for them to improve their presentation skills.

3.4. Promotion

Planning and promotion are two essential parts of the success of the Career Launch project. The creation of a Marketing kit ensures that the promotion of the project will be uniform in the whole network and will create a bigger impact and attract more participants. Additionally, the creation of a promotion strategy with specific dates to share the content and send it to the network will help to achieve that objective.

4. Career/Job Fair

A Fair is an online or in-person event gathering multiple professionals from law firms, international organizations, companies, NGOs, and universities presenting their workplace and promoting it to students. Most of the time, there are booths put into place where the professionals can put their banners, and flyers and welcome the participants to give their little speech.

Depending on the Fair, there might be different goals:

- **Career Fair**: The focus is more on discovering career paths and presenting the different fields and paths students can take after his/her studies. This is more of an informative Fair.
- **Job Fair**: The focus is on job hunting. Professionals present their companies in order to convince students to apply for them. On the other side, students are participating to find a job and, most of the time, they are dropping off their CV and Motivation Letter and have a good idea of which booth they will go to.

Moreover, a Fair can include the following aspects in addition to the booths:

- **Presentations** from organisations participating in the fair are a great promotional as well as educational tool;
- **Interview Simulations** can be arranged with organisations beforehand. In this way, participants can experience a job interview and practice soft skills. Another possibility is to collect CVs from participants so organisations can decide on who to interview;
- **Social activities** such as receptions or dinners where students and young lawyers can network with professionals in a more relaxed setting;

5. Professional Development Workshops

Professional Development Workshops indicate a project with the purpose of providing law students and young lawyers with practical knowledge and skills that cannot be provided in the ordinary academic curriculum. They should consist of a minimum of two hours of session. PD Workshops shall be planned to include practical exercises that could be useful in a legal career. Legal Courses, therefore, can be organised to cover topics including but not limited to:

- Legal English;
- Soft and hard skills (CV and Motivation letter, public speaking, crisis management, time management);
- Client relations.
- Career paths

Additionally, since organising a PD Workshop does not necessarily demand large financial investments, it can be a way of attracting new partners to future projects or competitions and improving external relations.

PD Workshops are focused on practical knowledge. It is possible to consult potential partners, such as law firms or training institutions, regarding the specific kind of skills participants can develop during a course. One of the most efficient ways of implementing a legal course seems to be cooperation with universities, NGOs, and law firms since these institutions have the trained experts to deliver sessions.

When deciding on a topic for a PD Workshops, adapt your project to ensure that the topic is interesting, accessible, and useful. PD Workshops are meant to be as interactive as possible to maintain the aim of the project - providing participants with practical tasks that allow them to put the topic into practice.

To have a uniformity in the Network, PD Workshops should consist of a minimum of two hours of sessions to ensure the quality of the event and a practical side of it for participants. As mentioned, this is only a minimum. PD Workshops can also be organised as a long-term process with multiple sessions in multiple days.

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6. Lawyers at Work event (L@W event)

Lawyers at Work Events (L@W Events) are projects that allow law students and young lawyers to experience working in the legal profession first-hand, and to discover the working culture and the different legal paths in the same company/firm. L@W Events are designed to involve practical insights into the legal profession and as such shall involve interactive learning opportunities between professionals and students.

L@W events can be organised in different ways: as a single session (a); as an open day (b); including a job fair; (d) including a case study.

6.1. L@W event as a single session

The easiest way to organise a L@W event is to provide a single session at the workspace, with a speaker and designated topic. Other requirements are providing a venue and some marketing materials to attract participants. This can be done easily by collaborating with the firm you're organising the event with.

6.2. L@W event as an open day

Organising an L@W event is one way to utilise open days. During the event, participants could perform the tasks of a lawyer, for example, working alongside a professional. This is an interesting way of presenting the work done in a law firm or other organisation and the daily assignments professionals perform. Be careful to separate this open from the open days organized by S&C.

6.3. L@W event including a job fair

L@W Events can include a job fair, combining the Career Fair event, where the law firms can present their scope of work and offer insight into their day-to-day operations through informational stands. Law firms never hesitate to seize an opportunity to present themselves to students and young lawyers, which is why this project can serve as a fundraising tool for your group.

6.4. Including a case study

The best way to use this type of event is to include it in the L@W event. The professional will guide students with the resolution of a real case to give them an idea of what work in a firm looks like on a daily basis.

7. Legal Tandem

Legal Tandem is a project in the area of professional development, during which two Local Groups from different ELSA countries organise a joint session for their members to discuss their legal system, explore the differences in their paths to becoming a legal professional and compare the practices of their legal work culture. The aim of the project is to help law students and young lawyers navigate the increasingly international job market by expanding their knowledge on the topics of Legal Tandem. Additionally, the project supports the awareness of comparative legal research. The engagement of members from different ELSA Groups supports the fulfilment of ELSA's vision in the Professional Development area.

8. Legal Clinic

Some Groups in the Network organise themselves in the way of a Legal Clinic. One of those groups gave the following description of the project. Feel free to get some inspiration to create your own Professional Development project!

Legal Clinic is a project designed for the professional development of law students and the wider application of the knowledge acquired at the university. The format of the project consists of 2 stages. In the first phase of the project, participants will have training for 1-2 months in the free legal aid and pro-bono cases department of the partner. In the second stage, will begin to provide legal assistance and advice under the supervision and assistance of lawyers and attorneys. S This project will be an important step for students who want a career as a lawyer or advocate in the future as they will learn how to communicate with clients and investigate and solve cases independently. This project is very human-oriented and does not only seek the professional development of the participants but also sensibilise them to help people get free legal aid.