

ACADEMIC PREPARATION HANDBOOK FOR **ELSA DELEGATIONS TO UN ECOSOC**

SEMINARS & CONFERENCES
2024/2025



ELSA
Delegations

elsa

The European Law Students' Association

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
1.1. About the European Law Students' Association	2
1.2. ELSA and International Organisations	3
1.3. ELSA Delegations	3
2. About the Institution	4
2.1. Introduction to UN ECOSOC	4
2.1.1. What role does UN ECOSOC play in the United Nations?	4
2.1.2. History of UN ECOSOC	5
2.1.3. Development	5
2.1.4. Membership	6
2.1.5. Other Organisations	6
2.1.6. Headquarters	6
2.1.7. Useful Links	7
3. Inside UN ECOSOC	7
3.1. Sessions	7
3.2. Sessions that ELSA Delegates regularly attend	7
4. Topics	10
4.1. What is sustainable development?	10
4.2. What are the branches of sustainable development?	10
4.3. Who uses sustainable development?	11
4.4. Why is sustainable development important?	11
4.5. What policy areas overlap with sustainable development?	11
4.6. Recent innovations	11
5. Relevant Documents	12
5.1. Meeting Agendas	12
5.2. Past Documents	12
5.3. Explanatory Videos	12
6. Rules of Procedure	13
6.1. What is consultative status?	13
6.2. General Rules of Procedure	13
7. HoD Reports	13
8. Archives	13

1. Introduction

This handbook aims to provide ELSA Delegates with all the necessary information to prepare themselves academically for a respective UN ECOSOC session. It is designed to be read alongside the Guidelines for the relevant institution. Any relevant feedback or questions are encouraged to improve this handbook for future ELSA Delegates.

1.1. About the European Law Students' Association

The European Law Students' Association (ELSA) is an international, independent, non-political, non-profit organisation run by and for students. It comprises students and recent graduates interested in academic and personal excellence in addition to their studies at their universities. ELSA offers law students a perfect platform to develop their existing skills, acquire new skills and meet fellow students and legal professionals throughout Europe.

Five law students from Austria, Hungary, Poland and West Germany founded ELSA in 1981. Today, ELSA is the world's largest independent law student association, and it is represented at nearly 432 law faculties in 41 countries across Europe with a membership of over 60,000 students and young lawyers.

ELSA's activities comprise a large variety of academic and professional events and projects organised to fulfil the vision of ELSA and to provide our members with opportunities to enhance their skills and interact with each other. Furthermore, ELSA provides law students with opportunities to develop their skills through our traineeship program and publications. Finally, working in the ELSA Network prepares active members of ELSA for their professional life through international experience gained through the association.

Vision

“A just world in which there is respect for human dignity and cultural diversity”

Purpose

The purpose is to contribute to legal education, to foster mutual understanding and to promote social responsibility of law students and young lawyers by:

- providing opportunities for law students and young lawyers to learn about other cultures and legal systems in a spirit of critical dialogue and scientific cooperation;
- assisting law students and young lawyers in being internationally minded and professionally skilled;
- encouraging law students and young lawyers to act for the good of society.

To read more about ELSA, please visit our [website](#).

1.2. ELSA and International Organisations

ELSA has gained a notable reputation in the international community. For many years, thanks to having a special status within a number of different international organisations and institutions, its members and alumni are able to participate in events organised by those institutions.

ELSA has special status and cooperation with:

- UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (since 1994);
- UN Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) (since 1997);
- UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) (since 1997);
- UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);
- Council of Europe (CoE) (since 2000);
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR);
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) (since 2005);
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (since 2016);
- Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC);
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (since 2022).

ELSA is exploring the possibility of gaining status with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

1.3. ELSA Delegations

ELSA Delegations are regulated in the [International Council Meeting Decision Book](#) under

decisions relating to Seminars and Conferences (S&C). The relationship between ELSA and ELSA Delegates is regulated by the [ELSA Delegations Terms and Conditions](#).

To participate in ELSA Delegations, ELSA Members and ELSA Alumni need to fulfil the following requirements:

- The Application Form shall be submitted before the deadline;
- The Application Form shall be written in English;
- All the fields of the Application Form shall be filled.

Please refer to the relevant Guideline for more information on the process of being an ELSA Delegate. You can also find practical information pertaining to your stay in New York, and instructions for delegates who will join a delegation remotely. If you have any questions, please contact your coordinator: dunecosoc@elsa.org, or the Director for ELSA Delegations: delegations@elsa.org.

2. About the Institution

The [Selection Criteria](#) do not require a particular level of education for applicants to attend a delegation. In fact, an applicant's grades are not considered during the selection process. However, we believe that, in order for delegates to represent ELSA to the best of their ability, it is important for them to have a good understanding of the session they will attend and the significance of the institution.

2.1. Introduction to UN ECOSOC

2.1.1. What role does UN ECOSOC play in the United Nations?¹

ECOSOC was created to advance and build upon three important pillars of sustainable development: the economy, society, and the environment. Thus, it deals with economic, social, and environmental matters. It provides a forum in which to debate issues that surround these policy areas, using innovation and forward thinking to reach agreements on how best to progress. ECOSOC sets goals that have been agreed upon by the international community and coordinates

¹ <https://ecosoc.un.org/en/about-us>

efforts to reach them. It also instigates follow-up meetings for major UN Conferences and Summits.

More details on the functions and powers of ECOSOC can be found in Chapter X of the Charter of the United Nations: [UN Charter](#).

2.1.2. History of UN ECOSOC

ECOSOC was established in 1945, the year when the UN Charter entered into force. It is one of the UN's main agencies,² along with the General Assembly, Security Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the UN Secretariat. ECOSOC's first meeting was held in London in 1946, chaired by Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar of India.³

2.1.3. Development⁴

A number of key developments developed after the end of the Cold War in 1991. You can find a summary of these developments below.

- **1991** - First Summit for Social Development, held in New York.⁵ Dialogues were also held in conjunction with the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Conference on Trade, and the Bretton Woods Institutions;⁶
- **1998** - the Bretton Woods Institutions held their first meeting with ECOSOC. The first Humanitarian Affairs Operation was also reviewed in New York;⁷
- **1999** - the Security Council requested for ECOSOC provide long-term support to Haiti;⁸
- **2001** - the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Africa was created at the request of the General Assembly;
- **2003** - First Special High-Level Meeting of ECOSOC (alongside Bretton Woods Institutions, WTO, and UNCTAD);

² [Source](#)

³ [Source](#)

⁴ [Source](#).

⁵ [Source](#).

⁶ The Bretton Woods Institutions are composed of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. More information about these institutions can be found [here](#).

⁷ [Source](#).

⁸ Ibid.

- **2005** - ECOSOC appointed the main forum in which to review the Millennium Development Goals. Its mandate was extended to include an Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and a biennial Development Cooperation Forum;
- **2012** - First ECOSOC Youth Forum took place;
- **2013** - Establishment of the high-level political forum on Sustainable Development;
- **2015** - Establishment of the ECOSOC forum on financing for development follow-up, and the Multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals;
- **2021** - General Assembly created the Coordination Segment of ECOSOC.⁹

2.1.4. Membership

Under the UN Charter, ECOSOC is composed of 54 UN Members elected by the General Assembly.¹⁰ Originally, there were 18 Members, but this was increased twice over the past decades, in 1963 and 1971.¹¹

Seats are allocated according to the geographical location of the Members. Africa has 14 seats; Asia has 11, Eastern Europe has 6, Latin America and the Caribbean have 10, and Western Europe/other areas have 13. Each representative sits for three years after being elected by the General Assembly.¹² The President changes annually, and decisions are taken by simple majority vote.

2.1.5. Other Organisations

UN ECOSOC is funded by a mixture of voluntary and assessed contributions. It helps to facilitate the coordination of a number of UN Programmes and Entities, such as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).¹³

⁹ [Source](#)

¹⁰ [Source](#)

¹¹ [Source](#). See also: A/RES/1991 (XVIII) and A/RES/2847 (XXVI).

¹² [Source](#).

¹³ [Source](#).

2.1.6. Headquarters

ECOSOC Chamber,
United Nations Headquarters,
New York, NY 10017
USA.

2.1.7. Useful Links

- [Main Website](#)
- [UNECOSOC Brochure](#)

3. Inside UN ECOSOC

ECOSOC is composed of a number of subsidiary bodies, which take the form of regional commissions, ad hoc bodies, expert bodies, standing commissions and functional commissions.¹⁴ Below, delegates can find more information on the sessions, commissions and bodies that ELSA regularly delegates regularly attend.

3.1. Sessions¹⁵

ECOSOC runs its schedule according to a yearly cycle that begins in July and ends in next year's July. This was implemented by [Resolution 68/1](#). It holds one substantive session per year and one organisational session per year. Substantive sessions are split into 'segments', with 'financing for development' and 'coordination and management' meetings worked into each segment. There are four in total:

- High-Level segment;
- Operational Activities for Development segment;
- Humanitarian Affairs segment;
- Integration segment.

Each Committee and Governing Body has a range of sessions that ELSA Delegates can attend. Below, delegates can find more information about the sessions ELSA has sent delegates to in the past.

¹⁴ <https://ecosoc.un.org/en/about-us/ecosoc-subsidiary-bodies>.

¹⁵ <https://research.un.org/en/docs/ecosoc>.

3.2. Sessions that ELSA Delegates regularly attend

Commission for Social Development (CSocD)¹⁶

CSocD advises the UN on issues related to sustainable development. It has a very important role in promoting policies that contribute towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, especially those related to relieving poverty, ensuring employment for all, and developing social integration. Its mandate is contained in ECOSOC Res 10 (II)(1946).

CSocD's website: [CSocD](#)

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)¹⁷

UN WOMEN is the main international body dedicated to furthering gender equality, women's rights and female empowerment. It has a key role in promoting the rights of women, including girls, by gathering information on the livelihood of women across the globe. This data is used to direct global standards on female empowerment and gender equality. UN Women's mandate is contained in ECOSOC Res 11(II)(1946). This was expanded by ECOSOC Res 1996/6 in 1996.

UN Women's website: [UN Women](#)

Commission on Population and Development (CPD)¹⁸

CPD is responsible for monitoring and following up on the implementation of the Programme of Action. It carries out review and assessment functions on international, regional and national levels, gathering data that is used to advise ECOSOC on matters of the population and development. CPD was established by ECOSOC Res 3 (III)(1946).

CPD's website: [CPD](#)

Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)¹⁹

¹⁶ All information taken from CSocD's website.

¹⁷ All information taken from UN Women's website.

¹⁸ All information taken from CPD's website.

¹⁹ All information taken from CEPA's website.

CEPA is a technical body that advises ECOSOC on ways to improve ‘governance and public administration structures’. It carries out studies and prepares recommendations on these matters, particularly in relation to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

CEPA’s website: [CEPA](#)

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)²⁰

UN DESA is the main UN organisation that creates and works towards the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. It is responsible for promoting and advancing sustainable development across the globe. Many of the ECOSOC sessions and committees that ELSA sends delegates to are branches of UN DESA. UN DESA gives a voice to all relevant stakeholders and promotes inclusion, the minimisation of inequalities, the eradication of poverty, and barriers that contribute to sustaining poverty. Every year, it produces a report on its work over the past year.

UN DESA Report 2023/24: [Report](#)

UN DESA website: [UN DESA](#)

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)²¹

HLPF is the UN’s main forum for following up and reviewing the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. It convenes every four years in an ‘SDG Summit’ consisting of Heads of State and Government from every country that participates in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Website: [HLPF](#)

UNFCCC: United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP)²²

UNFCCC’s secretariat is responsible for supporting global efforts to respond to climate change threats. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is ratified by almost every State (196 Parties). The Paris Agreement 2015 stems from UNFCCC, aiming to maintain the Earth’s average global temperature as close to pre-industrial levels as possible. The main goal of UNFCCC and its various agreements is to keep the concentration of greenhouse gases

²⁰ All information taken from UN DESA’s website.

²¹ All information taken from HLPF’s website.

²² All information taken from COP’s website

in the atmosphere stable to decrease the human impact on climate change. COP is the annual summit held to review and assess this goal.

Website: [UNFCCC](https://unfccc.int)

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)²³

UNECE is a regional commission that aims to promote economic integration within Europe. It has 56 Member States across Europe, North America and Asia. It allows for cooperation and the promotion of sustainable development through a range of methods, such as dialogues, international legal instruments, and the exchange of best practices.

UNECE's website: [UNECE](https://unece.org)

4. Topics

4.1. What is sustainable development?

Sustainable development is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, which comprises the so-called Sustainable Development Goals. Briefly, sustainable development is linked to protecting our planet and improving the lives of everyone, everywhere.²⁴ This approach to growth and human development is based on the principle of solidarity with the coming generations. According to the UN, “sustainable development is **how we must live today if we want a better tomorrow**, by meeting present needs without compromising the chances of future generations to meet their needs”.²⁵

4.2. What are the branches of sustainable development?²⁶

The three main areas of action are **economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection**. A responsible management of resources allows for economic disparity reduction

²³ All information taken from UNECE's website.

²⁴ <https://ecosoc.un.org/en/key-issues/sustainable-development>

²⁵ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2023/08/what-is-sustainable-development/>

²⁶ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2023/08/what-is-sustainable-development/>

without sacrificing the environment for future generations. An inclusive approach of all sectors of society is also central to sustainable development.

4.3. Who uses sustainable development?²⁷

The short answer is **everyone**! Governments, civil society organisations and businesses all can benefit from the sustainable development approach. Usually, governments craft policies to guide sustainable development, and both public and private sectors are involved in securing the appropriate funds to implement them. However, individual actions also play an important role. Your decisions can create **meaningful change**! Whether deciding how to work, travel or voice injustices, you have the chance of taking purposeful action ([source](#)).

4.4. Why is sustainable development important?

Simply put, the **survival of our planet and our societies** depends on a sustainable world. Making the right choices now is imperative. Climate change, poverty, increasing inequalities and social instability risk creating unsustainable change and deteriorating our planet. Sustainable development is key to achieving long-term benefits for everyone everywhere.

4.5. What policy areas overlap with sustainable development?²⁸

Sustainable development can seem a broad concept. Indeed, it intersects with several policy areas. The main ones are **environmental, economic and social policies**. Within each of them, several issues arise. In the case of environmental policy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, resource management and biodiversity conservation stand out. Concerning economic policy, circular economy models and job creation have attracted recent attention. As for social policies, extreme poverty, education, gender equality, and health-care access remain at the heart of the sustainable agenda.

²⁷ https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/SustDev_Explainer.pdf

²⁸ [Source 1](#), [Source 2](#).

4.6. Recent innovations²⁹

As the 2030 deadline approaches, ECOSOC has been made aware of the need to understand the potential opportunities and risks of artificial intelligence (AI). Questions of efficiency, innovation and decision-making can be potentially affected by the rise in AI technologies. This, in turn, is linked to the three pillars of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. However, careful consideration of the challenges associated with it is in order. This was evidenced by the ECOSOC Special Meeting on “Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, held in May 2024.³⁰

Additionally, the High-Level Segment on Innovative Solutions held in July 2024 focused on integrating innovative approaches to pressing global issues.³¹ Under the theme “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”, the Council discussed multilateral solutions for a sustainable future.³²

5. Relevant Documents

5.1. Meeting Agendas

Agenda, Working Arrangements and Programme of Work: [Agenda Documents](#)

5.2. Past Documents

- [Reports](#);
- [Resolutions](#);
- [Decisions](#);
- [Ministerial Declarations](#);
- [Other](#).

²⁹ <https://www.un.org/en/desa/ecosoc-examines-ai-advance-sustainable-development>

³⁰ [Source](#)

³¹ [Source](#)

³² Ibid.

5.3. Explanatory Videos

This official UN playlist ([UN Youtube](#)) contains excerpts, news, psa and features from the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). Full ECOSOC meetings can be watched live and on demand on [UN Web TV](#).

6. Rules of Procedure

6.1. What is consultative status?³³

Consultative status allows ECOSOC to consult with NGOs, provided for under Article 71 of the UN Charter. Eligibility requirements, procedures for withdrawal/suspension, and the role and functions of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs are determined by [ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31](#).

The Committee on NGOs is made up of 19 Member States. ECOSOC grants consultative status upon recommendation of the Committee of NGOs. To be eligible, an NGO must have existed for more than two years; have established headquarters; hold a democratically adopted constitution; have the authority to speak on behalf of its Members; be representative; and have suitable mechanisms for accountability, democracy, and transparent decision-making.

ELSA has a special consultative status. This means it is concerned with, or has special competence in, a few specific fields of ECOSOC's activity. The [list of NGOs with consultative status](#) is revised regularly.

6.2. General Rules of Procedure

ECOSOC's General Rules of Procedure are found in UN document [E/5715/REV.2](#).

Rules of participation for NGOs can be found on pages 30-33.

³³ [Consultative Status](#).

7. HoD Reports

If available, the Coordinator for ECOSOC will share the HoD Reports from previous sessions of that Delegation's committee.

8. Archives

ECOSOC's Archives can be found [here](#).