

# STUDY VISITS HANDBOOK

SEMINARS & CONFERENCES 2024/2025



*elsa*

The European Law Students' Association

## Foreword

Study Visits are one of the most dynamic and engaging projects within the Network. They reflect the core values of ELSA - they underline the importance of mutual understanding in the spirit of internationality and diversity. Study Visits are a perfect way to get to know other legal systems and cultures, to see some beautiful towns and cities not only in Europe, but also on other continents, to meet fellow ELSA members from other National Groups of ELSA, and to make friendships for life. Moreover, Study Visits are a great opportunity to convince ELSA members to stay involved in ELSA and its activities. Additionally, they can make your ELSA Group stand out at your faculty or university.

This Handbook aims to facilitate and simplify the organisation of Study Visits in the Network. It consists of tips and tricks on how to organise a successful event, especially on a low-budget basis. As it is based on real, personal experience, it constitutes a valuable tool, which we hope the Network will find useful.

Should you have any questions regarding organising Study Visits, this Handbook or the Study Visits Portal, do not hesitate to contact the Vice President in charge of Seminars and Conferences of the International Board of ELSA at [seminarsconferences@elsa.org](mailto:seminarsconferences@elsa.org)

### **Best of luck with organising your event!**

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# 1. What is a Study Visit? 🌍

## 1.1. Definition

A **Study Visit (SV)** is an event organised by one Local or National Group and at least one other Local or National Group of ELSA or the partner associations of ELSA aiming for an academic, social and cultural exchange through means of sharing cultural experiences and exchange of legal knowledge

**Study Visits can be:**

- **Unilateral:** When one Group visits another Group
- **Bilateral:** When two Groups visit each other
- **Multilateral:** When several Groups visit another Group

You can find the full Study Visit regulations in Article 5., Chapter 7., Part 9. of the [International Council Meeting Decision Book](#), available on [officers.elsa.org](https://officers.elsa.org).

## 1.2. Aim

Study Visits reflect the spirit of ELSA by promoting cultural exchange, education, and international cooperation among law students and young professionals. They serve as a unique opportunity to explore different legal systems and traditions, while fostering mutual understanding and long-term friendships across borders.

# 2. Why to be a part of Study Visit? 🤝

## 2.1. Why to visit another group

- To be part of one of the most exciting and social experiences that ELSA has to offer;
- To join a project that builds real friendships, creates lasting memories, and connects Groups across Europe and beyond;
- To discover different legal systems and cultures, and learn through hands-on experiences such as Institutional Visits, and workshops;
- To strengthen your skills in communication, planning, teamwork, and cultural awareness;
- To get the opportunity to be shown around a city or country by a local person who can explain local customs and culture, and take you to places you might otherwise not have come across;
- Because many members say a Study Visit was their favourite ELSA event - and the reason they stayed involved in the organisation.

## 2.2. Why to host

- To share the culture of your country, your legal system, and the ELSA life of your Group with students from abroad;
- To take part in interesting discussions during the Academic Programme with the Visiting Group, which will give you the opportunity to learn from their experience and knowledge;
- To build strong international friendships and connections, often with the potential for future collaboration or return visits;
- To bring an international atmosphere to your city or faculty, and show your members what it means to be part of the ELSA Network;
- To improve your skills in event organisation, leadership, and communication;
- To boost the visibility of your Local Group and strengthen cooperation with local partners, institutions, or sponsors.

## 3. Organising a Study Visit

You have just decided to organise your very first Study Visit. **Congratulations!** Now it is time to start planning your event. In order to make the process easier, you may find a detailed roadmap on how to organise a successful event below.

### Initial planning

The very first thing you need to do when planning to organise a Study Visit is to answer the following questions: what kind of Study Visit do you wish to organise - unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral? How many participants from your ELSA Group do you want to attend the event? When do you want the event to take place? Which Group would you like to organise a Study Visit with?

### 3.1. Preparing your Study Visit Portfolio

Before you can host a Study Visit, you need to create a clear and appealing portfolio that will be shared on the Study Visits Portal. Think of this as your invitation to the Network, a way to show what your Group can organise and why others should visit you.

To begin, you must first submit the [Study Visit Specification Form](#) available on the [Officers Portal](#) and the [Study Visits Website](#)). Once approved, ELSA International will publish your Portfolio on the Portal on behalf of your Group.

Information in the SV Specification Form, and later in the **Portfolio**, should contain key details that help other Groups decide if the visit suits their members. You don't need to have every small detail planned yet, but you should have a clear idea of what you can realistically offer, and be ready to build on it once a visiting Group shows interest.



## **What to decide before publishing the Portfolio**

When preparing your Portfolio, be ready to include:

- **Description** of your city and/or your ELSA Group;
- **Dates** of the visit (or a date range if flexible);
- **Type** of Study Visit (unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral);
- **Number of participants** you can host;
- **Accommodation recommendation** (e.g. student dorm, private home, hostels, hotels);
- **Ideas for the Academic Programme** (e.g. Institutional Visit to a court, law firm or specific institution, suggested workshop topics, etc.);
- **Social and Cultural Programmes** (e.g. traditional dinner, sightseeing tour, pub night).

These don't have to be final; they can be adapted later in coordination with the Visiting Group, but it's important to show that your Group has a realistic and engaging idea of what the Study Visit will look like.

Keep in mind that the offer is your **first impression** - the clearer and more engaging it is, the more likely you are to find a suitable and enthusiastic partner Group.

## **3.2. Connecting with a Visiting Group**

Once your portfolio is published on the Study Visits Portal, interested ELSA Groups may begin reaching out to you. This is the moment when your planning turns into a collaboration. Clear and friendly communication is key. Setting expectations early helps make the rest of the process smooth and enjoyable for both sides.

### **3.2.1. How to Respond to Interest**

When a Group contacts you about your programme:

1. Reply promptly, even if it's just to say you'll follow up soon;
2. Be open and flexible, but clear about what you can and cannot offer;
3. Share any updates since your portfolio was published (e.g. confirmed dates or new Academic Programme ideas);
4. Ask questions to understand what the Visiting Group expects from the experience.

This is not a formal negotiation yet, but it's important to make sure you're on the same page before moving forward.

### 3.2.2. Aligning Expectations

Before you commit to working together, take time to discuss:

- The **number of participants** both Groups are comfortable with (*minimum number is 5*);
- The **budget and cost structure**;
- **Accommodation and travel options**;
- **Academic, Social, and Cultural Programme ideas**;
- **Availability of both OCs** to coordinate in the coming weeks.

If you feel that the fit isn't right, for example, due to timing, expectations, or capacity, it's okay to politely decline and wait for another Group.

### 3.2.3. Confirming the Collaboration

Once both Groups are aligned and agree to organise the Study Visit together:

- Choose your contact persons from both sides;
- Set up a shared communication channel (e.g. email thread, WhatsApp group, or shared folder);
- Agree on a rough timeline for next steps - especially the Study Visit Agreement and final programme.

At this stage, it's also useful to schedule a short call to meet each other "face to face" and build connection. Study Visits work best when both Groups are cooperative, responsive, and enthusiastic from the very start.

### 3.2.4. Coordination with the National Group & External Relations

If the Organising Group is a **Local Group**, they should **inform their National Group** before committing to a Study Visit - especially once discussions with the partner Group have started and a draft agreement is being prepared.

In addition, when planning foreign institutional visits or contacting external partners (e.g. law firms, courts, sponsors), the Organising Committee must respect the rules outlined in the **External Relations chapter of the ICM Decision Book** (Article 3., Chapter 3., Part 2.).

For clarifications regarding this, consult your National VP in charge of S&C or President.

## 3.3. Forming your Organising Committee (OC)

A successful Study Visit depends on teamwork - and that starts with setting up a clear and reliable **Organising Committee (OC)**. Both the Hosting and Visiting Groups should form an OC, even if it's small. The goal is to divide responsibilities, avoid last-minute stress, and ensure smooth coordination throughout the process.



Your OC doesn't need to be large; in many cases, 2-5 people are enough. What matters is that tasks are clear, communication is consistent, and everyone knows what they're responsible for.

### 3.3.1. OC of the Hosting Group 🏠

Suggested roles may include:

- **Head of the OC** - the main coordinator and contact person for the Visiting Group;
- **Academic Programme Coordinator** - plans and arranges lectures, workshops, and institutional visits;
- **Social & Cultural Programme Coordinator** - organises sightseeing, group activities, and informal gatherings;
- **Logistics Coordinator** - handles accommodation, meals, transport, and venue bookings
- *(Optional)* **Welfare Officer** - a go-to person for participant support and emergencies.

### 3.3.2. OC of the Visiting Group 🧳

Suggested roles may include:

- **Head of the OC** - responsible for leading the team and staying in touch with the Hosting Group throughout the planning process;
- **Participants Coordinator** - manages recruitment, application forms, emergency contacts, and group communication;
- **Budget & Travel Coordinator** - oversees travel arrangements, payments, and any Group finances;
- **Marketing Coordinator** - promotes the Study Visit within the Local Group and ensures good visibility.

Depending on the size of your Study Visit, one person may take on more than one role, and that's completely fine. The most important thing is to stay organised, set internal deadlines, and check in regularly as a team.

### 3.3.3. Tips for Both Groups

- Use shared tools (Google Drive, Trello, Notion, etc.) to keep everyone in the loop;
- Create a joint checklist with the other Group to track progress ([SV Checklist Example](#));
- Respect each other's time and roles, and try to solve issues early through open communication.

Having a strong OC on both sides helps make the Study Visit not only well-organised, but also far more enjoyable to run. It's also a great learning experience in teamwork and leadership.

### 3.4. Signing the Study Visit Agreement

Once both Groups have agreed to organise the Study Visit together, it's time to make things official by signing the **Study Visit Agreement**. This document outlines the responsibilities of each Group and helps prevent misunderstandings later on. It also strengthens your position when working with external partners, such as universities, sponsors, or accommodation providers.

The Agreement should be signed before any final bookings are made or participants are selected.

#### **What the Agreement Covers**

The Study Visit Agreement defines key elements of the event, including:

- *Dates and location of the visit;*
- *Number of participants;*
- *Division of responsibilities (e.g. who arranges accommodation, meals, transport);*
- *Cost-sharing and budgeting;*
- *Academic, Social, and Cultural Programme planning;*
- *Deposits and cancellation terms;*
- *Emergency and visa support;*
- *Communication and Promotion Strategy;*
- *Governing law and dispute resolution.*

It may sound formal - and that's the point. A clear agreement protects both Groups in case of cancellations, financial issues, or unforeseen problems.

#### **Template and Submission**

You can find the official [Study Visit Agreement Template](#) here, and in the S&C section of the Officers' Portal.

Important: Once signed, each Group should keep a copy of the Agreement, and send one signed version to the Vice President in charge of Seminars & Conferences of the International Board of ELSA ([seminarsconferences@elsa.org](mailto:seminarsconferences@elsa.org)).

#### **Tips:**

- Take time to personalise the Agreement. Don't leave sections blank, if something doesn't apply, say so clearly;
- Be honest about limitations (budget, deadlines, accommodation) to avoid last-minute tension;
- If any changes are made after signing, agree on them in writing (even by email) and update the document if needed.

The Agreement is not just a formality - it's a shared commitment. Signing it means you're ready

to build something together, with trust and clarity from day one.

### 3.5. Finalising the Logistics

Once the Study Visit Agreement is signed, it's time to confirm the practical details. Good logistics are the foundation of any successful event, it helps participants feel comfortable, safe, and well-supported from start to finish. Most of the planning will be handled by the **Hosting Group**, but both sides should stay in close contact throughout the process.

#### 3.5.1. Accommodation 🛏

Decide early on where participants will stay, and make sure it matches what was proposed in your Portfolio and agreed in the contract. Options might include:

- Student dormitories or university guest rooms;
- Hostels or low-budget hotels;
- Hosting in private homes (only if you're confident it's manageable and safe);
- Airbnb.

Before confirming any accommodation booking, it is important to consider factors such as accessibility (including location, transport options, and mobility access), safety measures and emergency procedures, as well as whether the venue has group-friendly policies such as late check-in or flexible curfews.

If you're using multiple accommodation types, make sure the distribution is fair and communicated in advance.

#### 3.5.2. Meals 🍽

Participants should have access to at least two meals a day, ideally with one being warm. Be clear about:

- Which meals are covered, or **organised** by the Hosting Group, and which will be self-organised or flexible for the Visiting Group;
- Pay attention to **dietary needs** (vegetarian, halal, allergies, etc.);
- Meal **venues** (e.g. student canteens, restaurants, homemade dinners).

It's always appreciated when local dishes or traditional foods are included - a great way to share your culture!

#### 3.5.3. Transportation 🚌

Sort out how participants will get around during the Study Visit:

- Will they need public transport passes?

- Are group tickets available for cheaper travel?
- Is everything within walking distance?

Include directions, local maps, and useful apps in the participant materials. If the airport or train station is far, consider how you'll coordinate arrivals.

### 3.5.4. Things to Keep in Mind

All bookings should be **confirmed in writing**, with receipts or confirmations saved for reference. Key information should be shared with the Visiting Group well in advance to avoid last-minute confusion. It is also important to plan for potential situations such as delayed arrivals, illness, or participants who may lose their way, and to ensure the Organising Committee is prepared to respond effectively.

ELSA members have access to a range of **discounts and offers**, some of which can be particularly helpful when organising a Study Visit. These benefits include reduced rates at certain **accommodation providers and transport services** across Europe (e.g. FlixBus, Accor Hotels, Diversity Travel), and you can redeem them [here](#).

## 3.6. Building the Programme

A strong programme is what makes a Study Visit stand out. It's more than just filling time - it's about creating a mix of learning, exploration, and fun. The programme should reflect the academic spirit of ELSA while also giving participants a chance to experience the local culture and connect with each other.

Both Groups should be involved in shaping the programme, but the Hosting Group usually leads its organisation. Make sure the full agenda is agreed upon and shared in advance.

### 3.6.1. Academic Programme

According to the ICM Decision Book, the academic part of the Study Visit must average **at least three hours per day**. This doesn't mean lectures all day - think variety, interaction, and relevance.

Some examples include:

- **Institutional Visits** (e.g. court, parliament, ombudsman);
- **Law firm or company tours** (Lawyers@Work format);
- **Guest lectures, panel discussions, or workshops;**
- **Joint academic events** (e.g. debates, small conferences);
- *Suggestion:* Focus on Human Rights or the International Focus Programme, if possible.

The Academic Programme should be clearly structured and scheduled, and include opportunities for Q&A or informal exchange. It should also reflect both legal substance and accessibility, taking into account language, background knowledge, and level of complexity.

You don't need a "big name" speaker to make it worthwhile; students often value access to professionals who are open, engaging, and relevant.

### 3.6.2. Social & Cultural Programme 🎉

These parts create the most memories and help people connect beyond the academic side.

Some ideas:

- Welcome dinner or national drinks/food night;
- City tour or themed walking game;
- Local traditions (cooking class, dancing, etc.);
- Pub night, karaoke, or quiz night;
- Cultural sightseeing (museums, landmarks).

Think about what makes your city special, and make sure there's a balance between free time and planned activities.

### 3.6.3. Sharing the Programme (Agenda) 📅

Once the programme is confirmed:

Once the programme is confirmed, it should be sent to the Visiting Group at least **two weeks in advance**. The full schedule, including academic, social, and cultural components, should be presented in one clear document ([SV Agenda Example](#)).

You can also include the programme in a **Participant Booklet**, which we'll cover later.

## 3.7. Budget & Funding 💰

Even a low-cost Study Visit needs a clear and realistic budget. Budgeting is not just about staying within your means; it's about making the event accessible, fair, and well-managed. Both Groups should understand the financial setup from the start, and everything agreed upon should be reflected in the Study Visit Agreement.

### 3.7.1. Who pays for what?

The financial responsibilities should be discussed and written clearly in the Agreement. Typical options include:

- The **Visiting Group covers all costs**, including accommodation, transport, and meals.
- **Costs are shared**, with each Group covering specific parts (e.g. one Group pays for meals, the other for accommodation).
- **Some activities are free**, others are optional and paid individually by participants.

Be specific: Which meals are included? Are public transport passes provided? Are any entrance fees or group tickets needed?

Avoid vague phrases like “participants will cover some costs” - be upfront and transparent.

It's up to the Groups to decide:

- Will the **Hosting Group organise and pay for everything in advance**, and then issue a single **invoice to the Visiting Group**?
- Or will the **Visiting Group pay for certain parts directly** (e.g. booking their own transport, or paying a restaurant on-site)?

Whatever is agreed, make sure the payment process is **clear, documented, and trackable**.

### 3.7.2. Payments

If the Study Visit is not fully funded by sponsors or institutions, the Visiting Group may need to collect participation fees from its members to cover:

- The full programme fee - including accommodation (charged by the Hosting Group, or paid directly to the accommodation provider)
- Travel expenses
- Additional meals or personal expenses

To keep things organised, set a clear **participation fee**, with a detailed breakdown of what's included. Establish a **payment deadline** and a **cancellation policy**. Use simple, secure payment methods (bank transfer, mobile payment apps, etc.), and Issue receipts or confirmations, even if informal.

In some cases, Local Boards may assist in handling or supervising the payment process, especially where legal or financial oversight is required.

*Tip:* Always plan for a small buffer when collecting participant fees - exchange rates, last-minute changes, or extra expenses can quickly add up.

### Tips for Budgeting

- Create a simple spreadsheet with estimated and confirmed costs ([SV Budget Template](#));
- Include a buffer (around 5%) for unexpected expenses;
- Track group expenses separately from individual participant contributions;
- Don't forget to factor in deposits or cancellation fees, if applicable.



### 3.7.3. Funding Options

To reduce costs and improve quality, you can look for:

- **Support from your university or faculty** (e.g. free rooms, student meals, funds);
- **Local sponsors** (law firms, city authorities, embassies);
- **Grants** (national, regional, or international; though these often require early planning);
- **National Group support** (some Groups offer funding for organising projects);
- **In-kind support** (even small items like city maps, bags, or snacks can add value).

**ELSA Development Foundation** ([EDF](#)), in case of financial loss, despite proper planning, Local and National Groups may apply to EDF for partial reimbursement. Applications must follow the EDF regulations and include clear documentation of the deficit. Full details and deadlines are available on the Officers' Portal. Please consult your National Board on this matter.

### 3.7.4. Accessibility

Study Visits should be planned with **accessibility and fairness** in mind. The aim is to create an enriching international experience, and not a luxury event. Costs should be kept as low as reasonably possible, so that students from different financial backgrounds can take part.

Remember:

The **goal is not to make a profit** from participants, on either side

Expenses should be covered ideally with the help of **sponsors, partners, or in-kind support**, rather than passed entirely onto students

**Transparent budgeting** builds trust and helps avoid misunderstandings

A key strength of Study Visits is the ability to **travel affordably as a group**:

- Look for **group discounts** on public transport, museums, and attractions;
- Use **student cards** to access lower rates wherever possible;
- Contact local institutions or tourism offices; they often offer free or reduced-price services for student groups.

When choosing accommodation or meals, always balance comfort with affordability. If you're unsure what's reasonable, consult your members; you can even run a quick poll to get a sense of what participants would be able and willing to pay.

Finally, accessibility doesn't just mean price. Consider dietary needs, mobility, and other support participants might need. A well-organised, low-cost Study Visit can leave a stronger impact than an expensive one, and make a bigger difference for the participants involved.

### 3.8 Preparing the Participants

Once the logistics and programme are in place, it's time to focus on the people who will actually attend the Study Visit. Good participant preparation ensures that the experience is smooth, enjoyable, and stress-free for everyone involved, including the Organising Committees!

Both Groups should keep open and friendly communication with their participants, especially as the event approaches.

#### 3.8.1. Participant Selection

The **Visiting Group** is in charge of selecting its own participants. Depending on your internal structure, this could be done through:

- An **application form** (recommended for larger Groups);
- A **first-come, first-served** sign-up;
- A short **interview or motivation check**.

Make sure participants understand the purpose of the Study Visit and what's expected of them. It's helpful to collect emergency contact details, passport or ID information (if needed), and dietary restrictions or health considerations.

*Tips:* Include a cancellation clause in your application to protect the Group in case someone drops out without notice. Include a Privacy Policy in the application form to be compatible with GDPR.

#### 3.8.2. Pre-departure Communication

In the weeks leading up to the event, both Groups should:

- Confirm the final list of participants;
- Share the agreed programme and logistical information;
- Explain payment deadlines, travel plans, and what to pack;
- Provide emergency contacts and local addresses;
- Clarify behaviour expectations (Code of Conduct, if applicable).

This is also a good time to build excitement. Consider setting up a group chat for participants to ask questions, share updates, and start getting to know each other.

#### 3.8.3. Participants Booklet

The Hosting Group should prepare a simple Booklet or info sheet that includes:

- The final **Programme** (academic, social, and cultural);
- Addresses of **accommodation** and venues;

- Local **transportation** tips or group ticket info;
- **Emergency contacts**, including OC members;
- Key locations on a **local map**.

Send this at least **one week before** the visit, earlier if possible. You can also include a few fun extras, like local phrases, cultural tips, or a welcome message from the OC ([SV Booklet Example](#)).

### 3.9 Promotion & Marketing

Depending on how the Study Visit is structured, the Groups may wish to **coordinate their promotion efforts** or manage them individually.

Before launching any promotion, it's helpful to agree on **visuals** (e.g. using shared banners or branding), whether each Group will create **its own promotional materials**, and how and when the event will be announced publicly

If the **Visiting Group is opening applications**, promotion is essential to attract participants. Consider using:

- Your Group's **Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn** pages;
- **Mailing lists** or university newsletters;
- **On-campus visibility** (e.g. posters, info desks, student meetings);
- **Word-of-mouth** via ELSA members.

Make sure the materials include a short description of the Study Visit (destination, dates, costs), a link or instructions for the application, contact info for questions, and a clear deadline.

*Tip:* Always double-check the accuracy of details before posting, especially costs, dates, and application procedures.

ELSA does **not have a specific branding package for Study Visits**. However, all promotional materials must respect the **general ELSA Brand Guidelines**, including:

- Proper use of the ELSA logo and fonts;
- Language and tone aligned with ELSA's values;
- Avoiding any misleading or overly commercial messaging.

For reference, you can consult the [ELSA Brand Book](#), available on the Officers' Portal.

Whether promoting jointly or individually, marketing your Study Visit effectively helps create excitement, build credibility, and make your project stand out within the Network.

Also, keep in mind: Whether the Hosting Group wishes to **approve materials before posting**, whether sponsors or partners should be acknowledged in visuals.

If both Groups promote the event together, it can increase reach and visibility!

## 4. After the Visit

A Study Visit doesn't end when everyone gets on the plane or train home. Wrapping things up properly helps preserve what you've built - and makes it easier for your Group (or someone else) to organise an even better one next time.

### Feedback and Evaluation

Take time to reflect with your Organising Committee:

- What went well?
- What would you do differently?
- Were the programme and logistics realistic?
- How did participants respond?

You can gather feedback in a short online survey or during a relaxed debrief meeting. Be honest with yourselves, you don't need to be perfect, but you can always improve.

It's also a great idea to have a quick call with the OC of the other Group to evaluate together and share impressions.

*Tip:* Archive your notes, documents, and planning timeline. This will be a huge help to whoever organises your next Study Visit.

### Thank You and Acknowledgement

Send a short thank-you message or letter to:

- Guest speakers and academic partners;
- Sponsors and supporters;
- Venues that offered space or services;
- University contacts or administrative staff;
- Participants, especially if they were involved in planning.

This isn't just polite; it helps build long-term relationships and can increase support for future events.

### Visibility and Memories

Share photos (with permission), quotes, or short testimonials on social media to show what you achieved. This builds your Group's visibility and helps promote the project within ELSA.

If possible, ask participants to write a short reflection or post. Many people are happy to share a story or memory, and it keeps the spirit of the event alive even after it's over.

## 5. Useful Links

### General

1. [Officers Portal](#)
2. [Study Visits Website](#)
3. [International Council Meeting Decision Book](#)
4. [ELSA Brand Book](#)

### Organising Process

5. [Study Visit Specification Form](#)
6. [Study Visit Agreement Template](#)
7. [SV Checklist Example](#)
8. [SV Budget Template](#)
9. [SV Agenda Example](#)
10. [SV Booklet Example](#)

### Additional

11. [ELSA Development Foundation Guidelines](#)
12. [ELSA Member Benefits](#)