

Legal Tandem Handbook

2023/2024



 **LEGAL
ANDEM**

Foreword

For more than 40 years, the European Law Students' Association (ELSA) has been innovating and organising projects to develop professional and student relations of an international character in the field of Law, preparing its members for professional life in an international environment, contributing to the exchange of scholarly experience and stimulating mutual understanding and friendship on the principle of equality of all its member. ELSA is run by law students for law students making active participation in ELSA a fantastic opportunity to develop many soft and hard skills required in the modern working world.

Dividing ELSA's projects into four Key Areas allows our association to go beyond the limit of what can be achieved by mainly voluntary work in one-year board working terms. In 2021, ELSA decided to give professional development a bigger focus and reformed one of its Key Areas to Professional Development. Out of this reform arose the idea to critically look at ELSA's project pallet and evaluate what is missing from our professional development offering. The result of this brainstorming is Legal Tandem, presented in detail in this Handbook. Developing this project has been a labour of passion for me for two years and now, it is my pleasure to get Legal Tandem off the ground and let our local Professional Development officers experiment with it. I hope you will make it your own; challenge its concept, polish its outlines and improve its benefits.

Having brought this project this far, some thank yous are in order. Firstly, I would like to thank the co-author of this project's idea, Linnéa Regnell, for putting your brilliant mind together with mine and giving me your blessing to make this project a reality. Secondly, I would like to thank the Professional Development ELSA International Team and the whole Professional Development network of 2022-2023 for listening to my presentations and giving me your valuable feedback. The biggest thank you to Leia Hindricq for supporting and helping me with this project, trusting me to bring it alive and giving me space in both International Council Meetings of this term to engage our network to work on this project. I would also like to thank Maria Vittoria Voi who together with Leia helped me with the final editing of this Handbook.

I hope reading this Handbook inspires you to try Legal Tandem in your Local Group. I hope Legal Tandem opens a new chapter for ELSA to improve its officers and members professional development.

ELSAfully yours,



Emma Kuusela-Opas

Assistant for Professional Development and creator of the Legal Tandem
ELSA International Team 2022/2023

Legal Tandem Handbook

Created during the 2022/2023 term, the Legal Tandem project was a collaborative effort with the Network to bridge the gap between the two core components of the Professional Development area: the ELSA Traineeships programme and professional development events.

The project saw its initial implementation during the 2023/2024 term. In this year alone, local groups organized approximately 10 events. Based on the feedback received during this first year, we have made several updates to this Handbook. However, this is just the beginning.

Thanks to all the people who have worked on and supported this project from the start. I am confident we are on the right path.

To many more Legal Tandem events!

Sincerely yours,

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1. Introduction

Legal Tandem is a project in the area of Professional Development (PD), 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 PD area.

This Handbook gives an example of the basic structure of a Legal Tandem session. It is intended as a tool for Local PD Officers who are starting to organise Legal Tandem. As Legal Tandem is a brand new international project, this Handbook also aims to raise awareness of the project in ELSA's network. As the practical experience of Legal Tandem grows, the project will certainly evolve, and this evolution will be reflected in new editions of the Legal Tandem Handbook.

2. Definition, purpose and benefits of the project

2.1. Definition

Legal Tandem is a project during which two Local Groups from different ELSA countries organise a joint session for their members to discuss and compare their respective

- Legal systems
- Study paths to becoming a legal professional
- National working culture in the legal profession

The topic of legal systems is concerned with the procedures or processes that the State uses to interpret and enforce its law.¹ In Legal Tandem, this topic is not supposed to focus on any specific legal area or topic, such as tax law or environmental law, but rather give a big picture of the State's court system, litigation process and the system of its legal instruments. As an example, the topic addresses questions like "What is the hierarchy of your court system?" and "What is the basis of your legal system? Civil law, [common law](#), [statutory law](#), [religious law](#) or combinations of these?"

The topic of study paths to becoming a legal professional is concerned with mapping the different study programmes on Law which exist in a country and will result in a degree that enables the person to work as a legal professional. As an example, the topic addresses questions like "How many universities or higher educational institutions in your country offer educational programmes for becoming a lawyer or a legal professional?" and "Do you have freedom in composing your own curriculum?"

The topic of national working culture in the legal profession is concerned with addressing the practices of work life that a legal professional encounters. This topic helps to discover the cultural and even bureaucratic differences of working as a legal professional in different

¹ See the definition on legal systems in Cornell Law School website, section "legal systems".
https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/legal_systems

countries. As an example, the topic addresses questions like “When do law students start having their first jobs in the legal field?” and “How do you address your work colleagues?”.

Each of the three topics is further elaborated in the National Knowledge Bank Survey, which can be found as [Annex I](#) in the Handbook.

2.2. Purpose

The purpose of Legal Tandem is to help law students and young lawyers navigate in the increasingly international legal job market by expanding their knowledge of different legal systems and the study and work paths of legal professionals.

Legal Tandem also supports ELSA Traineeships by providing ELSA's members with information on the differences in the legal systems and cultures of each country. Once the project is better established and well-known among the ELSA network, the initiative for a Legal Tandem session would ideally come from the members. Any member could express to their Local PD Officer their interest in having a Legal Tandem session regarding another ELSA country and the Local PD Officer would start to organise the project in partnership with another suitable Local Group from the country that the member is interested in. If the ELSA member is aiming to apply for ELSA Traineeships in some particular country, Legal Tandem presents them with a great opportunity to get familiar with that country's work culture in the legal profession before doing the traineeship.

Additionally, the project supports the awareness of comparative legal research by introducing the participants to the differences in legal systems in different States. If a Local Group organises a Legal Tandem session once a year and every year with a partner Local Group from a different country, it is possible for the members of the Local Group to gain knowledge of 2-5 different legal systems during their studies, depending on the amount of years it takes to complete the studies.

2.3. Benefits

Creates direct interaction between Local Groups in the Professional Development Area

One of the advantages that ELSA uses to attract law students to take officer positions in the association is to promote the possibility of getting international connections and experiences with peers across Europe. In Local Groups, however, this advantage is less obvious and often depends on the financial means of the individual officer to participate in physically organised international projects. Especially in the area of Professional Development, the experience of a local officer often does not expand beyond communicating with their National Area Officer and other Local Officers. With Legal Tandem, Local PD Officers can first hand cooperate internationally within ELSA and feel ELSA's international network.

Fosters international interaction and networking for our members

If Local Officers often miss out on ELSA's internationalism because of financial constraints, the same is true for our members. Legal Tandem brings international interaction to the study cities of ELSA members and gives a face to the international ELSA network. One recommendation for Legal Tandem organisers is that when organising a virtual session, participants should be

encouraged to attend the session with their cameras on so that ELSA members can better see and feel ELSA's international Network.

Raises awareness of and provides basic tools for comparative legal research

Most law students are introduced to the comparative method of legal research during their studies, but very few law programmes provide an overview of other legal systems to help students understand some of the fundamental differences between national legal systems. By participating in Legal Tandem, law students will be able to acquire a basic knowledge of different legal systems during their studies, which in turn will raise awareness of the importance and potential of a comparative approach to legal research.

Supports ELSA Traineeships applicants

By participating in a Legal Tandem session, ELSA members gain a better understanding of the working culture of the legal profession and of the legal system in a foreign country, which can be an advantage when applying for an ELSA traineeship in that country. Legal Tandem participants can highlight their basic knowledge of the country's legal system in their motivation letter and have a better idea of what they can potentially expect when working in an ELSA traineeship in the country covered by the Legal Tandem session.

Quick and easy project to organise at any moment during the term

Organising Legal Tandem does not require resources from ELSA International or EIT. No Legal Tandem launches are coordinated by ELSA International. Local Groups will initiate and organise Legal Tandem sessions at any point in their term when they wish to offer Legal Tandem sessions to their members. The supporting role of National Groups is also minimal once they have coordinated their National Knowledge Banks.

The amount of work that a Legal Tandem session requires from Local PD Officers is also very manageable thanks to their National Knowledge Banks and this Handbook. Local PD Officers in two different ELSA countries can choose which information they want to compare for each Legal Tandem topic in their Legal Tandem session, and then use their National Knowledge Banks as a source for Legal Tandem presentations.

Local PD Officers will know what it takes to organise a Legal Tandem session, following the step-by-step example structure in this Handbook, and can safely fit the launch of a Legal Tandem session into any stage of their term. Additionally, Legal Tandem is not intended to gather large groups of participants in order to ensure active engagement and networking of participants, which in turn makes the management of the registration process and participants' wishes easier in general.

3. How Legal Tandem was born

When the LXXIX International Council Meeting (ICM) in April 2021 made the decision to reform our area from the Student Trainee Exchange Programme (STEP) to Professional Development (PD), our area's officers took a critical look at what projects we organise and what we try to offer to the ELSA network and its members. This was also a workshop topic at the Nordic Officers Meeting (NOM) 2021 in Aarhus. The NOM workshop noticed that:

- PD doesn't have a project that would engage ELSA groups from different countries to cooperate with each other directly (meaning vertical cooperation instead of the horizontal cooperation that happens between Local, National and International for example in ELSA Traineeships);
- PD does not have a project to support ELSA Traineeship applicants, which would give our members an insight into the differences between the legal systems and cultures of each country.

To tackle these shortcomings, the NOM workshop developed the idea for a new International PD project called Legal Tandem. The proper work on the project began in the PD ELSA International Team in the autumn of 2022. The PD network heard of Legal Tandem for the first time in the LXXXII ICM in Dubrovnik and gave the PD ELSA International Team a green light to continue developing the project. The full discussion on Legal Tandem can be read from the ICM Dubrovnik minutes on the workshop "[The One with Rachel's dream](#)" from Saturday 5.11.2022.

Next up, the PD ELSA International Team launched the National Knowledge Bank Survey in February 2023 expecting answers from National Groups by 17.4.2023. The survey was reopened in May 2023 for further answers with a submission deadline on 1.6.2023. Further information on the purpose and current situation of the Survey and National Knowledge Banks can be found in Chapter 4.

The full concept of Legal Tandem was introduced in the LXXXIII ICM in Malta. In Malta, the PD network had a chance to debate the first version of the project's outlines and give their inputs for this Handbook. The full discussion on Legal Tandem can be read in the ICM Malta minutes of the workshop "[The One that could have been](#)" on Tuesday 28.3.2023.

4. National Knowledge Banks

National Knowledge Banks are an essential part of Legal Tandem. They ensure that all Local Groups regardless of their resources have the necessary knowledge to organise a Legal Tandem session and that all Local Groups are equipped to compare the same information in a Legal Tandem session.

The National Knowledge Banks are assembled by ELSA's National Groups, preferably in cooperation with their Local Groups, to make sure that all Local Groups under one National Group have the same base level from which to start making Legal Tandem sessions. Local Groups which do not yet have access to their National Knowledge Bank can organise a Legal Tandem session but the PD ELSA International Team highly encourages first pushing to compile a National Knowledge Bank and then embarking on organising Legal Tandem sessions.

Once these ELSA National Groups have shared their Legal Tandem National Knowledge Banks to their Local Groups, all the Local Groups from these ELSA countries are potentially ready to organise the project.

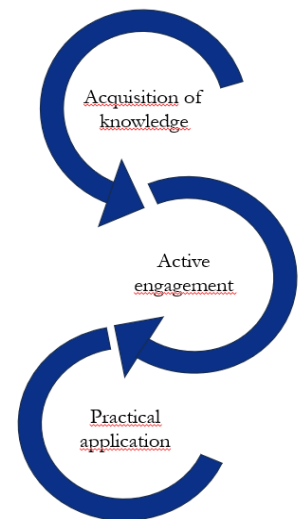
The PD ELSA International Team wishes to thank once again all the National Groups who have submitted their answers thus far and encourages all Local Groups within these ELSA countries to reach out to each other in order to organise this project for the first time.

The PD ELSA International Team will keep reopening and developing the National Knowledge Bank Survey with the purpose of eventually receiving answers from all National Groups. The updated list of countries who have submitted their National Knowledge Banks will be communicated to the ELSA network periodically. The National Knowledge Bank Survey can be found as [Annex I](#) to this Handbook and the updated list of ELSA countries with National Knowledge Banks as [Annex II](#).

5. How to organise Legal Tandem

This chapter gives a step-by-step example of how to organise a Legal Tandem session. Local PD Officers can use the sub-chapters as a to-do list when planning the session. However, the structure is exemplary and the Local PD Officers may modify for instance the length and the contents of the Legal Tandem session. The only elements that need to be followed in order for the project to qualify as Legal Tandem are:

- a. The session is organised jointly by two ELSA Groups from different countries.
- b. The joint session has members of the ELSA Groups as participants.
- c. The purpose of the session is to discuss and compare at least one of the three Legal Tandem topics: legal systems, study paths to becoming a legal professional and national working culture in the legal profession.



To help all the Local Groups ELSA International created a To Do List, which can be found as [Annex III](#).

5.1. Initiation

Legal Tandem can be initiated by any Local ELSA Group as their own idea or ideally, any member can ask from their Local PD Officer for a Legal Tandem with some country they are interested in. In order to have ELSA members request Legal Tandem sessions, the project needs to be marketed by the Local Groups. It would be particularly useful to ask members which countries they would like to have Legal Tandem cover at the beginning of the Local Group's term.

Once a PD officer has an idea of which country to partner with for a Legal Tandem, they will contact a Local Group from the desired country and the PD officers from both Local Groups will start to plan their Legal Tandem. Legal Tandem sessions are always jointly organised by two Local Groups from different countries.

To implement communication and help research all the Local Groups that want to organise a Legal Tandem, ELSA International has created a dedicated mailing list specifically for this need. You can find all the information about the mailing list and how to use it properly as [Annex IV](#).

5.2. Choosing the format

Legal Tandem can be organised as a physical or as a virtual session. A physical Legal Tandem session can take place inside any event which brings two Local Groups from different countries together, such as a Study Visit or a regional bilateral ELSA event. Offering a Legal Tandem session inside a Study Visit is a great example of Key Area cooperation which is highly encouraged by ELSA International.

Virtually Legal Tandem is organised as a webinar, using a platform that suits both Local Groups, such as Teams or Google Meets. ClickMeeting is not ideal because the participants cannot see each other. A virtual session can also be organised in a manner where the PD officer organises a room for their participants to gather during the session. The room should have such facilities that the participants can be seen and heard by the other Local Group.

In ICM Malta, the Workshop on Legal Tandem had a good discussion on how Legal Tandem serves the concept of ELSA's educational cycle. ELSA's educational cycle, as depicted on the right, requires cooperation from all of ELSA's Key Areas. Each Key Area plans the topics and timing of its projects so that when an ELSA member attends them all, the member has completed an educational cycle. For example, an ELSA Law School or conference organised by Seminars & Conferences (S&C) covers the acquisition of knowledge. Then the member practises that knowledge through active engagement for example in a legal research group or a Moot Court Competition organised by Academic Activities or Competitions. Finally, the member practically applies the practised knowledge in real life in an ELSA Traineeship position. In ELSA's educational cycle, Legal Tandem is suitable for the "acquisition of knowledge" from a Professional Development perspective.

5.3. Planning the session

Using the Legal Tandem National Knowledge Banks, the PD officers will choose which topics and questions they want to cover in their Legal Tandem session. The aim is that all questions are addressed by both Local Groups so that the participants get a sense of the differences and similarities in the legal system and study and professional paths in both countries. The PD officers will prepare a presentation on their country's practices and systems on the jointly agreed Legal Tandem topics and issues and present them during the Legal Tandem session.

The ideal length of a Legal Tandem session is 1-2 hours. Here is an example structure for a two-hour Legal Tandem session.

30 mins	15 mins	10 mins	30 mins	15 mins	10 mins
Presentation about country A	Participant presentation of country A	Questions	Presentation about country B	Participant presentation of country B	Questions

Participant engagement is critical for the success of the Legal Tandem session. When topics of country A are being presented, the participants from country A should not lose focus. This can be achieved by asking the participants to produce short teamwork on their study system.

5.4. Promotion and registration

The date and time of the Legal Tandem session needs to be chosen so that marketing of the event starts at least one week before the registration opens. Registration should be open at least one week. There should be at least a week between the closing of the registration and the opening of the event so that the participants can make their own preparations. It is highly recommended to schedule a call with the group of participants before the event to give them all the information necessary and to guide and help them brainstorm about the presentation.

The amount of participants should be limited so that there is space for real interaction and conversation. The suggested maximum number of participants per Local Group is 20-25 making the total number of participants from both Local Groups around 50.

ELSA International will create a simple brand for the project which is to be published soon after the publishing of this Handbook. The simple brand will include a logo, colours and key elements so that the project will be recognisable across the ELSA network. The folder with the Logos can be found [here](#).

5.5. Participant presentations

The VP PD should divide the participants from its Local Group into around three groups and give each one an assignment to answer with 1-2 presentation slides. The answer should take a maximum of 5 minutes. The VP PDs need to coordinate that the questions are the same for participants from both countries.

The VP PD collects the participant presentations at least two days before the Legal Tandem session. Each participant group needs to tell the VP PD which persons will be presenting the group's work. The participant presentations derive from the topic "Study paths to becoming a legal professional" and can be the only part of a Legal Tandem session covering this topic.

Examples of participant presentation assignments:

- a. Describe how you can plan your studies. How much freedom of choice do you have in your curriculum? Can you alter the length of your studies, meaning graduating sooner or later than on average? When and how can you plan exchange studies? etc.
- b. Describe the types of coursework you have. When do you need to do assignments and exams? How do you get graded? Can you substitute coursework easily? etc.
- c. Describe your study culture. How do students and professors address each other? How much do you have mandatory on-site lectures and how much are you expected to self-study? How does the university support students' social activities? etc.

The purpose of participant presentations is to keep the participants active and focused also during their own country's presentation. In addition, the fact that the small groups reflect on their own learning experiences can bring many interesting insights to the discussion that would be overlooked if all topics were prepared only by PD officers.

5.6. Session and evaluation

During the Legal Tandem session, PD officers are responsible for the presentations about their country. PD officers should host and guide the session in a manner that ensures maximum interaction and discussion among the participants. In virtual format, this means that participants should have their cameras on.

After the Legal Tandem session, PD officers should collect evaluations and feedback from participants. Evaluation, preferably in a written form, is highly important for the improvement of this new project.

The evaluation and feedback collected should preferably be sent to the VP PD of the International Board so that the first experiences gained from the organisation of this project can be taken into account in the further development of Legal Tandem.

The PD officers should send the participants Certificates of Participation. A template for a Certificate of Participation will be provided by ELSA International when the simple branding kit is published.

6. FAQ

6.1. Can Legal Tandem be organised by National Groups?

If the country does not have any ELSA Local Groups, just a National Group (for example ELSA Iceland or ELSA Malta), the National Group can participate in organising Legal Tandem. Whenever there are Local Groups, this project is aimed to be organised at that level. National Groups may support Local Groups when organising Legal Tandem.

6.2. Will Legal Tandem have uniform marketing materials?

The PD ELSA International Team is planning to give some basic elements for the marketing of Legal Tandem so that the project will be better recognised and known in the ELSA network. During the term 23/24 we created a [Logo](#) that can already be used. These materials are under work in the PD ELSA International Team. It is to be emphasised that there are no plans for launching a brand comparable to ELSA's flagship projects or yearly marketing campaigns for Legal Tandem.

6.3. Will the organising or participation in Legal Tandem cost something?

Legal Tandem is meant to be a free-of-charge event for members of ELSA's Local Groups. Also, it is advised that law students without ELSA membership could attend Legal Tandem without payment. Legal Tandem is possible to organise without any costs using free webinar platforms. Optional costs may occur if the Local Group decides to rent a space for the Legal Tandem session or wants to offer the participants some refreshments during the event.

7. Annexes

[Annex I](#): National Knowledge Bank Survey

[Annex II](#): Updated list of ELSA countries with National Knowledge Banks

[Annex III](#): How to Organise a Legal Tandem, To do List

[Annex IV](#): How to Use the Legal Tandem Mailing List

[Legal Tandem Logos folder](#)