

# STRATEGIC PLAN YEARLY REPORT

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ELSA INTERNATIONAL  
2020/2021



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The European Law Students' Association

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	2
<b>I. GOOD GOVERNANCE</b> .....	3
<b>A. Advisory Body</b> .....	3
<b>B. Board Reform</b> .....	3
<b>C. Secretariat</b> .....	6
<b>D. Annual cycle of meetings</b> .....	6
<b>E. Summary</b> .....	7
<b>II. A LIVING VISION</b> .....	8
<b>A. Refocus</b> .....	8
<b>B. Speak out</b> .....	9
<b>C. Continuity</b> .....	10
<b>D. Summary</b> .....	12
<b>III. AN ENGAGING ASSOCIATION</b> .....	12
<b>A. Member value</b> .....	13
<b>B. Community</b> .....	14
<b>C. Retain talent</b> .....	14
<b>D. Summary</b> .....	15

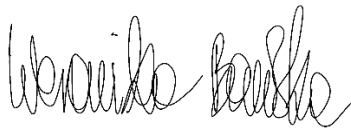
## FOREWORD

Dear Network,

Another year of Strategic Goals implementation is slowly coming to an end. At the beginning of the term we decided to create a list of our priorities in order to maintain efficiency and proper pace of work. As a result, the last months were dedicated to analysis and the consequent following plans. As the rest of the world we faced the challenge of adapting activities to extraordinary circumstances however, our efforts have been rewarded. The Association hasn't stopped and even in virtual reality we managed to fulfil the majority of our goals.

Therefore I kindly invite you to read the Strategic Plan Yearly Report 2020/2021. In case of any questions, I remain at your disposal ([president@elsa.org](mailto:president@elsa.org)).

Looking forward to seeing you during upcoming ICM,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Weronika Bańska', written in a cursive style.

**Weronika Bańska**

President of the International Board of ELSA 2020/2021

## **I. GOOD GOVERNANCE**

This goal is closely related to the optimisation and improvement of the internal management system of the organisation. Therefore, the activities undertaken in this area are mostly focused on the International Board and its scope of responsibilities.

### **A. Advisory Body**

After the creation of the Advisory Body was approved at 77th ICM Online in June 2020, we took steps to establish this new institution. At the beginning, we agreed that the priority would be to provide constant advice as an element of knowledge management in the Association, to develop contacts with the legal community to improve our fundraising strategies and to work on credibility and professionalism.

On this basis, we have developed the internal structure and governance method of the Advisory Body:

- members are diversified in terms of the type of support they can provide to the International Board (specialist and ad-hoc related to current activities),
- each member, upon joining the Advisory Body, establishes a contractual relationship with the International Board, which determines the scope of their rights and obligations,
- each member belongs to one or more thematic Committees dealing with a specific area of activity,
- the established Committees are currently Advocacy, Internal Affairs and Strategy & Finances (the selection was made based on the list of needs of the International Board)
- the most important decisions are made at bi-annually plenary meetings of the Advisory Body, chaired by the President of the International Board.

Members of the Advisory Body are obliged to:

- attend regular meetings of the chosen Committees,
- participate in plenary meetings twice a year,
- report on the progress of the Committee's work,
- participate in the sessions during transition upon the IB's request.

A candidate's list including past-immediate IB members, Alumni and externals was prepared as well as the draft of Advisory Body member agreement. The process of contacting individuals from the list is underway in order to create an initiative group.

### **B. Board Reform**

At the beginning of our term of office, we made a decision to prioritise this goal. Considering its complexity and potential difficulty in uniform implementation

throughout the Network, we wanted to be sure that specific actions would be undertaken early enough to be able to mostly fulfill the aim on time. Therefore, already during the transition, we discussed the potential structure, advantages and disadvantages of various solutions not only with the previous IB, but also with Alumni of our Association.

After determining the direction in which we want to pursue, we created the first draft of the reform, which was then consulted with our external consultant - an Alumni member who has been managing non-governmental organizations and providing strategic support for them for many years and who is a co-author of our current Strategic Goals. On the basis of these discussions, we developed a framework for the autumn ICM workshops, that were to ensure the participation of Officers in the brainstorming process. During the November ICM Online, we jointly analysed the current scope of our activities and the corresponding division of responsibilities in the Board to identify the areas that require changes. The collected input became the foundation for further conversations and brainstorming. These then resulted in an improved and more developed structure proposal.

During the I International Strategy Meeting, we presented the first proposals for changes in the scope of expanding the meaning and responsibility of ELSA International Team and standardising activities related to professional development. We also conducted further consultations on changes in the remaining Key Areas. Taking into account the contribution of the Network, proposals for further changes have been prepared. During subsequent meetings with Officers, we worked on the details and amendments, which resulted in the preparation of two structures that will be voted on during the LXXIX International Council Meeting Online. Both of them are presented below:

<b>STRUCTURE 1</b>			
<b>ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>COMPETITIONS</b>	<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>
ELSA Law Review	Rule of Law Education campaign	John H. Jackson MCC	WS on practical skills
Support for Legal Research Group			Career Launch
ELSA Law Schools	IFP		Lawyers@Work
ELSA Delegations			Job/Career Fairs
ELSA Webinars/ELSA Webinars Academy	Annual Human Rights Campaign	European Human Rights MCC	ELSA Traineeships
International Conferences of ELSA	Youth Forum for Education		

Study Visits/Institutional Visits	ELSA4Schools	Academic competitions coordination
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<b>STRUCTURE 2</b>			
<b>SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES</b>	<b>ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>COMPETITIONS</b>	<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>
Study Visits/Institutional Visits	ELSA Law Review	John H. Jackson MCC	WS on practical skills
ELSA Delegations	Support for Legal Research Group		Career Launch
ELSA Webinars/ELSA Webinars Academy	Rule of Law Education campaign		Lawyers@Work
International Conferences of ELSA	IFP	European Human Rights MCC	Job/Career Fairs
ELSA Law Schools	Annual Human Rights Campaign		ELSA Traineeships
	Youth Forum for Education		
	ELSA4Schools	Academic competitions coordination	

In addition, we proposed the creation of the following permanent teams within the ELSA International Team:

<b>ELSA INTERNATIONAL TEAM</b>	
<b>Human Resources Team</b>	To support the Secretary General
<b>Public Relations Team</b>	To support the Vice President in charge of MKT
<b>Grants Team</b>	To support the Treasurer
<b>Competitions Team</b>	To support the Vice President in charge of Competitions
<b>JHJMCC Team</b>	To support the Vice President in charge of Competitions
<b>EHRMCC Team</b>	To support the Vice President in charge of Competitions

### C. Secretariat

The topic of the professional Secretariat supporting the day-to-day administration of the Association was already taken up during the transitional period. We analysed the possibilities of implementing this goal together, taking into account the current situation of the Network. After the discussions, we made a decision not to classify these activities as a priority.

The creation of the Secretariat would enforce new and various responsibilities for ELSA International related to the employment of natural persons. Regulations, *inter alia*, in the field of labor law, social security law, and tax law would have to be applied here. In our opinion, the implementation of this task is not possible - not only now but also in the near future - assuming that there are no significant changes in the financing structure of the International Board. We not only do not have sufficient financial resources, but we also do not see the possibility of obtaining them from external sources. From our point of view, without a dedicated, permanent source of financing in the form of, for example, an institutional grant, introducing the institution of the Secretariat, even in the most basic form, will threaten the financial stability of the Association.

### D. Annual cycle of meetings

Following the adoption of the new structure for international internal meetings during 77th ICM Online, we have devoted time this year to implementing the changes. The implemented solutions are certainly not final due to the unusual formula of the meetings, however, they allowed for the effective conduct of workshops in the current pandemic situation.

#### International Strategy Meeting

The period between February 10-14, 2021, the first-ever International Strategy Meeting of ELSA was held, during which representatives of 26 countries discussed the future of the Association. The characteristics of the meeting were:

- no division of participants according to the criteria of the area of activity,
- dividing the agenda into small discussion sessions, workshops common to all participants and evening summaries of the achievements of the day,
- introduction of structured substantive preparations for the meeting enabling an engaging exchange of the ideas at an advanced level,
- including in the agenda of both current topics and debates about the distant future of the organisation.

## **International Training Meeting**

An important element was also the preparations for the International Training Meeting that is to replace the existing area meetings. At the beginning of the discussion, we noticed some organisational problems. Taking into account the current regulations, the agenda provides only training, so the only authorised individuals to conduct workshops are ITP trainers and this excludes the transfer of knowledge regarding the Association and activities strictly related to the respective areas. In addition, finding the 7 trainers that would be available for the full 5 days is now almost impossible. We also took into account the opinion of Officers who were against removing the area workshops and significantly reducing the number of participants. Based on this, we developed an amendment that includes:

- the final change of the format of the meeting to online,
- increasing the number of participants to 8 per National Group,
- introducing a mixed agenda combining soft skills training with knowledge of the Association and areas,
- waiver of the ITP trainers' obligation to participate.

We hope that with these changes we will not only solve the current problems but also increase the effectiveness of the transition, create an easily accessible platform for learning and sharing experiences for new members and keep the possibility of spreading ELSA Spirit.

## **E. Summary**

It should be stated that this year's implementation assumptions under this goal have been almost fully implemented and it is undoubtedly an achievement for the entire Network. Although aims refer mostly to the International Board, the content of changes affects the Association as a whole. There's still some space for other amendments but a crucial part of the tasks has been accomplished. It gives the new International Board a chance to focus on other goals.



## II. A LIVING VISION

The main assumption of this goal is to strengthen the identity of ELSA through a logical and consistent classification of our activities in line with the vision and values of the Association. The initiatives taken are general in nature and relate not only to the International Board, but also to National Groups.

### A. Refocus

We have spent a lot of time discussing the advocacy potential of ELSA in recent years. Various options were considered in order to implement our vision in the best possible way. This year we have decided to move forward by focusing on other aspects of this goal, recognising that the general concept of advocacy is now widely known and accepted.

#### Market research

One of the priorities in this regard was to properly define the expectations and needs of our members and a wide audience from outside the Association. For this purpose, we conducted the first market research in 8 years. Having over 3,000 responses from all over Europe, we are able to outline a basic development strategy and decide on the necessary changes and new projects. In addition, data collected at the international level can also be used in the respective countries. Our Officers may include them in their internal analyses when creating plans for the coming years.

#### Clarity of our actions

Keeping in mind the purpose of ELSA, we made an effort to highlight every aspect of it in our actions at the international level. Throughout the year, we continued to stabilise the educational cycle which enables us to provide our audience with a holistic experience that shapes not only their knowledge but also their skills in a logical and orderly manner. This year's novelty is the introduction of a professional development structure that standardised the ways in which we connect students with the legal community. At the same time, this concept fills the existing gap and provides the opportunity for targeted development that opens us up to a different type of audience. The last element is social responsibility and we also want to develop it. Our Network undertakes numerous initiatives and tries to act in this matter. In order to support these efforts at the international level, we decided to prioritise social responsibility. It is an element of the Board reform (described above) because we take the position of taking decisive measures to strengthen our position in relation to the society as a whole, not only students. At present, we can only express our hope that the successors will continue this endeavor. When listing specific projects, mention should be made of:

- running an international educational cycle including the International Legal Research Group on Human Rights and Technology, ELSA Webinars Academy related to law and technology, Career Launch and STEP,

- providing appropriate training materials and support for the Network,
- establishing the basis of Professional Development in international regulations,
- introduction of a new project: Career Launch.

### **ELSA vision in practice**

Our path to a "fair world" and "cultural diversity" has been supported by the development of the International Focus Program structure, Human rights initiatives and actions in the field of Diversity and Inclusion. Our projects within IFP are perfectly related to the subject of human rights. Subsequent editions of ELSA Law Review with record results and events within the Annual Human Rights Campaign prove that the interest is not weakening and there are still many opportunities for development. We managed to maintain the synergy of IFP with the classic activities of the Association which significantly affects the effectiveness of implementation. A definite novelty this year is the topic of Diversity and Inclusion that has always been present in the discourse but in this term we have brought it to the fore:

- work on creating a Code of Conduct for ELSA,
- improving the quality of our projects and initiatives in terms of accessibility,
- expanding knowledge in the area of good practices,
- building awareness of the Network,
- creating mechanisms for safe reporting of violations.

All this leads us to achieve high management standards of the organisation, taking into account the latest trends. These efforts do not end with a specific to-do list, it's a process, but we are proud of how much increase in awareness and acceptance we have achieved so far.

## **B. Speak out**

### **ELSA Advocacy Programme**

It is important to note the undoubted success of previous years is the development of the advocacy idea of ELSA. After many discussions, we reached a consensus on the most crucial issues and this allows us to say that the Association wants and is ready for advocating. Therefore, our priority was to strengthen this position and develop structures that facilitate operation. Many of the actions we wanted to develop had to be postponed due to the pandemic but that did not stop our preparations for the next years' Officers. We have defined the structure of the ELSA Advocacy Program including:

- raising awareness and education,
- impact on policy making,
- mentorship programme,
- training.

Each of these elements is geared towards achieving different goals. During our term we organised workshops and trained Officers to further popularise the idea of advocacy. Our Advocacy Team has developed a mentorship program structure that will be presented during the upcoming ICM. The biggest difficulties concern education and policy making, however, regardless of the circumstances, we have planned a campaign in the area of human rights and technology, as well as we are preparing policy papers in this aspect. Therefore our successors will have ready-made materials for use

### **Rule of Law**

Rule of law has become one of the most important topics of legal discourse in a relatively short time. The current political situation in Europe is not only conducive to discussing fundamental issues, and ELSA is trying to find its place in this discussion. Once again, our plans have been delayed by pandemic conditions, but we have made some progress. A key element of these activities is our cooperation with LexisNexis and ELSA Alumni and its fruit - the Rule of Law Education Campaign. This is by far the largest and most demanding project in recent years. A long-term campaign assuming at its culmination the involvement of all the countries of the Network in teaching the Rule of Law to youth in Europe. We are working on a proprietary curriculum, accessible to a diverse audience, provided by students and young lawyers. Thanks to the support of specialists from LexisNexis and ELSA Alumni, we work not only on the general outline, but above all on the localisation of the material. The start of the project in the pilot countries has been delayed, but we sincerely believe that our volunteers will go to schools soon. This initiative has great potential and has already attracted the attention of well-known personalities and institutions from the legal environment.

However, ROLE is not everything. Together with LexisNexis, we are organising the next edition of the Rule of Law Essay Competition to provide students with opportunities for academic development and recognition. We also want to expand the knowledge of our members which is why a lecture on Rule of Law will be held at the next ICM, and we are planning a campaign in social media for the coming months.

## **C. Continuity**

This goal focuses on improving internal management processes and ways of approaching external contacts.

### **External relations**

This year, we have introduced significant changes to the partnership structure. They were aimed at creating new opportunities for cooperation and strengthening the existing relations. The content of our contracts has changed. We divided partnerships into general and project ones. In general, apart from the usual

promotion and participation in ICMs, we now have projects and internal support in the form of training and workshops' contribution. Thanks to this, our partners can enjoy direct interaction with recipients, even in virtual reality. In addition, we have mostly changed the period for which we enter into contracts. The calendar year has been replaced by the equivalent of our term of office, from August to July. This allows us to present our partners with the full range of projects and initiatives at the beginning of the year, taking into account the ideas of the new International Board. As part of the promotion of our partners, we resigned from fixed numbers in favor of flexible, personalised promotion strategies based on the specific needs of the partner. Thanks to this, we have more control over the content we promote and it is also easier for us to plan the calendar of releases.

In terms of the fundraising strategy, we continued the efforts of the previous Boards. We decided to focus on securing our projects that do not have too many partners, bringing in more partnerships with direct benefits for our members, and combining our areas of activity in every possible field. We have therefore abandoned the rigid division of partners between areas in favor of a flexible structure with interchangeable elements. Each partner is treated the same, they are offered a full range of possibilities and it is up to their decision which initiatives to engage in. This improved cooperation increases our chances for the development of the Association in all areas.

### **Knowledge management**

Changes in the field of knowledge management are one of the most time and energy consuming tasks we have set for ourselves this year. However, we can proudly admit that we have successes that can be celebrated. One of the foci was on the relationship with International Trainers' Pool and ELSA Alumni. The first institution is currently struggling with many problems that we are trying to solve on an ongoing basis and adapt the trainers to the new reality of online training. On the other hand, we are working on ideas for a thorough restructure of the ITP to increase its attractiveness and efficiency. A good relationship with ELSA Alumni gives us access to a huge source of knowledge and experience that we can use, for example, through the newly created international speakers database.

We have also taken steps to diversify the sources of knowledge in our Association. We have introduced audiovisual materials such as webinars or more technically advanced tutorials on a large scale. The plans for the coming months include podcasts for people who prefer learning by listening. In addition, we are creating a completely new website as well as a new source - ELSA Wiki - which is the equivalent of the Association's encyclopedia. Simple, accessible language, basic content presented in a logical way. Everything an ELSA member should know in one place. ELSA Wiki is part of the Officers' portal transformation. By the end of the year, all these materials will be available to the entire Network.

## Human Resources Strategy

Working in the HR area from the very beginning brought many challenges. We knew we wanted to help the Network deal with problems and at the same time look for solutions that would also work at the international level. And so the decision to create an HR strategy for ELSA was born. This work has not been and will not be completed this year but we have a solid foundation. The HR survey was conducted to examine the needs and expectations of our Officers, we talked with members of the National Groups' Boards. Based on the results of these activities, we mapped the weaknesses and tasks to be performed. The most important elements are:

- transition and knowledge management efficiency,
- making the Association and its structure more attractive,
- Officers' well-being,
- diversification of “career paths” in the Association,
- proper relationship with Alumni.

To achieve this, we propose, first of all, the creation of a permanent HR department within the ELSA International Team, whose members will focus on these separate tasks throughout the year. We are also changing the current HR model to regulation that is more accessible, organically combined with the HR Handbook, where all detailed guidelines will be provided. The progress in knowledge management has been described above. We hope that this year is just the beginning of changes in the Association that will not only make its management easier but also encourage new students to join.

## D. Summary

We positively assess the implementation of this goal this year. Some plans had to be changed, most often extended over time, but no area of our activity has been neglected. Despite the unusual circumstances for us, we, as a network, have not forgotten the importance of development and together we tried to introduce further improvements to our everyday life. The key element is the fact that many tasks are a long process that has been started but must be continued unconditionally. So we hope that the next executives will take up the challenge and in a few years we will see a brand new Association.

## III. AN ENGAGING ASSOCIATION

This goal relates to activities undertaken to achieve synergies between different categories of members of our Association. We work on a coherent image, a sense of belonging and the development of ELSA's identity.

## **A. Member value**

Taking into account the fact that the Network changes every year, an important element of work on the implementation of this goal is to collect data on the needs and expectations of our members. The Market research and HR survey helped significantly in that aspect. Thanks to the different assumptions of both surveys, we received information about many areas of our activity. On this basis we:

- developed a part of the HR strategy “Officers welfare”,
- distinguished areas that need external support,
- created internal training strategies,
- collected ideas for creating a virtual communication platform inside the Association.

### **External opportunities**

This year, we managed to finalise three new partnerships to facilitate the work of our members:

- Nemovote: an entity offering an online voting system during Council Meetings on preferential terms for the entire Network,
- Sertifier: an entity offering a free platform for creating participation certificates and other documents needed to organise projects,
- WeProofread.it: an entity that offers free proofreading of personal documents in English.

We are constantly in touch with representatives of the mass transport and tourism industry in order to offer our members attractive discounts during their travels. However, this type of partnership has been temporarily frozen due to the current pandemic situation.

### **Human Resources developments**

As part of the HR strategy development, we are working on the creation of monthly training courses for Officers of respective areas, which will develop their skills that are useful not only at ELSA. Moreover, we want to introduce the habit of organising similar activities during international internal meetings on a regular basis. The strategy also includes strengthening the practice of appreciating and rewarding the achievements of Officers through competitions and awards.

The long term plan is to create a membership platform for ELSA. Unfortunately, this requires a considerable financial outlay, so the implementation is stretched over time. This year, we made an initial reconnaissance of needs, tools and financial resources. We cooperate in this area with members of ELSA Alumni. All arrangements and the first results of the work will be transferred to the new International Board which will be able to continue the work.

## **B. Community**

As part of strengthening the identity of ELSA, we have taken decisive steps also in the area of marketing. The main goal is to ensure an unified image, both external and internal, and a stable increase in recognition and professionalism.

### **Marketing materials**

Like the previous International Boards, ours also introduced unified document templates. We took over and updated the existing ones but also filled in the gaps. Materials presented to partners such as proposals, packages, booklets are the same, regardless of the area, although we are constantly improving them. We strengthen project brands and introduce additional materials to marketing kits to facilitate the work of our national and local Officers. This year we also focused on increasing the amount of content with a greater level of engagement on the part of the recipients. This manifests itself in a variety of video materials that we create or receive from partners. The current material will soon be supplemented by a full-scale Public Relations strategy of ELSA, which is to be ensured by the permanent PR department in the ELSA International Team. An important mention is also a complete reconstruction of our main website, which is to ultimately increase our attractiveness.

### **Learning unity**

Achieving full uniformity in a network with more than 400 communication channels is not easy, but we persistently strive for it. One of this year's solutions was the introduction of tighter supervision over compliance with Corporate Identity. MKT Team members regularly browse social media for possible violations to be removed. In addition, we have detailed the guidelines published with the marketing kits to dispel doubts about their use. Our Marketers are also working on tutorials and training in the field of creating valuable content to increase its quality and facilitate the ongoing work of our Officers.

### **On the way to rebranding**

One of the most innovative and future-oriented actions was the creation of a Working Group for Branding. Its members worked on collecting data and feedback on the ELSA brand among the National Groups, identifying interesting trends and finding tools and resources that could be implemented. The main goal is to modernise our image and follow the development of marketing techniques. The outcomes of the Working Group's work will be presented during the upcoming ICM and then submitted to the new Board for their disposal.

## **C. Retain talent**

At the international level, we pursue this goal mainly through our relationship with ELSA Alumni. After the partnership was formally established last year, we decided to strengthen our ties and develop joint initiatives. We conduct joint projects such

as the Rule of Law Education Campaign or the virtual celebration of the 40th anniversary of ELSA. ELSA Alumni members take part in our projects as speakers, such as during the last edition of Career Launch. We are developing together a new initiative in the form of the international speakers' database, which on the one hand facilitates the search for speakers ready to present on international projects, and on the other, enables the involvement in the activities of the Association for people who have already ended their active career in ELSA. Material support is also an important element of our relationship. ELSA Alumni makes financial donations that can be used for the most dire needs. This year it was equipment for recording audiovisual content.

Promoting ELSA Alumni activities, however, is only one way to encourage post-ELSA engagement. We work with National Groups on a daily basis to support their efforts to build or develop their own relationships with Alumni. We train on how to create your own organisation for Alumni, how to activate and encourage them to stay in touch with the Association. All tips and suggestions will be included in the HR Handbook as Alumni are part of the HR strategy. Reconstruction of the International Trainers Pool and the development of National Trainers' Pool are also helping to keep former members and Officers active.

#### **D. Summary**

As for the circumstances in which we have to work, we assess the implementation of this goal as correct, although many aspects can still be improved and expanded. The challenges presented here are one of the most difficult, but without progress in this regard, we will not be able to reach the next stage of the Association's development. Undoubtedly, the support of the Network and joint efforts are indispensable, and this requires time and energy. Nevertheless, we suggest for this part of the Strategic Goals to be prioritised in the coming years.