HOW TO ORGANIZE AN INTER NATIONAL DE BATE TOURNAMENT

A BRIEF GUIDE

Ana Gurau and Zsófia Murányi
How to Organize an International Debate Tournament: A Brief Guide

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Budapest
February 2013
CONTENTS

List of Tables ....................................................... vi
Acknowledgements ........................................... vii

Getting Started .................................................. 1

Chapter 1: The Organizing Committee ....................... 6
   Formation and Establishment ............................... 6
   Leadership and the Division of Labor ...................... 7
   Internal Communications .................................... 10

Chapter 2: Fund-Raising and Partnerships ..................... 12
   Budgeting ..................................................... 12
   Banking ....................................................... 16
   Donors and Partners ......................................... 17
   Registration Fees ........................................... 22

Chapter 3: PR and Promotion .................................. 24
   Registration ................................................... 24
   Promotion ..................................................... 26
   Institutional Support ......................................... 29
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 4:</strong> Socials and Logistics</td>
<td>Debate Venues</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wining and Dining (not necessarily in that order)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topography of a Tournament</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 5:</strong> Adjudication and Debate</td>
<td>The Chief Adjudication (CA) Panel</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tabbing</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 6:</strong> Running a Smooth Tournament</td>
<td>Schedule</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers and Swings</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 7:</strong> Using Your Success in the Future</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining Contacts and Cooperation</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 8:</strong> Quick Guides and Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>About the Authors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**List of Tables**

Table 2.1: Budget Forecaset .................................................. 14

Table 4.1: Plan for Debate Tournament ................................. 42

Table 6.1: Schedule ............................................................... 51

Table 8.1: Timetable ............................................................... 61

Table 8.2 Debating Resources .................................................. 63
With many thanks to:

**Ary Ferreira da Cunha**, from the University of Porto Debating Society, who inspired this booklet by writing their own “Brief Guide on How to Start a Debate Society”;


**Maja Nenadovic**, Debate Trainer and Coach;

**Anne Valkering**, International Debate Education Association;

and to all of the **Budapest Open 2012 Organizing Committee**.
This handbook is meant to provide debate societies and clubs with practical advice on how to organize debate tournaments on university campuses. These recommendations stem from our Debate Society’s experience of holding the first international debate competition in Hungary, and could come in handy for any similar initiative, whether at a private or public university.

Our tournament, held in Budapest, was coordinated by two debate societies. One was 10 months old; the other had only just begun the month before. The overwhelming majority of the members were therefore complete beginners in the world of debate, but they had a passion for debating, a big idea, and a good helping of optimistic enthusiasm.

Since you have started reading this guide, you are probably interested in organizing a large tournament for yourself. Before you start, it is important that you have a clear picture in your mind of the reasons you want to organize such an event, and of the goals you would like to achieve through it.

A well-articulated goal—such as popularizing debate at your university or helping to integrate your Debate Society into the international

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1. For further details, see our website at [http://debatehungary.com](http://debatehungary.com)
debating community—will keep you focused and will strengthen your conviction. And if people can see that you have a strong belief in what you are doing, you are already on the path to success! All you need now is a little instruction to guide you through the practical matters of making a debate tournament happen.

Our aim is to convince you that despite some very common barriers detailed below, organizing a successful tournament is possible. Moreover, such an event can help you promote your Debate Society among students and spread the values and benefits of debate to an even wider audience. The lessons and advice provided in this booklet are based on our biggest triumphs and our biggest mistakes in the organizing process.

“We Are Beginners with No Experience”

No problem! This was exactly our situation when we started and we ended up organizing an international event in a professional manner. All that matters is identifying each of your members’ best skills and putting them to work appropriately. Think about the fact that debate clubs attract a mixed crowd of people of various nationalities and from different academic backgrounds, with different levels of employment or volunteer experience. Make sure that all these people are assigned tasks they are best at, establish clear communication channels between them, and you’ll have an organizing committee ready to go!
“We Have Little or No University Funding”

That’s no surprise. But there’s no need to panic or give up your plans. You can approach local organizations and companies for funds in exchange for visibility. Moreover, you can obtain many necessary items through donations. Snacks, pens, notebooks, tea, coffee, cookies, maps—just to name a few!—can all be obtained free. We’ll share our experience with you, with its fun and not-so-fun parts, so that you can adapt it to your fund-raising necessities.

“We Are Busy with School or Have Full-Time Jobs”

An average debate, whether open or intervarsity (IV), requires some five months of preparation and an organizing committee of about 15 people. Most probably, all your debate club members have full-time occupations, either studying or working, possibly both. Although there is no way you can replace the dedication that such an event requires from its organizers, you can develop methods to ease the burden of asking members to accomplish tasks in addition to their normal daily commitments. A very straightforward division of labor can help a lot in this respect, and we’ll show you all the ways to do it effectively.

“Our Debate Club Is Not an Independent Legal Entity”

That’s also a problem and it closely relates to your obvious fund-raising needs. Potential donors will wish to know whom you represent
and how you will be accountable for the support they are offering. But there are fairly easy solutions to this requirement, as well. You can associate with a debate nongovernmental organization (NGO) from your city, or negotiate with the administration of your university and talk through this issue. Your motivation and enthusiasm to make the event happen will convince them to help you in logistical and financial matters.

Having no legal personality and initially zero cash, we—a group of 17 students and alumni from debate societies at Central European University² and Corvinus University of Budapest³—managed to organize an international debate open worth almost €40,000, attended by 48 teams from 33 countries in Europe, the Middle East, North America, and Asia, representing 37 institutions. Organization proceeded over six months, the bulk of the work accomplished in the two months leading up to the tournament. The event benefited from the generous contributions of 14 donors: our universities, NGOs, vendors, and service providers among them. Their offerings ranged from discounts to in-kind donations and direct financial support.

Our tournament received great feedback from both debaters and adjudicators, and it helped us develop a constructive love–hate relationship with our university managers. We learned a lot in the process.

We hope that this handbook inspires you to get motivated, knock on office doors, recharge your pre-pay every other day, write millions of e-mails, and enjoy everyone having fun at your event. Organizing a debate tournament is a worthwhile and rewarding venture, and if we could pull it off, then so can you!

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2. See http://facebook.com/CeuDebateSociety
3. See http://facebook.com/corvinusvitalklub

4 How to Organize an International Debate Tournament
Participants of the Budapest Open 2012 tournament, by country

- Australia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Canada
- Croatia
- Germany
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Lithuania
- Montenegro
- Norway
- Portugal
- Rep. of Moldova
- Russia
- Singapore
- Turkey
- United Kingdom
- Austria
- Bulgaria
- China
- Denmark
- Greece
- India
- Israel
- Kosovo
- Macedonia (FYROM)
- Netherlands
- Pakistan
- Qatar
- Romania
- Serbia
- Slovenia
- Ukraine
- United States of America
Formation and Establishment

Now that you decided that your debate club wants to host a tournament, the next step is to attract a reasonable number of people—between 15 and 20, at least—willing to help organize it. Usually, while forming the organizing committee, you will first rely on the members of your debate club. Friends or students from other clubs may also be lured into this process. You will meet once every two weeks during the first preparation phase (4 to 5 months ahead of the event), and then weekly throughout the 2 to 3 months prior to the event. Establishing a certain day of the week for these organizational meetings will help overall planning and enable organizing-committee members to attend regularly.

At the beginning, you can expect new people to join the organizing committee, as well as those who will drop out or not show up for all committee meetings, so make sure to keep an updated list of contacts. Later on, this contact list will help you keep track of your
most committed people and those who are less available, and thus enable you to assign the work in the most efficient manner.

Always remember not to take things personally! Offering volunteer work is a bit risky, and people have different motivations for volunteering. At the end of the day they are working for free, on top of their usual commitments, and you should respect that. Moreover, there is no problem if out of 20 organizing committee members, five people are absent once in a while. Tasks required for organizing a tournament are very diverse, and there is a job for everyone.

Nonetheless, as you get closer to the kickoff, you will have to finalize a list of organizing committee members for logistical and financial reasons. Assigning operational tasks to less-committed people might be a good way to deal with their occasional absences during the preparation phase, but situations could arise in which someone’s lack of engagement is so frustrating that the organizing-committee team must decide to dismiss that person. Make sure this decision is clearly and diplomatically communicated.

Leadership and the Division of Labor

The trickiest thing in managing a team of peer volunteers is keeping their engagement and reliability at the highest possible levels without creating the impression that they are being commanded or forced to do something.

In order to achieve this balance, it usually helps to endow one member of the organizing committee with decision-making power. This person will become the convenor of your tournament: he or she will delegate tasks and supervise their completion, make strategic
decisions, and be in charge of reporting to the university and to the other donors about your event. Designating a convenor can be done in the most straightforward way: interested people propose their candidacy, state their willingness to dedicate more time to the venture and assume more responsibilities, and explain their previous debate and tournament experience. The organizing-committee members then cast votes to elect the most suitable person. One important thing to keep in mind is that convening an event is not about being bossy. It is about strong communication, arbitration, and problem-solving skills. In simpler terms, a good convenor is always on top of what’s going on with the event, inspires the team to continue work despite hardships, and panics quietly and calmly. In addition, the convenor has to establish the date of the event, taking into account what’s going on in the debate world at that time. The convenor also invites an experienced chief adjudication panel and a tabmaster for the tournament well in advance.

The diagram below illustrates the plan for the division of labor used for organizing the Budapest Open:
When dividing the organizing-committee members into teams, you should take into account an individual’s specific knowledge and best personal skills. The **Fund-Raising Team** will find potential donors and partners, negotiate terms and conditions with them, and prepare reports. In developing this team, you should consider asking students of economics and business, or people with some project-management or fund-raising experience. Good negotiators, people with easy social skills will definitely be in the right place. This team must also include a person with a basic understanding of accounting, as he or she will handle the budgeting process.

The **Registration and PR Team** is in charge of building the image of your event for external audiences, promoting it, and communicating with participants. But the most important task of this team is carrying out the registration process: calls for participation, preregistration, payments, and confirmation of participation. For this purpose, you will want to involve people who have the opportunity to be online practically all the time and who do not mind receiving and replying to tons of e-mails. People with a background in PR or with graphic design skills will be very valuable to this team.

The **Socials and Logistics (S&L) Team** is the “always-on-the-run” team: it has to find venues in the city for accommodations, dining, and partying. Members of this team will negotiate the best prices and conditions, keep in touch with restaurant and hotel bosses, make sure participants are in the right place at the right time, and even arrange cookie trays before coffee breaks, if necessary! For this team you need the most composed organizing-committee members: brisk but calm people who can find a solution to any problem.

Certainly, these domains are not clear-cut and require cooperation. As you get closer to the tournament, you’ll have the feeling that
everybody in the organizing committee is doing a hundred different things at the same time and that your great division of labor project is ruined. It’s never too late to revive it: stop for five minutes to reassign tasks, so that work is done in the most efficient way possible and chaos is avoided.

**Internal Communications**

It is crucial to set up clear and efficient communication channels between the members of your organizing committee. Tools such as e-mail accounts, cloud storage services, and file-sharing platforms will help you deal with the huge amount of information circulating within the organizing committee.

It is advisable to create a mailing list that includes all organizing-committee members. A mailing list is the most efficient way to share essential information, plan meetings, and get questions answered.

You should also set up a general e-mail address following the template `[nameofevent@service.com]`, to which everybody has access. This account can be given as contact information to your prospective donors, partners, and participants so that all of your tournament-related correspondence with the outside world is found in one place. The account can also be used to store various documents, such as master lists, contact information of the organizing committee, the budget of the event, and other details. Remember that if you also allow all members to send or reply to e-mails from this account, you should set up rules for making these processes clear for everyone, so that miscommunication or omissions are avoided. Always be clear about who has the authority and duty to respond to given e-mails.
This mechanism may well get cumbersome, so you can decide to set up separate e-mail accounts for each of your teams, and then connect them with your general account through importing or automatic forwarding. Make ample use of various tagging systems available in e-mail service applications and always use filters for read / unread / reply needed e-mails. This structure will keep your e-mails organized and hopefully avoid confusion.

Manage the right to edit shared documents carefully. Encourage teams to carry out their communication on tasks at a decentralized level whenever possible, and to stick to their own field of work. This precaution decreases unnecessary traffic on your general mailing list (which should be reserved for information that affects all teams and members), and prevents crossed wires. A member of the logistics team should not reply to e-mails requesting confirmation of participation, and you certainly don’t want to end up with five different versions of a document called, “PARTICIPANTS_LIST_SUPER_FINAL_1” uploaded by five different people.
From the very beginning of the preparation phase, you will want to know how much your tournament costs. It is very important to estimate the overall value of your event when approaching potential donors, sponsors, or partners. Thus, you should anticipate, appraise, and record the value of all budget items, not forgetting to include easily obtained in-kind donations such as rooms for the debate events offered by your university. As you proceed with fund-raising, you will update your budget file to provide donors with current information. We will also discuss donor and partner communication: from identifying through negotiating to reporting on the acquired funds or goods.

**Budgeting**

Tasks related to budgeting should be entrusted to a limited number of organizing-committee members: usually, the convenor and a person from the Fund-Raising Team who is willing to assume such
responsibility and has some previous experience. In this way you make sure that money is appropriately controlled.

Certainly, if your debate society is not an independent legal entity, you will have to share budgeting tasks either with your main donor (usually, the hosting university) or with a partnering debate NGO. One way or another, it is extremely important that your convenor negotiates clear rules for collecting and spending the budget. On this note, it is necessary that you get an accurate understanding of taxation procedures applicable to your future income derived from registration fees and financial donations. You will prefer that the institution collecting this money has put in place legal mechanisms for collecting non- or reduced-taxable income, otherwise you might have to spend up to 30 percent of it on taxes. Examples of such mechanisms are a foundation affiliated with your university, a student association, or any other not-for-profit form of officially registered organization. But remember: consult an expert because regulations vary across countries! Make sure that you also consider bank fees and the money you spend on exchange rates. Ideally, a written partnership agreement should be signed to confirm all these details and to settle ownership rights of your income.

Throughout the organizing process, the volunteer you designate as the team’s accountant will work with two Excel files: the budget forecast, and the budget execution. In the forecast file, you will estimate all necessary costs, as well as your base income from registration fees. Usually, money collected from registration fees is enough to provide three or four meals for each participant. Everything else, meaning about 90 percent of your necessities, will be paid for by a donor. Therefore, you will use this file when negotiating with donors and you will update it each time you have confirmed a donation.
There are two types of donations: direct financial (cash wired to your account or to that of the service provider), and in-kind (goods delivered to you for immediate use). This distinction has to be explicitly made in your forecast file, and you should always ask for the exact value of the goods you receive in-kind. Consider the following example of a forecast file:

### TABLE 2.1: BUDGET FORECAST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Unit rate</th>
<th>No. of units</th>
<th>Sub-total (€)</th>
<th>Source or Type of support / Donor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rooms for debates</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>In-kind / Our University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations (3 nights)</td>
<td>30 x 3</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>10,800</td>
<td>Direct financial / Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee breaks (snacks, coffee, pastries)</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website design and maintenance</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner on Friday</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3,750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total forecasted expense</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base Income: Registration fees</strong></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To be raised</strong></td>
<td>X – Y = Z</td>
<td></td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current balance</strong></td>
<td>Z – (donated items)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>– 11,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This way of structuring your financial needs will help you have productive fund-raising negotiations (use formulas, they are awesome!). Interested donors will easily understand three main things: the overall value of your event, your previous successful fund-raising, and how exactly they can contribute. To illustrate: let’s say you have a forecast file as shown in the example above. You’ve done a good job in getting the most out of your university, and you were awarded a grant from a foundation in order to cover participants’ accommodations costs. But you have to raise €11,200 more, and for this purpose you’re meeting representatives of well-known law firms (they love debaters!). The bossy manager will listen to your nice story about argumentation and public speaking, he will be delighted that the logo of his firm will be displayed on your poster, but he will want to know precisely how much money you are looking for and how it will be spent. At this moment, you show him your budget forecast. Beside the fact that he will be impressed by your accuracy and the amount of money you already managed to raise, he will immediately see where his firm’s donation fits on your list. As a partner in a law firm, he might be more interested in providing you with awards or a website than paying for your coffee breaks. But that’s great! Your financial burden has just decreased even further and you can move on to contacting a bakery or a coffee shop, and lure its owner into giving you cookies and coffee for free. You should always try to match your needs with the donor’s profile.

Depending on how successful you are at fund-raising, you may be able to provide additional services and goods to your participants in exchange for their registration fee. Gather a few ideas about extra items you could invest in for the benefit of all your participants (for example, more substantial welcome packages, tickets for local public
transportation, T-shirts, and other goodies) in case you should find yourself in this happy situation.

**Banking**

If you are serious about obtaining financial donations, you must be able to present a mode of payment that is appropriately secure in the eyes of your donors. If your debate club is a registered legal entity, you are probably entitled to an independent bank account for the association, and managing it should not be a problem. However, if you are not a legal entity—this was our situation—you must look into other options.

The first option is to ask for assistance at your university. You probably wish to involve your institution in the tournament to a great degree anyway, especially when the campus is your desired debate venue. Therefore, you must strive to establish good relations between the organizing committee and the chief administrative bodies of your university. If they are willing to stand behind you, you might want to take advantage of their own financial system. Be sure to negotiate all appropriate terms of use with the relevant authorities (such as the bursar’s secretary, the financial controlling office, the budgeting office), and put everything in writing. Most donors you’ll be approaching are eager to associate themselves with a higher education institution, so securing university support will lend you and your event credibility. You may also wish to approach different university bodies, such as the student union, which have relatively independent budgeting and decision-making powers. Contacting an NGO to help manage your income might also be possible.
Alternatively, you can try to approach potential donors and propose that they pay for a given service directly. In this way, no money actually goes through your hands, but you still get what you need.

In any case, always negotiate clear terms on how you spend the money and how much influence or control will be held by the entity assisting you. Put in place efficient communication rules that will enable you to obtain real-time information about incoming (for example, participation fees) and outgoing (for example, payments to vendors) transactions made from your money.

**Donors and Partners**

It is important to identify and define the roles of all of the major stakeholders in the event so that everyone is on the same page. A *donor* is an organization or company that will offer you a donation as part of their corporate social responsibility plan, while a *sponsor* will contribute to your event for its own marketing purposes. The reason we point out this distinction is that you are obligated to donors and sponsors in different ways, and they expect different things in exchange for their contribution: donors want *visibility*, while sponsors want *advertising*. *Sponsorships* are thus considered marketing investments of the sponsoring party. They are duly monitored and governed by corporate policies, and they would somewhat limit your freedom of choice as an event organizer. Most certainly, you will prefer to look for *donations* instead. They enable donors to obtain various tax exemptions in the country where they operate. Therefore, a donation creates more space for common interest between you and the donor: by accepting a donation, you already benefit the donor organizations, and thus they are less keen to impose various
conditions upon you regarding the organizing process. For example, you can find donations with local or national governments or European Union (EU) institutions, NGOs, and private funds. They can donate because a debate tournament fits certain objectives they subscribe to. In some cases, however, you can also find nonprofit entities focused on a specific topic (such as the EU, or environmental issues), who are willing to sponsor the tournament in exchange for particular attention being paid to “their” topic, either in competition rounds or in side events.

What becomes extremely important at this point is how you undertake donor management and communication. First, you will have to identify your main donor: the organization that contributes the most to your event. As we mentioned before, usually this is the university that hosts your tournament, since rental prices for the necessary rooms will most likely be the highest number in your forecast budget. (You’ll be amazed to find out how expensive these rooms would have been if you had to pay for them yourself!) Your main donor is also your most valuable partner, therefore you will always ask for that partner’s approval when pursuing other potential donors and commercial partners. This procedure might seem a mere formality, but it helps you create a professional, credible relationship with your main donor. Also, situations in which your main donor wouldn’t like the firm’s name associated with another organization or a brand of products can certainly arise, and you might get in trouble if you don’t ask in advance. For instance, your main donor is a large state university in a country where recent regulation increased taxation on food containing high doses of sugar, and there is public pressure to limit consumption of such products. Even if you obtain a donation from a brand of energy drinks (debaters love them!), your university
might refuse to be associated with the brand and your fund-raising efforts will have been in vain.

Next, throughout the process of finding secondary donors, you will negotiate as transparently as possible, in order to avoid cases similar to the above. You will always explain who your main donor is, what other organizations or companies you are planning to approach, and most importantly, what visibility tools you can offer in exchange for the donation you obtain. Consider direct competitors strategically: if a bakery refused you, you’ll mention it to the next bakery on your list, and maybe knowing this fact will motivate the second bakery to give you those croissants. Your discussions will ideally culminate in written documents that state all these aspects in detail. Always prepare for meetings with potential donors! Make sure you have answers to all foreseeable questions, present yourself as a reliable group, and emphasize how the donor’s support of the event benefits the donor. Tell them how cool debate is, how noble it is to invest in youth and education, and how diverse your audience will be.

The best way to finding sponsors and donors really depends on the local situation. If you do not have much experience in this area, you can start by asking other student organizations how they got funding. Check posters for similar student events to see the type of businesses that sponsored them. Ask around if anyone with experience in fund-raising has good suggestions for what businesses might work in your case; an expert might know of a foundation that they could not use, but who might be perfect for you, or have a contact that might be of help. Make a list of organizations and companies that you think might or should be interested in your tournament and try to follow it.
Finally, another group of people you will deal with are vendors—companies from which you will buy services (restaurants, hotels, and party places). Your goal will be to turn them into your partners, meaning to negotiate reduced prices and special conditions. From our experience, partners are fairly easy to acquire: the leisure industry is very receptive to international audiences, so if you market your event in such a way, you will be offered discounted prices, free reservations, and gifts from the house. What do you offer partners in exchange? The same: you will place their logos on your posters, website, and ID cards. You might wonder: why would these established businesses find your proposal attractive? After all, you organize a very specific event for around 140 very specific people, from which 100 might never return to your city. On top of that, they are all students and don’t have too much money to spend. In reality, marketing is mostly about unexpected opportunities and, even more so, a matter of how you present your event and how you succeed to match the partners’ profile and interests with your needs. Here is an example of a “first-contact” e-mail we sent to selected party venues in Budapest in order to get great offers while keeping our costs low:

Subject: Cooperation Proposal for International Youth Event

Dear Zsuzsanna,

My name is Jane Doe and I work for the student club ‘Debate Society’ of the Central European University (CEU). I am contacting you at the recommendation of [be creative!]. I would like to propose a cooperation opportunity for an event that we have organized at CEU on March 2. The event will be attended by 130 international students and we are designing promotional materials for an even larger outreach. For your easy reference, please find a detailed description attached.
On that Friday, we would like to organize a welcoming party, and to offer our participants coupons with a fixed value, based on which they can order. Our budget would be limited to 800–1,000 HUF/person, but we hope that we can further negotiate with you, given that all the participants will be staying for more than just one drink.

I am happy to meet and discuss the idea with you at your earliest convenience. We would really like to have you on board for our event since, as foreign students in Budapest, we often enjoy parties at [your pub] very much!

Thank you!

Now, let’s see what we’ve done here. We mentioned whom we represent. A university equals lots of young people, which equals more potential sales. We found a recommendation, which for them translated into, “Oh, wow! My pub is cool!” We emphasized that our audience is young, large, and diverse, thus we profiled ourselves as potential clients. We explained exactly what we want, but we certainly left room for further discussions. We let the pub establish the time of the meeting, because that’s nice of us. Finally, we assured the pub that they are simply great at providing a specific service (that is, parties for international crowds), which translates into, “These guys really know my business,” and again, “My pub is so cool!” This kind of flattery usually turns into “OK, I’m gonna talk to them!” From this moment on, the deal is almost done.

A particular group of partners is formed by the media: newspapers, TV and radio channels, and online platforms, which you will invite to your event and then help them report about it. Their interest is not difficult to maintain, either: make sure to assign a person from the
PR Team who will take care of journalists at the opening or closing ceremony, serve them a cup of coffee, and tell them fun stories. In this way, they will be motivated to dedicate more space and time to their report about your tournament. It is worth considering that if you are able to negotiate preliminary commitments from any media outlets early on, you can then use those commitments as an added benefit when contacting prospective donors and partners. In addition to all of the other visibility opportunities already mentioned, you will also be able to tell donors and partners that specific news outlets are going to report on your event.

If debate is new in your country, as it was in Hungary when we organized Budapest Open, you will need to explain to your media partners what university debating is, highlighting its educational value and benefits.

**Registration Fees**

In order to provide your event with a baseline fund and to ensure that participants who register actually show up for the tournament, it is common to require registration fees. Certainly, these fees are symbolic: if you charged each participant the actual amount of your expense per person, very few people could afford to attend. Therefore, the importance of fund-raising and smart spending is obvious: the more you raise, the smaller the registration fees, and the more popular your event becomes. Conversely, if your registration fee is too small, it won’t commit people to attend, and in the event they have something urgent or unexpected in their schedule, they might not come at all even if they paid. So, make sure to keep fees balanced here. To avoid potential conflicts, we recommend that
you inform your participants about conditions for nonrefundable fees. For instance, if they cancel participation three days ahead of the event or later, regardless of the reason, you are not obliged to refund their fees.

Registration fees have to provide every participant with decent accommodations, good meals, and fun socials. Deciding on the optimal fee can be difficult, because you’ll have to announce and collect it before you obtain most of your donations. Nonetheless, we advise you to stay within the range of €30–50 for a three-day tournament, depending on how you evaluate your chances to raise funds at the early stage of preparations. Also, think about the fact that most participants will try to get this money reimbursed from their university or debate society. Thus, it will be very important to make sure that you can issue an official invoice to each paying participant. This, once again, highlights the necessity of having a proper means of administering payments (see Banking, p. 16).
In this section, we’ll see how your event relates to the outside world: how you acquire participants, what you can do to promote the event among nondebate audiences, and how you can attract support from institutions in your city.

**Registration**

Let’s continue the previous discussion about registration fees by covering the whole registration process in depth. You will want to announce your event as soon as you have:

1. established the date when the event is taking place
2. confirmed the venue for debate rounds for that date
3. estimated a registration fee
4. estimated the maximum number of teams you will be able to host

It is common to start with a **preregistration** phase of one to two months. This phase begins with announcing your tournament,
continues with promoting it and, in parallel, with preregistering people interested in participating. That means you will collect general information from potential participants (full name, team name, university, citizenship), without requiring the payment of the registration fee and without imposing any institution caps. You can do that by designing a simple questionnaire on an online survey platform, which sends all results to your event’s e-mail address and is administered by the Registration and PR Team. Preregistration will help you get an idea of your event’s reach and the demand for it in the debating world. This information enables you to decide what your tournament profile will be (regional, continental, international) and what institution caps you should introduce in order to make it balanced, yet diverse enough to be fun.

The second phase is registration itself: preregistered participants transfer the registration fee, which effectively secures their place at the tournament. Usually, tournament organizers adopt the rule “first come, first served,” while keeping in mind the previously adopted institution cap (commonly, maximum 2 to 3 teams per university) and the maximum number of teams. These criteria will shape your final list of participants. The logistics of the process can be complicated, given that preregistered participants will most likely wire their fees through bank transfers, and thus you will have little real-time information about actual payment. To make things a bit easier, by announcing an institution cap at the very beginning of the preregistration phase, you will avoid more teams from the same university preregistering. As you get closer to reaching your limit of teams, another good idea is to ask participants to send you an inquiry e-mail before paying, so that you can confirm that there are still places left and they can proceed with payment. You should handle these situations very carefully and always give deadlines, for example, “please,
get back to us with a confirmation of payment by tomorrow at 5:00 pm.” A situation could arise that somebody promises you they will pay, but then something doesn’t work with their card, or they don’t have a card, and the person takes two days to complete the payment, during which you refused a potentially more interesting team. Don’t forget to require a proof of payment from all participants. This proof can be a scanned document or an online confirmation message from their e-banking service.

If you control your finances by yourself, asking for flight or train tickets from participants can also work well as confirmation of their attendance.

The registration phase usually lasts up to a month and it will probably be a tough time for the Registration and PR Team. Task-sharing and communication rules are very important, as well as availability in terms of time and access to the Internet. Once registration is done, you’ll be a few months ahead of your tournament and you can calmly take care of promotion and fund-raising.

**Promotion**

Debaters are busy people, so you have to start by making your event recognizable. We advise you to think of a logo and an event description that are uniform across the various online platforms you will use for promotion. Be consistent and accurate in everything that you publish. Accuracy will ensure that potential participants get correct and current information and that your event seems reliable and professionally organized.

The most common promotion tools you will have to develop are:
1. a logo
2. a Facebook event
3. a promotional video
4. a website
5. wall posters
6. identification (ID) cards
7. accessories

Let’s go through each of them. For a nice logo you will need to find among the organizing-committee’s friends and friends of friends somebody with a kind heart and graphic design skills, because design and PR firms charge a lot of money for this job and you most certainly want to avoid this expense. Needless to say, your logo has to represent your tournament in the best possible way. On top of that, you might want to connect it with the image of your university or your city.

A Facebook event will allow you to connect quickly with your audience and participants, as well as with your donors and partners (that is, their pages). Make sure, though, that you make changes in a smart way (not too many, not too often), so that your attendees don’t push the “turn off notifications” button. The host of your event will usually be your convenor, and the right to make changes should be managed carefully.

It would be nice if you could shoot a short video for online promotion. Again, you just need a good idea and an average camera, as software for putting video files together is quite accessible.
Developing a **website** can be a little more complicated since it needs more advanced skills. We received our website www.debatehungary.com as an in-kind donation, but because the procedure took a long while, we started with a site on a blogging platform, redesigned by a member of our organizing committee. This approach might be less fancy than a website, but it works perfectly for uploading documents and posting news about the tournament, so it’s definitely a viable solution. And it’s free.

**Posters** are easy to design, once you have the logo. You just have to put everything on an A3 page, add the full name, the date, the location of your event, and the logos of all your supporters. It’s important to bear in mind that the dimensions of the logos should be different so that they correspond to the amount of the contribution: your main donor’s logo will be the largest, your secondary donors’ logos smaller, and your commercial partners’ logos the smallest. Print the poster in color and hang it in the appropriate locations at the biggest universities in your city some two weeks before the event. It’s always a smart idea to bring posters to your partners, so that they can promote on your behalf as well. To see a sample poster, go to Chapter 8: Resources.

You will also have to design **ID cards** for every participant, which they will wear during the event for identification purposes and in cases of emergency. Ideally, these cards should be two-sided, laminated for durability, and contain the following information: on the front side: full printed name of participant, represented university or city, a big event logo, and smaller logos for donors and smallest for your partners. On the reverse side: at least three mobile phone numbers of organizing-committee members from the Logistics Team, numbers for calling the police and the ambulance, the addresses of the
hotel and the tournament venue, and a text in the local language saying whom to contact in case the participant’s lost card is found or in case the participant needs help. We in Hungary paid special attention to this, as most of our participants obviously didn’t speak any Hungarian. The reason we put ID cards among promotional tools is that they are worn all the time, and are thus visible to everyone, including other students in the university, people in the street, crowds in the pubs, and tourists in the hotel. That’s one way of publicizing your event without too much effort. You can find sample ID card in Chapter 8.

Producing promotional accessories largely depends on your financial situation, but you can certainly consider some inexpensive yet nice ideas. For example, you can print stickers or badges to include in the welcome package. You can also order tote bags with the logo of your event; they are a more practical alternative to T-shirts.

A general rule to follow regarding promotion: make sure that before producing and launching each of the tools above, you contact the relevant persons working for your main donor and your secondary donors for a formal approval.

Institutional Support

After you have created a recognizable “face” for your tournament and attracted the attention of the international debate community, it is time to think about boosting the reputation of your event at home and among a more general audience. There are numerous institutions in addition to your university that might be interested
in a debate tournament and would be interested in starting a very fruitful collaboration with you. We will list a few of them here.

**EMBASSIES AND CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE**

As you are organizing an international event, a multitude of foreign countries will be represented by very talented debaters in your city and country. After the registration phase is concluded and you have your full list of participants, you might then be interested in contacting the embassies or other representations of relevant countries. Many missions include a cultural department geared to the kind of event your tournament promises to be. Therefore, you could inquire about the possibility of an embassy or other expat hub promoting your event on their website or in their newsletters. A tournament can be the perfect press opportunity for an ambassador, cultural attaché, or other high-ranking representative to demonstrate the excellent relations and continued cultural exchange between your two countries. By inviting such dignitaries to attend the opening and finals ceremonies, your event will gain stature. And, with a little luck, after the results are announced, an ambassador may have the chance to congratulate their nationals personally as the champions or best speakers of your tournament. Thus you would have created a win–win situation for all involved. You may also want to make polite enquiries about the possibility of an embassy offering to support their nationals, whether with travel expenses or in another way they see fit. This gesture shows extra kindness to aid the participants of your event.

The Budapest Open organizing committee, in consultation with interested participants, approached the respective embassies to sponsor
their country’s participants at the tournament. We knew it was a long shot, but a few attempts were successful in the end!

A quick side note: finding correct and up-to-date contact information of embassies might not be as straightforward as you think—ambassadors come and go, e-mail addresses change. It is best to proceed from the official home page of the country’s foreign ministry, which usually contains a list of all foreign missions with reliable contact information. Also, make sure to observe applicable protocol when contacting these institutions.

**CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS**

These entities may be linked closely to embassies but they have their own channels of communication and can therefore provide you with extra promotional opportunities. There are cultural institutions that represent entire regions or communities of states (for example, an institute for Scandinavian culture), and if your event is hosting participants from several countries of such a group, this event may be especially relevant to them.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND TOURISM OFFICES**

The local government should no doubt be notified that such a major event is going to take place in the city, and their support, whether merely symbolic or as donors, will lend your tournament credibility as well as a promotional channel that can reach the general populace. Local tourism offices can be another promotion target as well as in-kind donors and suppliers of logistical resources.
OTHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

If one of your goals is to promote debate within your city or country, finding other colleges, universities, or even high schools and involving them in some way is something you’ll definitely want to look into. Try to identify teachers and professors who are sympathetic to your causes, for example, those who teach English or simply believe in an interactive approach to education. Such educators may be very interested and will help you create buzz about the event among students.

JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA

In addition to debaters and to a university audience, you want to reach out to the general public through mass media. This outreach can be a way to attract more sponsors, or promote debate in general in your city, or establish ties that might help you find more supporters for your next events. A good reception in the mass media might also be an achievement you can show to your university and supporters. Reach the press through press releases, which you can send out at any newsworthy time, for example, when you complete registration, or a few days before the tournament starts, or when the finalists and the winners are known. If you can afford to send releases to national mailing lists, which sometimes cost money, they may reach an interested audience you had not even considered.
Debate Venues

We have already mentioned that booking the debate rooms should be the very first thing you accomplish. Even a smaller debate tournament requires at least half a dozen rooms of appropriate size in a convenient setting, and your campus is the obvious answer to all your needs. Being able to hold the tournament at a university is the fundamental point of departure for our purposes. Once again, we must emphasize that in order to have a successful event, it helps to be on good terms with the administration of your university. You must check whether there are enough available rooms on your chosen dates and how the opening times of the university figure into your plans. As soon as you can, book university rooms with the relevant authority (usually through the campus administration office or the student services office). Universities may charge hefty sums for renting out their rooms for purposes other than official classes, and it is absolutely essential that you are able to waive any such fee.
If necessary, get help from your Student Union or a helpful professor to ensure a waiver of fees. Please consider that while ideally the university administration is very open and helpful toward the student body, you should never take their participation for granted or presume anything baselessly. Always be sure that you have their commitment secured, preferably in writing.

The rules of parliamentary style debating make the spatial requirements clear. One debate will involve about 10 to 12 people (the debaters, a chair judge, plus any wing judges), so a seminar room that can comfortably fit that many will be suitable for any given debate in the preliminary rounds. Make sure all rooms have the necessary equipment: the right number of desks and chairs, and preferably another desk or a lectern for the speakers. It is, of course, quite straightforward that the number of rooms depends on the team cap (or vice versa—the number of available rooms may determine the cap!). If your cap is at 40 teams, you’ll need 10 debate rooms. You’ll need another smaller room for tabbing. In addition, a lecture hall large enough to accommodate everyone will be necessary for roll calls and announcements. In the lecture hall you will need a projector. Ideally, all debate rooms should be as close to the main hall as possible to make it easy for debaters and judges to find their rooms during prep time.

For the break rounds you may want to book rooms that can also accommodate an audience. Most debaters who are out of the running by then will want to see the best debaters fight it out for the final. If your budget allows, you might want to choose a more prominent location for the Final—museums, churches, ballrooms in hotels are not uncommon locations for tournament finals. Consider that this venue will need to accommodate all participants, and then some.
Members of the public, the representatives of your donors, all those helpful professors, ambassadors, and other VIPs you’re working so hard to attract can be expected to attend.

**Wining and Dining (not necessarily in that order)**

The other important task of the S&L Team during the months leading up to the event is to secure appropriate venues for lunches, dinners, and parties. You should aim to obtain discounts, free drinks, and other small items by making the venues your partners. Thus, the S&L Team will need to cooperate closely with the Fund-Raising Team to match price ranges with the amount of funds you raise, and to coordinate matters once you have established partners. The S&L Team also needs to arrange for venues that will limit logistical challenges (that is, transporting participants between their accommodations, debating site, and venues) to ensure less strain on organizers and a well-functioning event for all.

**DINING**

When it comes to lunches, your main goal is to find a cheap and cheerful option that is close to your debate venue. Debaters will simply want to grab a quick, nourishing bite in the middle of the day between rounds. If your university has its own canteen, that may well be the optimal choice for you. You can also explore other eateries popular with students within a short walking distance from your university. You might consider the possibility of a catering service that will deliver to your debate venue, but this extra step could create an additional burden, because you will need an appropriate
place to serve the food as well. The venue you choose is ideally a place where most or all participants can be served at the same time so that lunch doesn’t take up an unnecessarily large amount of time in your schedule.

Dinners are a different matter, as you have much greater liberty when choosing locations. Dinner is the ideal time to show off your local cuisine, traditions, and notable city sights. For both lunch and dinner, agree with the vendor on a set menu or buffet selection, possibly with a few different options from which the participants can choose in advance. It is customary to include a non-vegetarian and a vegetarian option, and to make sure other dietary requests are satisfied.

If your budget allows, you should also invest in trying to obtain snacks and drinks, such as water, tea, and coffee, to be served between debate rounds. Water is especially important, as everyone will be clamoring for a drink after long speeches and tense moments. Obtaining in-kind donations from a bottled-water or other soft drink producer may seem minor compared to your other great expenses, but it could prove to be one of the most comfort-enhancing assets of your tournament. In any event, also be ready to point participants toward drinking fountains and coffee machines found in the venue.

As already mentioned, a university cafeteria or local bakery can be approached for coffee and pastries served at the debate venue.

With all food-related matters, keep in mind that your diverse list of participants is bound to include people with various dietary restrictions, such as food allergies or other conditions. You should gather this information from participants during preregistration, or soon after registration is finalized. Keep a list of these special requirements, and cooperate with vendors to cater to these needs.
WINING (AND OTHER OPTIONS FOR SOCIALS)

Everyone likes to relax after a long hard day of debating. Participants coming from all corners of the world should also have the opportunity to get to know each other, no matter how tight the schedule is. Great evening socials will make your tournament truly memorable. At a three-day weekend tournament, it is customary to have a social after the Opening Ceremony; a Break Party, which is the social involving the break announcement; and a closing event after the Finals. You should plan for a social that is big enough to include all participants, but nevertheless make it optional so that those who prefer to relax in their hotel room get the chance to do that as well.

The first night after the opening ceremony, or perhaps the first few rounds of debate, is usually the most low-key affair of the three. Everyone will have just arrived tired from the journey, and they will have to be up bright and early the next morning, ready for a full day of debating. We recommend you to end the day after dinner but, since debaters are pretty hardcore, you might give in to the pressure of a longer night out. Feel free to do it, but be cautious! You’ll have to make sure that ALL the participants are back in the hotel, and get enough sleep to actually attend debates on the next day. All this, on top of your own tiredness and other issues you might have to deal with.

An ideal social venue should be ready to receive an international audience. If you can find a bar where you can book a private room so that people can sit and chat undisturbed, and have the option of hanging out in the main area to party, you’ll have the conditions for a great night out. A student bar at your university (if there is one) is a good idea, as well as any places that are well liked among local youth or present a unique, quirky feature characteristic of your city. Be as
creative as you like, but always establish first that the managers and staff at the venue are cooperative and receptive to your needs and suggestions. A cooperative vendor is a much more important factor for an amazing social than the poshness of the pub or restaurant.

You can also think about socials that go beyond a simple night out. Sightseeing and engaging in a popular or traditional activity of your country or city make for excellent socials, and also offer a great cultural experience to those visiting your location.

With any such activities, always keep in mind that you are, at least indirectly, responsible for the health and safety of the participants, so take all necessary precautions to prevent nasty surprises. And remember: be prepared to bargain hard, and don’t forget to press home all of the advantages this event and its diverse audience can offer to any potential party venue.

**Travel**

Participants at a debate tournament are expected to take care of their own travel arrangements. However, since this is the first time your society will be holding an international tournament, and you probably have more experience in the best ways of traveling to and from your city and country, your S&L Team should prepare a guide for participants, who will appreciate such helpful information and courteous attention. Think about the international audiences you want to reach and attract to your tournament, and look up travel options, whether by plane, train, or bus, to your location from those regions. You will need to prepare a document arranged either by mode of travel (“You can reach our city by plane and by train. X, Y,
and Z budget airlines land at the nearby airport, and each has flights from the following cities …") or by location (“From city A we recommend either a long-distance bus serviced by companies P and Q, or the international train operated by R Rail.”). If you send this information as early as preregistration, and publish it along with other basic information about your tournament, potential debaters will see how conveniently they could make it to your tournament and you may entice more of them to attend. If you publish such a document after preregistration is closed, you can specifically target the locations of the preregistered debaters to help them prepare for arrival. For those coming by car, your S&L Team should check parking options and fees in advance with the hotel or perhaps the university.

You might have enough people among organizers and your debate club to help participants get from a transport hub, such as a train station, to the debate venues when they are arriving on the first day. If you do, you should tell the prospective participants the time interval in which they can expect to meet your people at the transport hub, for example, “for all arriving between 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm at the airport.” Even at a smaller tournament, with, say, 20 teams, you might already have about 50 people coming, and fetching all of them at their various arrival times to accompany them to their hotel can prove simply impossible. You might also decide not to meet and greet at transport hubs altogether and await arrivals at the hotel or at university. In that case, you should prepare detailed and clear instructions (including ticket information, taxi fare guidelines, and the like) on how participants can reach the venues by themselves. And be ready to answer phone calls from people who think they might be lost or delayed.
If your various venues throughout the tournament are within walking distance from each other, you’ve hit the jackpot. If, however, some local transport during the event becomes necessary, people from the Logistics Team must also be prepared to tackle any issues arising from that.

The most important thing is to provide sufficient, accessible, and clear information to all participants. Think with the brain of a foreigner and consider any special difficulties or barriers that travel toward and within your city and country might pose to people who are unfamiliar with them.

**Topography of a Tournament**

On the first day of your tournament, the Logistics Team will need to be on top of everything at your venues. By the time the event starts, they are practically best friends with the porters, the cloakroom, and technical staff. They must ensure that the university is open on time in the morning; many institutions have special opening times on weekends. They must make sure that the rooms you have reserved are open and ready to be used for debating, or find alternatives if something goes wrong. At the main lecture hall where the draws and motion announcements will take place, you will probably need a few microphones, a working computer, and projection capabilities. We have already spoken of the rooms where the actual debates will take place. If you have some A3 paper for note taking in the main lecture hall, judges will love you.

The Tab Room is absolutely crucial. Here is where the tabmaster will prepare the draw for each round, and transfer the results from the
ballots to the tabbing software. This room will need a rock-solid computer and a printer to prepare ballot papers.

If finding debate rooms isn’t straightforward, provide all participants with a simplified map of the building displaying the locations of the rooms. Always make sure to put up signs and arrows showing the way to the various rooms. Place these in elevators, on staircases, and at hallway corners to guide people along.

If you have obtained some snack and drink donations, the Logistics Team is also in charge of the delivery and placement of these items. We advise you to print more maps, timetables, and technical plans of your campus or venue in advance than you think you will need, so that everyone is on the same page and you don’t run out.

Example:

**Technical Plan for Debate Tournament, Saturday**

![Technical Plan Diagram](image-url)
How to Organize an International Debate Tournament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Tasks &amp; Tools</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30 am</td>
<td>Bring snacks from bakery</td>
<td>From bakery van at Entrance to Auditorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 am</td>
<td>Roll call; microphone,</td>
<td>Auditorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>projector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>Bring out coffee</td>
<td>From Cafeteria to Auditorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 am</td>
<td>Round 1 ends, take ballot,</td>
<td>From Deb. Rooms 1–8 -&gt; Tab Room -&gt; Auditorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>draw 2nd round</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your S&L Team may very well require additional personnel to carry out all of these logistical tasks, which we discuss in more detail in Chapter 6.
Before we discuss how your event will go down in practice, we must return to an area that is, despite the importance of good venues and fun socials, undoubtedly the most crucial element of the tournament: the debate itself. The way you set up the scope, style, and various other aspects of your debate tournament will determine its fundamental character. And while good food and great hotel rooms provide much-appreciated comfort, adjudication is the chief benchmark that will ensure your event is memorable, valuable, and educational for all.

The Chief Adjudication (CA) Panel

The CA Team and especially the CAs themselves are an important part of the tournament. The CA Team, typically consisting of three, five, or seven persons depending on the size of your tournament, will test and set the motions for the tournament to ensure that you have topical, debatable, and not least of all fair motions (fair meaning that any of the four teams has an equal chance of setting up a
winning case based on the motion). The CA Team will also supervise the work of the other adjudicators throughout the tournament, make up a large part of the adjudication panel of the Finals, and provide overall feedback. Therefore, it is highly important for the popularity and quality of your event that you find a good CA Team. You should look at people who have had several years’ experience in British Parliamentary (BP) debate, have already chaired a number of international tournaments, and have a reputation for being good judges in the debate community. Don’t worry if there aren’t many such people in your own debate club. You can—and we encourage you to—invite a very diverse set of adjudicators with a broad range of experience in various tournaments. Being asked to be a CA of an international tournament is always an honor. However, you ought to invite adjudicators well in advance, as soon as you have secured the dates and the debate venues. There are many tournaments happening each weekend in all parts of the world, and adjudicators may have their calendars full for many months ahead. Because the CAs also put a lot of work into the tournament and perform a great service for you, it is customary to minimize or fully refund their expenses, so expect to budget for that.

When people register for your tournament, some may apply as adjudicators as well—judging at a tournament can be a learning experience on par with debating at one. These requests are very good for your tournament, because you need judges in addition to the CA Team to ensure that there is an adequate adjudication panel chairing every single debate during the event. The CA Team may ask people who have applied as adjudicators to submit information on their adjudication experience or even test their judging skills before the tournament. The CA Team should ideally cooperate very closely with the convenor on all relevant issues.
Debate

A great part of that cooperation must also include settling all of the details about the debate format and criteria. You will set a number of criteria, which will position your tournament on the map of debate events. These criteria and what you ought to consider when deciding on them are discussed below.

**TYPE**

There are two types of BP debate tournaments: IV (intervarsity, open only to university students) or Open (to anyone, regardless of student status). While the IV style is great because students will know that they are likely to encounter and practice against teams that might also compete later in huge events such as Worlds or Euros, Open tournaments can draw in experienced masters whose skills at debate are a great asset and a benefit to those who are newer to the form. Opens also allow debaters from different universities to form a team together, rather than represent their own university, as they do in an IV.

**TEAM CAPS**

Team caps are the most important criterion in terms of scope and budgeting. You must decide how much you are likely to be able to raise and spend on the event, how many people your debate venues and prospective accommodations can comfortably hold, and what magnitude of crowds your organizing committee is prepared to handle. Local international tournaments can have anywhere from 12 to 100 teams, so consider well, then pick a number that is divisible by four. This result will be your team cap. Additionally, to encourage
variety and a fair chance for all, you may wish to set an institution cap, declaring that a maximum of, say, three teams may register from one university. Make this cap very clear and enforce it when assessing preregistered teams.

**N-1**

This rule states that most institutions must also register adjudicators along with their debate teams, and the number of these adjudicators must be exactly one less than the number of registered teams. If you have three preregistered teams from one university and you are enforcing the N-1 rule, then these teams are obliged to register two additional people as adjudicators to fulfill the criterion. If you think you can invite enough adjudicators yourself or you want to make sure that people from less well-established debate clubs who lack experienced judges can attend, you may choose not to enforce this rule.

**ROUNDS**

Rounds are somewhat linked to the team cap, since the more teams you have, the more preliminary rounds in your schedule. Since the preliminary rounds are where everyone competes, setting an appropriate number ensures that teams get to debate against as many of the other teams as possible, giving debaters a broader learning experience and a fair chance to prove themselves. Generally, you can comfortably include a maximum of four rounds of debate within a single day. Five are technically possible but only at great risk to your schedule (see Chapter 6). So, depending on when in the weekend your event starts, you may kick off with one or two preliminary rounds on Friday, continuing with prelims all throughout Saturday, coming to the break by that evening. Alternately, you
may start rounds on Saturday, and either break that night or carry some prelims over to Sunday, although this schedule takes the edge off the Saturday night party. Cumulatively, fewer than three or four rounds of preliminary debates are hardly worth “getting out of bed” for, whereas more than six or seven will be impossible to fit into your schedule.

**BREAKS**

Breaks are also fixed to the number of teams you have and the diversity of your participants. If you have a smaller number of teams present, say, between 8 and 28, it makes sense for the top 4 teams to break straight to the Finals. For anything above, you may decide that the top 8 teams on the overall tab based on the results of the preliminary rounds break to the Semifinals first, from where the top 2 teams from each Semifinal break to the Finals. If you are even more ambitious, you may decide that your large tournament needs a break to Quarterfinals, but always remember: if you decide to let nearly half of the teams break, you risk diminishing the prestige generally attached to breaking at an international tournament.

**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)**

Furthermore, if you can reasonably expect a large enough number of native and nonnative English speaker teams as well (this means a fairly large number of teams overall), you may decide to introduce a separate ESL (English as a Second Language) break parallel to the regular one. You should discuss all of these options with your CA Team, who can then propose the wisest course of action in these matters.
**LENGTH**

According to the official rules of Worlds and Euros, BP style debates must consist of seven-minute speeches. Most established tournaments adhere to this rule. However, since the length of speeches and debates has a significant impact on the schedule, you may decide that you want shorter speeches with more rounds, longer adjudication feedback, and other considerations. If so, five-minute speeches may be used instead.

**THEMES, QUIRKS**

If you have an undying urge to differentiate your tournament from all others in a remarkable way, you can set a theme or introduce interesting stylistic characteristics into the tournament. Currently some tournaments pay extra attention to manner, or have fun motions based on movies or books such as *Harry Potter*, or pick motions with large thematic sections, such as international politics, human rights, and so forth. Creating such a unique feature for your tournament can indeed make it stand out, but keep in mind that such features could also keep some debaters away. Always discuss with your CAs whether quirky themes would be a smart feature to offer, because there are many variables that can influence this decision.

**POWER PAIRING**

While the draw in the first round is random, the following rounds pair up the teams based on their performance, so the strongest teams go up against each other, and the less successful ones also meet others who performed similarly. Power pairing allows everyone to
debate more or less at their appropriate level, but you may decide to eschew this option in favor of Lady Luck.

You should announce all of these features clearly when you announce your tournament.

Tabbing

Having mentioned the draw, one absolutely vital figure in your tournament will be the Tabmaster: the person who creates the draw starting with the first round, and then inputs data from the ballots to the tabbing software to generate the next draw and keep score. You may want to ask another experienced debater to handle this task, as you did for the CAs. Ideally, the Tabmaster will have someone assisting him or her in tabbing throughout the tournament, and will need to have their needs swiftly met while they are doing their very demanding job. Keeping the Tabmaster(s) happy in a quiet room with no disruptions during the tournament is essential to the success of your event.
Schedule

Tournaments are known for tardiness. The single best way to make sure you have a well-functioning tournament that leaves people generally contented is to set up a schedule that is realistic and workable, and then stick to it.

How do you to do this? The simplest way is to estimate the time a certain event takes normally, and then generously overestimate it, accounting for various possibilities, mistakes, latecomers, and other unforeseen situations. You may consider, for instance, that the quick dinner on the first night will take half an hour. But you have, say, 100 different people coming in at various times, there aren’t enough places to seat more than 50 at once, the vegetarian dish hasn’t finished cooking yet, six people are an hour late because their train was delayed, and so on and so forth. You should easily assume that the dinner could take 1.5 to 2 hours and put that into your schedule instead of hoping for the best. Similarly, it is crucial that you leave
enough time for the rounds in the schedule. If you expect to start a new round every 1.5 hours, your schedule is doomed to fail. From the point of announcing a motion, it takes 15 minutes while debaters prepare, another 5 minutes if someone gets lost on the way, uses the restroom, or the room is locked. Then you usually have one full hour of debating, followed by the deliberation process of the adjudicators, after which they submit the ballot paper to be taken back to the Tab Room, and deliver the call. While they are doing that, the Tabmaster needs to input all of the ballot data to create the next draw as soon as physically possible. There might be a lunch in between two rounds, in which case the Tabmaster will have enough time to prepare everything, but the debaters themselves might be enormously late because they went to get a burrito instead of the on-site lunch offer or wandered off to find an ice cream cone to round off their meal. You can see that this is a demanding set of tasks to handle smoothly. The best way to do it? Leave enough time for it! In our opinion, it is advisable to leave 2 to 2.5 hours for each round, or, if you are initially determined to try to enforce as tight a debate schedule as possible, you will need to leave a few hours empty at the end of the day between the debates and the socials as a contingency interval. Your dinners and socials will probably entail fixed reservations for a certain time, and being late for those events should be avoided. Here is a quick example of a viable schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00–8:00 am</td>
<td>Morning wake-up call, breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30–8:30 am</td>
<td>Walking/travel from accommodations to university in groups, roll call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00–11:30 am</td>
<td>Round 1, snacks and coffee served at 11:00 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above schedule should be easy enough to keep without anyone getting a headache. It will allow the debaters to get to the dinner venue anytime between 8:00 and 8:30 pm. You can start your break party in great suspense at 10:00 pm, and after the judges announce breaking teams and adjudicators, there is still plenty of time for everyone to go crazy, dance, and not sleep a wink all night. This schedule, once again, highlights why it is advisable to have your venues close to each other.

Below are some tips about avoiding scheduling pitfalls at each important point of the weekend.

**REGISTRATION**

The event officially starts with registration, which may take place either at the hotel or on campus, on the same day as the opening ceremony. At registration, each participant receives a welcome package filled with the goodies you have collected over the previous months. The package may be a bag or a folder, and it should contain pens, notebooks or writing paper, any brochures, coupons, vouchers, a printed copy of the schedule, and maps (including a general city map and a custom one highlighting the locations and exact addresses of each venue; you can easily make these in Google maps and print
one for each participant). People also receive their accreditation (ID) cards, which are their identifiers at all venues. Make sure the vendors at bars are also well aware of these cards. It is handy to get key chains, safety pins, or lengths of string that let the participants wear their cards comfortably at all times. You should also be prepared to hand out invoices confirming payment of the registration fee. Have each participant sign an attendance sheet for you and any others required by your institution. Be aware that there could always be some people who don’t arrive on time to register when everyone else does. Fix the time of preferred arrival clearly (say, Friday, 5:00 pm), and establish a late registration opportunity (say, 8:30 the next morning for anyone who arrives after 9:00 pm on Friday). If you are providing a meal on the spot, right after registration, bear in mind that some participants might be late and miss it. Any leftover food could be saved for the late arrivals or donated to your local homeless shelter so that it doesn’t go to waste.

**ACCOMMODATIONS, SETTLING IN, EVENING SOCIAL**

Some people might arrive early enough to get settled at the hotel well before the tournament begins. For them, it is useful to have someone at the hotel to welcome them and point them toward the location of the debate. Others will settle in at the hotel after the opening ceremony or first rounds. Regardless of whether you have a big social on the first night, do give these people the option to go straight to the hotel beforehand, and you might need to provide someone to accompany them. Similarly, if you have a social, it is always wise to offer an opportunity to get back to the hotel accompanied by some organizers at, say, midnight. Those debaters wishing to stay late into the night are responsible for arranging their journey back to the hotel.
THE FIRST MORNING

One pitfall to keeping even the most cautious schedule is messing it up right at the beginning. The hardest part, therefore, is to get people to wake up and prepare to leave their hotel room on time. If you want to make sure to maintain your schedule, assign some organizers to do wake-up calls at the hotel. If the rooms have landline phones, wake-up calls should be arranged through the concierge or front desk attendant. If the rooms do not have landlines, simply knock on doors. This task might seem awkward and needless, but it will guarantee your schedule and is therefore very much worth the effort. When everyone is at the venue, do a quick roll call of all the teams before the first round. You may want to repeat a roll call before each subsequent round, too.

DURING DEBATE ROUNDS

The most important tasks are getting the ballot papers delivered to the Tab Room, and then the draw to your main gathering place. You must also make sure that all debaters and judges eventually return from the debating rooms on time.

SUNDAY MORNING

After the break announcement the schedule changes. Most debaters will be out of the competition, and they are, strictly speaking, not obliged to attend the break rounds. But it is, of course, much nicer for all involved if they do. So for these people, another wake-up call can’t hurt, while for breaking teams it’s essential that they are all present on time.
THE FINALS

Following the break rounds, you will hold the Finals: the prestigious conclusion of your wonderful effort. If you have been able to secure a special venue, such as a ceremonial hall at your university or in a public building, you may wish to request that participants dress up for the occasion, to add a bit of flair. Make sure you leave enough time for this, and to get participants to the Finals venue on time. The Finals may include many elements apart from “just” a debate. You have invited all sorts of people, who will be making speeches, wanting to interview people, taking photos, and so on. Make sure that the Finals have a well-formed schedule as well, and all invitees are aware and respectful of it. Also keep in mind that wherever your Finals venue is, there must be separate room where the adjudicators can make their decision. After the winner of the tournament is announced, awards will be handed out for best teams and best speakers. Put all of these events neatly in a Finals schedule or technical plan.

With all of these details having been done, you can now bask in the glory of a successful event. Be proud of yourself!

Volunteers and Swings

A few questions are still left unanswered. Who will be helping your event take shape by waiting for people at airports, taking them to the hotel, waking them up in the morning, and carrying the ballots to and from the Tab Room, among many other small tasks? It seems as if you need an entire separate army for these details, since the organizing committee is already busy discussing with the CA Team, calling a restaurant to prepare for invoicing, making last-minute additions to
the Finals guest list, or giving interviews to the local paper. Indeed, you need other individuals to handle all these seemingly small but essential tasks. These people are your tournament volunteers. Volunteers arrange, attend to, accompany, inform, direct, transmit, and generally save everyone’s lives and make everyone’s day better in subtle ways. Especially important among the volunteers are runners, the people who collect ballots and take them to the Tab Room at the speed of light. How do you to find these wonderful people? Recruit by involving any members of your debate club who may not have wanted to make a long-term commitment to organizing but are nevertheless keen to observe a tournament; find people who are just getting interested in debate after all the promotion you have been doing; bring in non-debater friends, or high school debaters who are already looking at a way to continue debating at university. They get to be part of your great event and watch debates while doing a few tasks in between. Make the schedules and responsibilities thoroughly clear to them. For this reason it is preferable to have debaters for these tasks rather than complete newcomers.

However, your debaters might also be needed elsewhere. It can always happen that some teams pull out at the very last minute because of some unforeseen circumstance, and you find out after on-site registration that you are stuck with 34 instead of 36 teams. It can also happen that a team that has already registered doesn’t turn up for a round on time (a common symptom of how great the night before was). Beyond a certain limit, you should not wait for the members of that team to arrive; they are wasting everyone’s time and messing up your timetable. Make it clear that anyone who isn’t in the right place within ten minutes of the scheduled starting time will be cut from the tab for that round. This rule will hopefully deter most teams from being late, but tardiness can still happen. In these cases, have a few so-called Swing Teams at the ready. These
are usually your local debaters who volunteer to jump in at the last minute if absolutely necessary. You can also draft people who registered as adjudicators but are happy to be paired up with someone and fill up the roster.

If you’ve thought of all of these contingencies, you have your schedules and plans about who needs to do what, when, and with whom, and have clearly assigned responsibilities for a given task to certain people, your tournament is likely to withstand the challenges of chance and human error.

Two more tips for the time of the tournament:

1. Truly, truly make sure that all organizers have their cell phone batteries charged and their balance topped up (if they are using a prepaid mobile service), and that everyone in the organizing committee remains reachable throughout the entire event. This requirement goes especially for those who are designated as emergency contacts on everyone’s ID cards.

2. Don’t overdo it. If any organizing committee member feels that he or she is burdened with so many tasks to the point of exhaustion, reshuffle and make sure those who need to rest have the chance to get it. Overload, however, is not typical at tournaments. Attention to all the details described above may, at first glance, seem overwhelming and chaotic, but there are no crises that can’t be handled calmly and resolved smoothly. At the time, any stress is offset by the wonderful atmosphere of meeting friendly debaters from all around the world. Just keep in mind: this event is for fun! So don’t be afraid to let yourself enjoy it when the time has come. Toast your achievement and reap the benefits; great debates, lovely people, a new chapter for the future of your debate club, and that triumphant feeling: You did it!
CHAPTER 7:
USING YOUR SUCCESS IN THE FUTURE

Evaluation

Now that your event is over, you have slept it off, and you are no longer getting 50 debate-related e-mails a day, it’s time to look back. As with all project management, evaluation is as important as anything that has gone before. You can ask participants and the CAs for verbal feedback on the tournament in general, or ask them to fill out a short survey at some point during the Finals. The questions in the survey should ask them how they rated various aspects of the event, and what they would like more or less of. This feedback provides a frank overview that you can analyze and then draw conclusions.

Similarly, you should ask your organizing committee to evaluate the event. First, think back to your original vision for the tournament: how successful were you in achieving that goal? What can you still do to get closer to fulfilling it? Next, you will want a more technical evaluation as well, deciding which organizational aspects were more or less successful, setting new targets for when you repeat the event.
(and you will, of course!), coming up with ideas for solving communication, staffing, or technical issues. It is never easy to establish clear channels of authority among a group of peer volunteers, but your experience helps you get better at this task, and your next tournament will be so much better.

Hopefully you, your debate club, your university, and the general public also learned quite a bit about debate from the event. You may want to publicize these benefits to your local scene after the tournament.

**Maintaining Contacts and Cooperation**

In addition to finalizing the budget execution, one of your most important post-tournament tasks is to draw up one shorter and one longer report on the event for submission to your various donors and partners. This report tells them how you utilized their contribution during the tournament, what kind of people the participants were, and why this great success compels them to work with you again in the future.

You should aim to prepare the shorter report (2 to 3 pages) as soon as possible, and attach it to your thank-you letters, which you will of course be sending to all of your donors and partners soon after the event. Try to obtain an answer from them, a commitment in which they agree to extend cooperation to you in the future. This acknowledgement on their part will make things so much easier the second time around.

The longer report is for your main donor, who played a special role in the realization of your project. This longer report should contain a
summary of the entire organization process, as well as a description of the event itself, and details of your future plans, highlighting the role played by your main donor in bringing these plans to fruition!
## Chapter 8: Quick Guides and Resources

### Table 8.1: Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 1 year before the event</td>
<td>Set up an organizing committee or at least the core of it; secure main debate venue; fix the date of the event; announce the date in the debate community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months before the event</td>
<td>Distribute organizing committee roles, establish communication channels; invite CAs, set team caps, format, etc. Estimate the value of the event, fix fund-raising targets, prepare a budget forecast. Look to secure separate Finals venue, if targeted. Organizing committee meets every 2 to 3 weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 4 months before the event</td>
<td>Open preregistration, advertise the tournament in the debate community, start looking for press contacts, fund-raising donors and partners, accommodations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 months before the event</td>
<td>Open the payment phase of registration; start fixing socials venues. Organizing committee meets at least every 2 weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Frame</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 months before the event</td>
<td>Close the payment phase of registration, finalize participant lists, make final accommodations arrangements. Send invitations to Finals. Organizing committee meets weekly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 month before the event</td>
<td>Attempt to conclude all necessary fund-raising; focus on outlying Logistics and PR tasks; increase local promotion of the event. Organizing committee meets weekly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 weeks before the event</td>
<td>Finalize all terms, conditions, menus with dining and socials venues; collect and store in-kind donations such as brochures, pens, notebooks, maps, coupons, awards. Print accreditation cards for each participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 week to 2 days before the event</td>
<td>Check out the debate venue, accommodations etc. with necessary signs, instructions; ensure technical requirements are secured; prepare welcome package.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| First day of the event and throughout event | Logistical matters of arrivals; on-site registration etc.  
Follow schedule and technical plans. IT’S BOOM TIME! |
| Within 1 month after event        | Evaluate event within organizing committee; prepare short report on event, distribute to donors and partners along with letters of gratitude; attempt to establish ongoing/recurring cooperation. Prepare reports for distribution in the press. |
| 1 to 3 months after event         | Prepare detailed report on event, submit to main donor(s); start early preparation for next year’s tournament. |
## TABLE 8.2 DEBATING RESOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alfred Snider's Channels on Vimeo</td>
<td><a href="http://vimeo.com/user1244229">http://vimeo.com/user1244229</a></td>
<td>Debates and lectures on video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedatabase</td>
<td><a href="http://idebate.org/debatabase">http://idebate.org/debatabase</a></td>
<td>Pros and cons collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate Central</td>
<td><a href="http://debate.uvm.edu">http://debate.uvm.edu</a></td>
<td>Links, news, resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate Motion Central</td>
<td><a href="http://globaldebate.posterous.com">http://globaldebate.posterous.com</a></td>
<td>All motions of all big tournaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate Motions</td>
<td><a href="http://debate-motions.info">http://debate-motions.info</a></td>
<td>Motions from EUDC, WUDC, and other tournaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debatepedia</td>
<td><a href="http://debatepedia.idebate.org">http://debatepedia.idebate.org</a></td>
<td>Wikipedia of debating, pros and cons on many topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Debating Calendar</td>
<td><a href="http://europeandebating.blogspot.nl">http://europeandebating.blogspot.nl</a></td>
<td>Calendar of practically all European BP tournaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Debate</td>
<td><a href="http://globaldebateblog.blogspot.com">http://globaldebateblog.blogspot.com</a></td>
<td>News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idebate</td>
<td><a href="http://idebate.org">http://idebate.org</a></td>
<td>Calendar, social network, news, motions and more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProCon.org</td>
<td><a href="http://www.procon.org">http://www.procon.org</a></td>
<td>Pros and cons collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Budapest Open Accreditation Card (size A6)

FRONT

Event Logo

Logos of main donor(s)

Participant Name

Dietary status (carrot for vegetarian, chicken for omnivore)

Team Name

Position (Adjudicator, Debater, CA, Tab)

Budapest Open 2012 Debate Tournament
2-5 March 2012

MINTA JÁNOS

XYZ Debate Club

Adjudicator OrgCom
Contact numbers
Vija: +36 50 7654321
Elsa: +36 50 7654321
Zsófia: +36 50 7654321
Janos: +36 50 7654321
Anna: +36 50 7654321
Márton: +36 50 7654321


Hotel’s address
1234 Budapest, váci utca 9

University’s address
1234 Budapest, váci utca 9

The owner of this card is a participant of X international debate tournament. If you have found this card or in case of emergency, please contact this number +36 50 7654321

Budapest Open 2012
www.debatehungary.com
Budapest Open 2012 Logo

Are these aliens? Is it a snail?

Someone even likened it to a cow wearing a turtleneck top.
Budapest Open 2012 Poster

Observe, once more, the placement of the logos according to the donor status.
Ana Gurau is an alumna of Central European University, where she received a degree in Public Policy in 2011. She has nearly ten years of debating experience in Moldova, Romania and Hungary. She managed accounting and fund-raising for Budapest Open 2012, the first international BP tournament in Hungary, and continuously contributes to the development of CEU Debate Society. In her non-debate life, Ana is a tax consultant.

Zsófia Muranyi is a graduate student of International Relations at Corvinus University of Budapest. After her first encounter with competitive debate in the spring of 2011, she helped set up and lead a debate society at her own institution, the first ever BP style society at a Hungarian state university. She joined the organizing committee of Budapest Open 2012 as part of the fund-raising team, and went on to be co-convenor of Budapest Open 2013. After completing her MA in International Relations, she began a second MA in Political Science at Central European University.