

European Forum Alpbach 2013

Three weeks of Alpbach. Has it already been long enough to let it all settle and reflect upon the experience? Definitely not! Those three weeks have been exhilarating, stimulating, demanding, interesting, amazing and much more. All together a fantastic experience. But before counting down innumerable more adjectives to express what I have brought home with me, let me roll it up from the start and try to give you a bit of an insight into the adventure that the European Forum Alpbach 2013 has been.

Getting There

Shortly after a friend pointed the [Forum Alpbach](#) out to me, I received an Email via the Embassy of Liechtenstein in Vienna. Concerning the registration for this year's forum with the [Club Forum Alpbach Liechtenstein](#). „Experiences and Values“ would be the theme of this years forum, which was explained to me generally as an interdisciplinary platform for science, politics, business and culture.

Shortly after submitting an application, I received a positive answer from Reto, telling me that I would be this year's scholarship holder. I was to check in at the forum on Monday the 12th of August. There would be a room available in the guest house „[Wöll](#)“, which the [Club Alpbach Vorarlberg](#), our cooperation partners, inhabited for that time.

On my way to Alpbach on that very first day I got a call from Lisa from CAV, who told me how to get to the place and also greeted me at the door steps. She introduced me to Frau Wöll, our lovely hostess and my roommate Diego. Then I already had to run to the [Congress Center](#), because I was short on time, the opening ceremony was about to start in a few minutes. Registering at the front desk took no time and I headed inside for the opening speech. My friend Edgar was supposed to be somewhere in this hall of numerous faces. Close to 800 I was told later. Finding a seat next to the girls from Niederösterreich I watched the ceremony's kick off.

Seminar Week

Already at the opening, the seminar chairs and co-chairs presented their undertakings. We were given the choice between a wide range of topics, which were to be discussed throughout the following days. From 'Exploring the Universe' over 'Democratic Interventionism' to 'A Cultural Approach to Integration' there were all together 15 subjects to choose from. I took the opportunity to participate in the morning and afternoon sessions, having chosen the first and the latter of the above mentioned classes. These two classes would dictate the daily program for six hours until Sunday. The participants were a lively and various bunch of many nationalities, as were the professors. The discussions on topics, that lay outside of my usually law oriented curriculum, were very stimulating. Especially because the students participation was well provoked and lead towards constructive arguments. The discussions went from either covering Mars with our footprints, or to follow Elias Canettis advice on changing habitat every five years for a better understanding of the cultures (Mars was not an option then).

Following the daily academic program, the [Standing Committee](#) of the forum coordinated a fabulous schedule of events. Ranging from fireside talks to late night clubbings.

On the second evening the „international evening“ took place at the Erwin Schroedinger Hall. All the Clubs/IGs teamed up in fours and gave performances and presentations of their national backgrounds, personalities, their history and future outlooks. In between goofing off and adding to

the entertainment of course. A performance from Alumni of [The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art](#) opened the event. Then came already our performance of „the dating game“, where I was put in the lucky position of picking one out of three girls as my „Herzblatt“. Since IG Liechtenstein with IG Niederösterreich, IG Bosnia and IG London were up first, there was not much time to become nervous. We entertained the audience well and had a blast ourselves. The girl from Bosnia, whom I later chose, had a fantastically romantic poem in store as one of her answers (and also wonderful red curls). All of the shows were enthusiastically performed and a good vibe of excitement was in the air. After getting introduced on stage as Mr. Liechtenstein, that name stuck for the days to come and I tried my best to be a worthy emissary for our great little principality next door.

The week passed and everyone grew more and more familiar with each other. There were hikes to the Gratspitz and Wiedersbergerhorn taking place. At one point, the participants of the seminar week were also put in the place of the lecturers when it came to the [BarCamp](#). The sessions contained a colorful variety of topics and were well attended. Fully living up to the principle of the format, a mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences took place in the Hauptschule Alpbach that night.

[Symposium Weeks](#)

The following two weeks of the Forum were shaped by the different symposiums. Following each other and sometimes overlapping, the core themes ranged from [Perspectives](#), over the [Technology Forum](#), to the [Legal](#) and [Economic Symposium](#). According to the current fields of interest, the audience changed the face of Alpbach. Decision makers and thinkers from various fields of interest, meeting the curious and energetic crowd of motivated, sometimes feisty but definitely well spirited young people. How exhilarating!

The Club Alpbach Vorarlberg opened the stage for several interesting fireside talks with politicians, scientists and artists. Amongst them, a talk over lunch with the Austrian Federal Minister for Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle and Swiss State Secretary Mauro Dell'Ambrogio. We were told first hand about a freshly signed [treaty](#), concerning the cooperation of research facilities. And not to forget, about Töchterle's opinion of the value of a humanitarian educational system, that lets itself not be dictated by market needs and greeds but functions as its own independent body.

Following the speeches and plenary sessions, there were usually breakout sessions planned for the day after. The speakers, usually supported by other professionals from a similar field, held discussions and workshops. These presented the opportunity for the participants, to go deeper into certain topics and challenge the speakers in their portraied points of view, or to simply ask why.

After several days in Alpbach, the little village had become quite familiar. From the Hauptschule up the street, the village becomes quickly a tiny accumulation of houses, with the church in the middle. At night, the restless crowd of participants (students and speakers alike) would sooner or later meet up in one of the two bars, or shake a leg at the [Vollpension](#). Farther up the hill would then be the Congress Center, with another venue for happenings right behind it. The availability of the sports fields left nothing to wish for either. Tournaments in volleyball and soccer took place and let the people connect on yet another level. The chess challenge was also an opportunity to go heads on with each other. Maybe less sweaty, but no less exciting.

By then, many of the previously unknown faces had a name to them. Sometimes connected to a nice story about their origins and backgrounds. Always eager to share and participate in the action. The receptions that took place in between were always well attended. Obviously. We were not only thirsty for knowledge, but if you write „free drinks“ on your door, we will most likely grace you

with our presence. Some of the receptions required an invitation, to maintain a higher ratio of professionals of a certain field. I was lucky to get my person to some of the main events and meet many interesting characters ... and witness some politicians act unexpectedly crazy. Having had the possibility to talk to some of the speakers in the comfortable atmosphere of a bar with a fireplace added to the rich experience that Alpbach presented.

Recommending Alpbach

Why should one attend the Forum Alpbach?

The forum invites each year to join under the roof of a new theme, as it did this year with „Experiences and Values“. People from all over Europe and many different professional backgrounds are given a stage to present and discuss current issues and ideas for the future. Since the topics cover a wide range of professions, the attendees are accordingly diverse. As a student participant, one is encouraged to take classes outside the familiar subjects. This leads to most interesting discussions because the contributions come from so many different perspectives... and sometimes even passionate outbursts, when perspectives collide.

What makes the event unique, are the many initiatives by the different clubs. The clubs support the forum by bringing it to the attention of many young participants, who eventually get a scholarship from a club. The events organised by the clubs are another reason why the forum stays so vibrant throughout three weeks. If the forum doesn't offer a certain speaker or a specific topic, everyone is invited to extend an invitation and find a venue to make it happening.

Since there are also many executives participating in the events, it is easy to make acquaintances that may lead to a job offer.

Whether you are looking to share your ideas with others, discuss thoroughly, get to know some personalities you may have read about, maybe find accomplices to build an enterprise or run up and down the mountains all day long, Alpbach is the place to be!

Never before have I had the opportunity to connect with so many people from such numerous countries and backgrounds. Today the forum may be over, but the friendships maintain and I am looking forward to several events taking place in the aftermath of the forum. Therefore a big „thank you!“ is in order, to the guys from the Club Alpbach Liechtenstein! Likely everyone who has had the pleasure of experiencing Alpbach, will recommend it to others. Thank you for making it possible for me this year and I hope many more will follow!