MINUTES
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Date, Time:	2026.05.12, 5.00 –7.00 pm (CET)
Location:	EFA Office, Mariahilfer Straße 47/1/2, 1060 Vienna and online
Participants:	• Attendances in-person: 62 • Attendances online: 36 • Voting authorisations 39 • Delegated Votes: 35
Attachment(s)	General Assembly – EFA Member Club PowerPoint Presentation

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Determination of Quorum
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Approval of the Minutes of the General Assembly held on 24 March 2026
4. Report by the President Othmar Karas
5. Report for the fiscal Year 2025 (Treasurer)
6. Report of the Auditors and Account Examiners
7. Approval of Financial Statement and Dischargement of the Board
8. Report FAN
9. Report Working Group Transition
10. Update EFA26
11. Miscellaneous

1. WELCOME AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Presenter: Nikola Donig

Talking points:
- Formal opening of the General Assembly at 5.10 pm
- Clarification of voting procedures:
  - Purple cards = personal votes
  - Sand-colored cards = delegated votes (max. 3 per person)
- Online participants may raise a hand and the microphone will be enabled and participants may unmute themselves

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Presenter: Nikola Donig

Talking points:
- Agenda had been circulated in advance
- Minor structural adjustment – see page 1 of the minutes

Decision: Agenda formally approved

Vote: Adopted unanimously

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2025

Presenter: Nikola Doing

Talking points:
- Minutes had been distributed prior to the meeting

Decision: Minutes of March 2026 General Assembly approved

Vote: Adopted unanimously

4. REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT

Presenter: Othmar Karas

Talking points:
- Thanks were extended to members, former presidents, and supporters, especially ERSTE Group and Foundation
- The year 2025 was described as content-wise successful, but still financially and structurally challenging

- Weakness in organizational structures and processes were openly acknowledged
- Improvements in budgeting, accounting, and internal control systems have been initiated

- The transfer of operational activities into the foundation was highlighted as the key structural reform
- Focus on the importance of balancing the Forum's intellectual mission with economic responsibility
- Members were asked to actively support efforts to secure additional funding, sponsors, and donors
    - Members received pins symbolically representing the identity and values of the European Forum Alpbach

5. REPORT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 (TREASURER)

Attachment: Link - jump to presentation

Presenter: Peter Oberlechner

Talking points:

- Treasurer presented the financial figures for the 2025 business year
    - Revenues: 5,351 Mio. EUR
    - Expenses: 5,728 Mio. EUR
    - Deficit: 378 TEUR
- The deficit could only be mitigated through internal financial support from the foundation
- Major budget overruns occurred particularly in marketing, external services, hospitality and IT
    - Lack of adequate controlling and monitoring structures was identified as a key cause
    - There had been no sufficient internal control systems or meaningful regular reporting
    - The Treasurer stated that, despite having requested regular financial monitoring and reporting already in October 2024, he received a first proper financial monitoring report only once, namely in August 2025 shortly before the EFA25
    - True extent of the losses became clear only after EFA25 in autumn
- Audits led to structural and personal changes and decisions
- The new management team has focused on creating transparency and restoring order in financial processes

Discussion:

- **Concerns raised by Otto Eden:** Are there any cuts to scholarship funding?
    - Response: Financial constraints acknowledged but scholarships maintained

6. REPORT OF THE AUDITORS AND ACCOUNT EXAMINERS

Attachment: Report on the audit oft he annual financial statements – Draft (German)

Internal Auditor‘ report on the annual financial statement 2025 (German)

Link - jump to presentation

Presenter: Gerald Pessl-Trinko (ECOVIS), Barbara Zimmermann

Talking points:

- The auditor confirmed a significant deterioration in the financial situation over the last two years
- Previously maintained a solid equity ratio; however, this has now declined to below 1,4% amid consistently negative operating results
  - Weaknesses in the internal control system were again highlighted
- The annual financial statements nevertheless received an unqualified audit opinion
- Positively, the existing shortcomings were recognized, and corrective measures have already been initiated

- Barbara Zimmermann read the Internal Auditors' report on behalf of association's auditors Karl Sevelda and Günther Schrems

Discussion:

- The legal classification of internships and their compliance with labor law requirements was discussed. Agnes Streissler-Führer raised concerns that some internships could potentially qualify as pseudo-internships and therefore involve underpayment.
  - Barbara Zimmermann responded that internships are limited in duration and are currently considered legally compliant, while also agreeing to look into the matter again.
- Questions by a member were raised regarding the category of "other expenses" in the financial statements.
  - Barbara Zimmermann explained that these included consulting fees and additional investment evaluation costs. It was acknowledged that such a large amount classified as "other expenses" was not ideal from a transparency perspective and shall not be repeated
- Valentin Radloff asked whether responsibilities for budget control had previously been unclear and whether this had now been changed. He also asked about the projected balance between revenues and expenses for 2026.
  - Barbara Zimmermann explained that the organization is currently working with external consultants to redesign and strengthen its financial systems, with implementation expected to conclude in May 2026. Following the EY analysis, stricter invoice approval procedures have been introduced, and a purchasing order system is being implemented.
  - Peter Oberlechner added that the organization had previously operated in a highly centralized and monocratic manner, which had revealed structural weaknesses.
  - Nikola Donig explained that no expenditures can now be approved without presidential oversight. Expenses above EUR 50,000 within the foundation require submission to the President, while expenses below EUR 50,000 require approval by the executive board.
  - Regarding Balance 25/26, reference was made on the one hand to the approved budgets and the Q1 quarterly closing in the context of the carry-forward, and on the other hand to the association's very limited expenditures from Q2 onwards.
- Thomas Garnier (Chat): Half a million in IT is a lot! Where does it go and why is it so high? And as it's almost entirely US infrastructure, given the current pressures/kill-switch potentials from the US on pro-EU organisations and discussions on digital sovereignty, does the Forum have a plan to switch to cheaper + EU providers?

- Barbara Zimmermann explained that the organization's core CMS infrastructure is based on Microsoft systems, while the goal for ticketing and badge systems is to increasingly rely on European providers.
- Questions were raised by a member regarding the transfer of assets and liabilities between the association and the foundation.
  - Peter Oberlechner clarified that the transfer had officially been structured as a contribution to the foundation.
  - The external auditor Gerald Pessl-Trinko confirmed that the transaction effectively constituted an asset deal and included the transfer of liabilities as well.
- Members asked what costs would remain within the association following the operational transfer to the foundation.
  - Barbara Zimmermann explained that the association would mainly remain responsible for membership administration, committee meetings, and member-related activities.
- Harald Pfannhauser (Chat): Have discussions been held with those responsible in previous years about how such poor financial results came about?
  - Nikola Donig confirmed that such discussions had taken place.
- Franz Fischler asked why the Board, but not the former management, was to be formally discharged.
  - Nikola Doing confirmed that this was compliant with the statutes and procedures in the past.
  - Peter Oberlechner explained that Austrian association law provides for the discharge of the Board, whereas management employees are not formally discharged under such procedures.
- Franz Fischler further asked which budget would remain with the association in 2026 and which budget would belong to the foundation, as well as how internal controls within the foundation would function and who would supervise and discharge those responsible.
  - Peter Oberlechner explained that the previous management structure had been based on employee liability law, whereas the new structure creates direct board-level liability. Oversight within the foundation is exercised through the advisory board, which is composed of members of the association's board.
  - Nikola Donig added that the association budget for the previous General Assembly had already been approved and formally adopted. Mr Fischler was provided with the budget overviews after the meeting personally.
- Questions were also raised by a FAN Member regarding catering and the availability of vegetarian and vegan food options at the EFA.
  - Barbara Zimmermann stated that the intention is to continue offering meat options alongside vegetarian and vegan alternatives.
  - When asked whether this represented a step backward, Nikola Donig responded that the organization wished to preserve freedom of choice for participants.
  - Upon request the topic was put on the agenda point "Miscellaneous"

7. APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND DISCHARGEMENT OF THE BOARD

Attachment: Link - jump to presentation

Presenter: Nikola Donig

Talking points:

- "Die Generalversammlung nimmt den Jahresabschluss des Vereins European Forum Alpbach zum 31. Dezember 2025 sowie die Ausführungen der Rechnungsprüfer und des Abschlussprüfers zur Kenntnis und beschließt, den Vorstand für das Geschäftsjahr 2025 zu entlasten."
- "The General Assembly takes note of the annual financial statements of the European Forum Alpbach association as of 31 December 2025, as well as the reports of the internal auditors and the external auditor and resolves to discharge the Board for the 2025 financial year."

Vote: Adopted unanimously

0 votes against

2 vote abstentions

8. REPORT FAN

Attachment: Link – jump to presentation

Presenter: Celina Moser

Talking points:

- See attachment

9. REPORT WORKING GROUP TRANSITION

Attachment: Link - jump to presentation

Presenter: Veronika Hopfgarnter, Rainer Schrems

Talking points:

- See attachment

10. UPDATE EFA26

Attachment: Link - jump to presentation

Presenter: Nikola Donig

Talking points:
- See attachment

11. MISCELLANEOUS

Presenter: Nikola Donig

Talking points:
- Statement by Andreas Treichl
  - Andreas Treichl reflected on his responsibility for parts of the current financial situation, particularly during the transition period after the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - He stated that the previous organizational structure, divided between association and foundation, had become overly complex and difficult to control financially.
  - According to Treichl, the consolidation of operations into the foundation represented the most important structural reform for ensuring the future financial stability of the Forum.
  - He acknowledged that implementing this reform earlier could have prevented several financial problems.
  - Treichl emphasized that the financial challenges cannot be solved through cost-cutting alone, but primarily through increasing revenues and attracting additional funding.
  - He called upon all members to contribute actively to securing the financial future of the Forum.
  - He further stressed the unique role of the European Forum Alpbach as a platform bringing together young people, politics, business, science, media, and culture to shape Europe's democratic future.
- A discussion took place regarding catering policies, vegetarian and vegan food options
  - Several participants argued that sustainability measures should not be viewed merely as ideological preferences, but as science-based responsibilities linked to climate protection and the future of the planet.
  - Other participants argued in favour of preserving individual choice and accommodating a broader range of participants and donors during the current financial stabilization phase.
  - Management emphasized that catering would continue to prioritize regional, organic, and environmentally responsible sourcing standards.
  - It was acknowledged that the discussion reflected differing perspectives within the community and that no final consensus was reached during the meeting.
- Another discussion point concerned the representation and diversity of speakers at the Forum. Special focus?
  - As diverse and interesting as possible.
  - No regional or country focus this year, but plans for a focus on eg certain continents in the future are discussed

The General Assembly ended at 7.10 pm.
Minutes: Melissa Nemet, Lukas Hiegelsberger