

MINUTES

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- Date, Time:** 2026.03.25, 5.00 –7.00 pm (CET)
- Location:** EFA Office, Mariahilfer Straße 47/1/2, 1060 Vienna and online
- Participants:**
- Attendances in-person: 54
 - Attendances online: 27
 - Voting authorisations 42
 - Delegated Votes: 48
- 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 extraordinary General Assembly held on 10 December 2025
4. Report by the President Othmar Karas
5. Outlook EFA26
6. Approval of the EFA Association's Budget 2026
7. Information to the EFA Foundation's Draft Budget 2026
8. Replacement Members of the IAB
9. Report Working Group Transition
10. Report FAN
11. Miscellaneous

1. WELCOME AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Presenter: Nikola Doing

- Talking points:**
- Formal opening of the General Assembly
 - Welcome extended to:
 - Onsite participants at the new EFA office
 - Online participants (approx. 26–27 attendees)
 - Introduction of the new office premises (occupied since June of previous year)
 - Invitation to informal networking after the meeting
 - Commemoration - Moment of silence held in remembrance of Prof. Wolfgang F. Danspeckgruber
 - Clarification of voting procedures:
 - Purple cards = personal votes
 - Sand-colored cards = delegated votes (max. 3 per person)

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Presenter: Nikola Donig

- Talking points:**
- Agenda had been circulated in advance
 - Minor structural adjustment:
 - Combination of budget-related agenda points 6 and 7
 - Inclusion of foundation's budget presentation (informational)

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

- Discussion:**
- **Concern raised by Katharina Reisinger:**
 - Minutes considered too brief (approx. 3 pages)
 - Noted absence of answers to previously discussed questions (especially regarding statutes)
 - **Response:**
 - Answers addressed within the report of established working groups on agenda point 9
 - Assurance that no substantive content was lost

Decision: Minutes of December 2025 General Assembly approved

Vote: Adopted unanimously

4. REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT

Presenter: Othmar Karas

- Talking points:**
- Characterization of the assembly as:
 - A technical and preparatory meeting
 - Focused on follow-up from previous GA and preparation for EFA 2026
 - Key themes:
 - Financial stabilization and transparency
 - Structural transformation is necessary but challenging due to operational pressures
 - Strategic repositioning
 - Reflection on previous years:
 - Persistent mismatch between planned and actual revenues/expenditures
 - Necessity for realistic and enforceable budgeting for institutional credibility
 - Strategic priorities:
 - Strengthening institutional foundation
 - Ensuring long-term sustainability
 - Enhancing transparency (first-time disclosure of foundation financials)
 - Structural transition:
 - Technical and operational transfer from association to foundation effective 1 April 2026
 - Not a final step, but part of ongoing transformation
 - Programmatic outlook:
 - Strengthening the next generation through the EFA Academy
 - Expansion of Euregio Days beyond regional scope
 - Improved accessibility via unified conference ticket

5. OUTLOOK EFA26

Attachment: [Link - jump to presentation](#)

Presenter: Nikola Doing

- Talking points:**
- Programme release dates:
 - 13 April: Ticket sales & first release
 - 20 May: 90% sessions confirmed
 - 23 June: Final programme and speakers
 - Structure:
 - Academy Days
 - Conference Days (One for All-Ticket)
 - Euregio Days moved to the center of our two weeks, with the aspiration to bring the aspect of regions to the question of “How Europe Wins”

- Programme innovations – introductions:
 - Studios (young leaders format) – mixed programme and partnerships formats
 - Regarding age no hard cut intended when it comes to the target-groups for seminars/studios/labs/Expanded labs and seminars
 - Central main stage every evening (no competing sessions)
- Solution Hour:
 - Focus on outcomes and actionable results
 - What are the take-aways, What are the results of the Academy Week)
 - Integration of Academy outputs into conference
- Four focus topics (one flexible to adapt to global developments)
- Four main tracks:
 - Climate
 - Finance
 - Democracy
 - Security
- Scholarships
 - ~5,000–5,500 applications
 - Increase in European applicants (+23%)
 - Slight decrease in other regions due to stricter requirements (AI Detector) and reduction of the scholarship package

Discussion:

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

6. APPROVAL OF THE EFA ASSOCIATION'S BUDGET 2026 & 7. INFORMATION TO THE EFA FOUNDATION'S DRAFT BUDGET 2026

Attachment: [Association's Budget Plan 2026](#)

[Link - jump to presentation](#)

Presenter: Barbara Zimmermann

Talking points:

- Review of 2025 Financials
 - Revenue: approx. €6.6M
- High expenses due to:
 - ~€600k stabilization measures
 - Significant unforeseen costs
 - Increased operational costs (e.g., fuel, logistics)
- External Consulting Costs
 - Estimated €300k
 - Strategy consulting
 - Staff development and retreats
 - Legal and structural transition support
- Accounting Issues
 - Loss of accounting control in 2024
 - External service providers engaged
 - Ongoing system rebuilding Q1 2026
- Budget 2026 (Association)

- Revenue: ~€698k
- Expenses: ~€619k
- Result: ~€69k surplus

Discussion:

- **Question raised by Otto Eden:** Why are numbers of revenue and expenses in plan of Q1-2026?
 - Response: Ongoing operations, personnel costs and assemblies taken place in Q1-2026
- **Question raised by Manuel Neubauer:** Why were these high consulting costs needed and are there any costs regarding this mismanagement (loss of accounting control in 2024)?
 - Response: Number of reasons, recent investments linked to setting up financial reporting system; high loss result of inadequate financial and control system
- **Question raised by Manuel Neubauer:** Why are personnel costs higher than operational costs?
 - Response: in terms of reduction of the headcount, we are now limited to what is possible within the working law constraints of the Austrian law and the structure needed for EFA26; steps taken: reduction of units and unit heads from 6 to 4 and other structural reforms have been implemented; minimal index adjustment of salaries
- **Question raised by Thomas Goiser:** What were these consulting cost for in detail?
 - Response: cannot be defined because it predates the time of the current managing director; individual consulting/coaching for management and employees can't be published;
- **Questions raised by Christoph Wenna:** What is the current financial status and do we get access to consulting reports?
 - Response: reported loss of app. €307 – €338k; **no actual dept**, loss has been fully covered by the foundation's reserves; reports have been shared in assemblies and with the board
- **Concerns raised by Otto Eden:** Requests improvements for future reports to include previous years 2023 and 2024?
 - Response: direct comparisons are difficult because activities and responsibilities have shifted between units over time
- **Suggestion raised by Verena Ehold:** Make usage of the SAC and other committees.
 - Response: yes, we will

Vote: Adopted unanimously
0 votes against

8. REPLACEMENT MEMBERS OF THE IAB

Attachment: [Link - jump to presentation](#)

Presenter: Nikola Donig

Talking points:

- Leaving:
 - Ms. Catherine Ashton
 - Ms. Katja Gentinetta
 - Mr. Thomas Wieser
 - Mr. Miroslav Lajcak

- Nominated:
 - Ms. Helga Schmid
 - Mr. Shashi Tharoor
 - Ms. Maria-Pia of Liechtenstein
- Gender balance maintained

Vote: Adopted unanimously
0 votes against

9. REPORT WORKING GROUP TRANSITION

Attachment: [Link - jump to presentation](#)

Presenter: Jenni Zeller, Verena Ehold, Christoph Wenna, Nikola Donig

- Talking points:**
- Working Group Transition was established in January following a call for participation
 - Three subgroups including:
 - Communication
 - Committees/Governance
 - Memberships
 - Final results will be presented at the General Assembly in May
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- **Report Working Group Communications (Jenni Zeller) – [link to slide](#)**
 - Communication with members is currently sporadic and predominantly top-down
 - Limited opportunities for dialogue and interaction
 - Lack of community-building mechanisms
 - Insufficient visibility of activities and events
 - **Proposed Measures**
 - Introduction of town hall meetings during quarters without General Assemblies
 - Development of an internal member newsletter with feedback opportunities
 - Facilitate networking and informal communication between members (e.g. member overview/platform, group chats)
 - Improved communication of events beyond social media channels (e.g. EFA Website event overview)
 - Consideration of member surveys
 - **Report Working Group Committees/Governance (Verena Ehold) – [link to slide](#)**
 - High level of complexity and lack of clarity in governance structures
 - Unclear roles, responsibilities, and expectations across committees
 - Inefficient decision-making processes
 - Challenges in communication and coordination between bodies
 - Limited resources require more efficient structures
 - The primary issue lies in operational implementation rather than structure

- There is a strong need for clear governance, defined roles, and transparency
- Proposed Measures
 - Clarification of roles across all committees
 - Streamlining of processes and decision-making
 - Improved communication flows between Association and Foundation
 - Targeted, active involvement of the committees in strategy and programming

- **Report Working Group Memberships (Christoph Wenna) – [link to slide](#)**
 - Approx. 300 members
 - Membership fee around €100 annually (with exceptions)
 - Benefits include event discounts, newsletters, and networking opportunities
 - Participation in General Assemblies is relatively low (30–60 attendees)
 - Overall engagement is considered passive
 - Limited member engagement and interaction
 - Lack of internal networking opportunities
 - Insufficient clarity and visibility of membership processes
 - Unclear value proposition of membership
 - Degree of openness vs. exclusivity of membership
 - Potential expansion vs. maintaining a smaller member base
 - Role of volunteering within the organization
 - Need to attract younger members and diversify the community
- Proposed Measures
 - Improve transparency of membership admission processes
 - Enhance tools for internal communication and networking (see above, subgroup Communications)
 - Establish a members-only LinkedIn group as a quick and cost-effective measure
 - Foster a more active and engaged membership culture (e.g. buddy systems, meet-ups, group chats)

10. REPORT FAN

Attachment: [Link – jump to presentation](#)

Presenter: Celina Moser

Talking points: • See attachment

11. MISCELLANEOUS

Presenter: Nikola Donig

Talking points:

- Josef Mitterer reminds of the “Schrödinger”-Year and strongly encourages organizing at least one event at EFA26 to commemorate him; offers support and willingness to fund and invitation of high-quality physicist speaker, if money is an issue
- Christoph Wenna reminds of the passing of Erhard Busek on March 13

The General Assembly ended at 18:58.
Minutes: Melissa Nemet, Lukas Hiegelsberger