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A Window to the World
The European Forum Alpbach 1945 to 2015

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Introduction

The European Forum Alpbach represents the most renowned forum for dialogue in Austria and has been a fixture in the European conference landscape for decades. Spread out over more than two weeks, it currently brings together over 4,000 people each year in the Tyrolean mountains in order to discuss current contemporary topics in various programs streams which include several summer schools, a seminar week and diverse symposia. It also lends its name to several events organised throughout the year and a wide-reaching alumni network that currently includes more than 30 clubs in 25 countries.

Established in the year 1945, it can now look back on a 70-year history. Thanks to its diverse field of topics – ranging from science to arts through to politics, economics and technology – it has been able to attract a multitude of people and has served as a place of encounter, a platform for presentations, a field for experimentations and a supplier of ideas.

This brochure gives an overview of the history of the European Forum Alpbach from 1945 to 2015. It sketches out the institutional development from its creation as the “International Summer School” of the Austrian College through to its current iteration as a platform for dialogue and idea generation. It also highlights thematic focal points and programme streams throughout the years and, within this context, explores not only the self-set goals and fundamental ideas, but also the defining personalities.

It is based on the book “A Window to the World. The European Forum Alpbach 1945 to 2015”, a study for which a series of written sources were evaluated and almost 30 interviews were conducted (Studienverlag, ISBN 978-3-7065-5481-7)
The Origins of the European Forum Alpbach as the “International Summer School” of the Austrian College

The European Forum Alpbach was created as the “International Summer School” of the Austrian College. It was held under this name for the first time in late summer of 1945 as one of the first projects intended to renew intellectual life following National Socialism and World War II. Its founders were Otto Molden and Simon Moser.

The Founders: Otto Molden and Simon Moser

Otto Molden (1918-2002) came from an upper-class family whose branches stretched far throughout the territories of the former Danube Monarchy. His father, Ernst Molden, was the editor-in-chief of the tradition-steeped daily “Neue Freie Presse (New Free Press, later Die Presse).” His mother was the poet Paula von Preradović, chiefly known for her poem “Land der Berge (Land of Mountains)”, which has been used as the lyrics to Austria’s national anthem since 1947. He grew up in Vienna, where he began to study in 1937/38 at the Faculty of Law and Political Science. After 1945 he also studied history, but he did not complete a university degree. He became politicized early on, was anti-National Socialist and anti-Marxist, and eventually joined the youth organisations of the Dollfuß-Schuschnigg regime. Following the invasion of the German troops in 1938, he was arrested. He subsequently voluntarily joined the Wehrmacht in order to avoid further detention. In March 1945, he deserted the German military and joined the resistance movement. He had previously established contact to resistance circles – first and foremost through his brother Fritz Molden (1924 – 2014), who had been active in the catholic-conservative youth resistance as of 1938 and fostered important connections to the Western Allies following the founding of the resistance movement O5. When Otto Molden arrived in Innsbruck in May of 1945, the city had already been liberated before the American troops arrived. This was thanks to the Tyrolean resistance movement led by Karl Gruber, who would later become Tyrol’s governor and then the first foreign minister of Austria’s Second Republic. Otto Molden subsequently led the Highest Ministry of the Austrian Resistance for the occupied territories of the Western Allies and developed various projects. One of his undertakings was the organisation of a “College Meeting”, which he planned with Simon Moser.
Simon Moser (1901-1988) was a philosophy lecturer that Otto Molden had known since at least 1941, if not earlier. He was born in Jenbach in Tyrol and following a variety of studies (jurisprudence, philosophy, economy, classical philology, mathematics) in Vienna, Innsbruck, Berlin, Marburg and Freiburg, he worked at the University of Innsbruck as of 1935, as well as the University of Vienna as of 1937. Furthermore, Moser was also involved with the Fatherland Front’s leisure organisation called, “Neues Leben (New Life)”. The Fatherland Front was founded in 1933 as the unifying party of the Dollfuß-Schuschnigg regime. Following the creation of the state-run university summer camps, he served as a teacher for “ideological education”. He was suspended from his duties in 1938 due to his previous activities. It was not until 1940 that he reacquired permission to teach at the University of Vienna, after he had (most likely opportunistically) joined the NSDAP. Concurrently, he took up a position in May as a rifleman in the training camp of Eichat near Hall in Tyrol and was active as a photojournalist in various training grounds of the Tyrolean mountain troops. According to his own account, he joined the German Wehrmacht in 1941 and remained in its ranks until 1945. Following the end of the war, he returned to the University of Innsbruck, where he had to register as a former NSDAP member. In April of 1947, he was awarded a position as an associate professor. In 1952, he moved to the Technical University of Karlsruhe.

Different Concepts

As Otto Molden has explained retrospectively, he and Moser wanted to realize a similar idea, though a different project. Moser had envisioned a kind of “mountain academy for mind and sport”, intended to impart specific knowledge to participants through university-type seminars and physical activity. For Molden, on the other hand, the goal was the creation of a “community of free European intellectuals” or a “collection of an intellectual and political elite”, intended to be constructed comprehensively and form the foundation for an intellectually and politically unified Europe. He wanted to link this project to the tradition of the German youth movements and the related construction of communities, a European consciousness strengthened by the resistance fight, the pedagogical reform movement of the early 20th century and the Anglo-Saxon college tradition or, more specifically, its habit of “relaxed collective collaboration”.

A “College Meeting” near Innsbruck

The first records that document the realisation of this project date back to early summer of 1945. In an exposé (likely penned by Otto Molden) entitled “Exposé on the Intellectual Situation of Austrian Activism and its Programme in Tyrol and Vorarlberg”, the “intellectual and cultural preconditions for a new sense of Austrian citizenship and a new formation of Austrian society” would now need to be created following the “liberation after seven years of subjugation.” To this end, three concrete projects had already been developed: the formation of an “Austrian Club”, in which representatives of all political and intellectual bents were meant to discuss the diverse problems of the present, the foundation of a weekly magazine called “Die Aktion (The Initiative)” and the organisation of a “College Meeting” near Innsbruck, intended to be a one-off initiative designed to “connect a set of especially strong Austrian students with students from abroad once again” and to push open for them the “window that faces the world”.

Another document calling for renewal through a complete structural change due to the deterioration of the universities during the Nazi reign, provided further details on the “College Meeting” near Innsbruck. The establishment of an “Austrian College”, developed in the
intellectual hub of Central Europe, Vienna, was intended to be the first step towards this reform as soon as circumstances would allow it. In order to gather the necessary experience to implement such reform, a two-week college course was to be held near Innsbruck from mid-August to early September, intended for Austrian and Swiss students, as well as officers of the Allied occupying forces. The “subsequent work in Vienna” was supposed to entail “creating an exemplary college for Europe from these first steps, in order to draw from it the experience necessary to begin the construction of a fundamental university reform along the lines of a true community of teachers and students.”

First concrete steps towards the founding of the “College Meeting” were taken through the hiring of a staff consisting of mostly young people and the establishment of a secretariat at the University of Innsbruck. Concurrently, the question of where the “College Meeting” near Innsbruck” were to be held was answered. After Governor Gruber had offered the former military high mountain training school in Fulpmes in the Stubai Valley as a potential venue and the Hotel Klosterbräu in Seefeld, as well as the seat of the Grail Movement in Vomperberg across from Schwaz were also put forward, the philosophy lecturer Robert Muth introduced Alpbach into the conversation – a small village in the Kitzbühel Alps, beautifully situated, but hard to access all the way into the 1960s.

Otto Molden during his first visit to Alpbach in the lead-up to the first International Summer School 1945

The strong connection to Karl Gruber through the resistance movement certainly had a positive effect on the plan’s authorisation process. As governor, the project required his approval, along with that of the Allied troops in Tyrol: these were initially the Americans and then, as of July 1945, the French, who also approved the organisation of the event, not least thanks to their consideration of the Molden brothers’ background. Additionally, Gruber also assisted with the raising of the financial resources that would be necessary to stage the “College Meeting”. As Fritz Molden repeatedly stated in his reflections on this period in time, Gruber supported the endeavour, among other means, through a generous special allocation of cigarettes, a popular post-war method of payment. Furthermore, the willingness of mayor Alfons Moser to undertake illicit slaughtering of animals was another important contributing factor, as food policies represented a decisive element in 1945. As was repeatedly illustrated later on, Alfons Moser, who was the brother of Simon Moser and served as mayor of Alpbach, quickly recognized the opportunities that were presenting themselves for the village.
The first International Summer School of the Austrian College

The weeks of July and August 1945 were characterised by frenzied preparatory work. In order to allow the “College Meeting”, now been redubbed the “International Summer School” of the Austrian College, to take place, a long list of tasks needed to be completed in a short period of time and under the difficult circumstances present in 1945. It eventually attracted around 80 participants, including Austrians, Swiss (who had been particularly eagerly awaited as “emissaries of the free West”), a few South Tyroleans that had illegally crossed the boarder, as well as representatives of the French and American occupying forces.

The opening ceremony took place under a sun-filled sky a mere three months after the unconditional surrender of the German Wehrmacht and a few days before the Second World War ended in the Pacific arena after Japan’s surrender. Apart from Otto Molden, the opening speakers included Chancellor Karl Brunner of the University of Innsbruck, Lt. Col. Thomazo as the chief French representative, Lt. Col. Maurice Besset as the representative of the French student body and Peter Keckeis as the president of the Swiss organisation of students. Otto Molden and Simon Moser, who each presented their concept of the International Summer School and the Austrian College, gave additional speeches. Molden illustrated the Austrian College as a “path to a new university” that, combined with a criticism of specialisations, was intended to be the “cup for two primary reforms”: a reform of the working method and a reform of the collective student life. The latter placed a special emphasis on the study groups (small seminar-style groups), which were carried by lively individuals. Simon Moser, on the other hand, regarded the objective of the college as fostering the art of scholarly symposia and finding a path back to “real dialogue”. The primary focus, according to Moser, ought to be the rediscovery of the lost “unity of sciences” and a reconsideration of the relationship between philosophy and the individual sciences.

A first meeting of the seven study groups, all of which focused on the humanities and formed the core of the college weeks, took place the same day. As the conference centre was not yet available, these groups either met outside or in the nearby inns to discuss the fields of theology, philosophy, law and state, antiquity and modernity, modern history, modern literature and art. Moreover, a Swiss book exhibition was organized in addition to an initial
arts side programme (which included, among others, the French poet Louis Aragon and the German painter Werner Scholz, who lived in Alpbach). Furthermore, the programme also consisted of a mountain excursion and bonfire. A garden party and the staging of a “concluding revue” of the past weeks’ events, which would later become a constant element, marked the conclusion of the summer school.

The international aspect of the initiative still left much to be desired in 1945. Most of the leaders of the study groups and the speakers during the presentations were from the University of Innsbruck. The classical scholar Olof Gigon from Freiburg, Switzerland (modern literature) and the publicist Roland Nitsche from Zurich (modern history), who represented the first Austrian émigré to come to Alpbach, were the exceptions among the study group leaders. The exceptions among the scholarly presentations were Father Hans Urs von Balthasar from Basel, the physicist Hans Thirring from Vienna and the economist Theo Surányi-Unger from Pécs/Fünfkirchen. Thirring and Surányi-Unger were, however, already in Tyrol. The French presenters were Eugène Susini, speaker for education in the French military regime and Cpt. Michel Herr. Nonetheless, the first International Summer School of the Austrian College left a profound impression, especially on the young participants. Being able to freely debate and discuss for the first time following the war was an overwhelming experience for them, even if it was accompanied by some initial difficulties following the period of dictatorship. To finally meet people from abroad represented a wonderful new experience for many participants, especially for those who were given the opportunity to go to Switzerland after the summer school.

From the International Summer School to the European Forum Alpbach

Since the “College Meeting” of 1945 was intended to be a kind of test run for a college to be established later on in Vienna, they continued to be held in Alpbach each subsequent year near the end of summer. The development of solid connections to the French occupying forces were essential to the staging of the event, as was the fact that it was easier to attract participants and speakers from the West to Tyrol than to Vienna, which was in the middle of the Soviet-occupied territory. The headquarters of the “Austrian College”, the supporting organisation of the Alpbach events, was nonetheless established in Vienna.

Continuation of the International Summer School

The International Summer School grew rapidly. The iteration of 1946 featured ten study groups, with their focus no longer solely on the humanities. The Summer School featured a programme with more than 25 presentations and various artistic events. In addition, “Alpbach Symposia of Young Europeans” were offered, which were intended to deal with the “shape of the young European” and the “European idea” en route to the establishment of “concrete, specifically defined conversational topics between the young representatives of the various peoples”. In 1948, there were 15 study groups, general lectures, the “Alpbach Symposium of Young Europeans”, cultural events, several art and book exhibits, as well as professorial disputations and special events, during which politicians and media representatives spoke about “Austria’s Fight for Freedom and Inner Democracy” and the “Great European Newspapers as a Beacon for a United Europe”. These developments went hand-in-hand with the increased presence of international academics and artists in Alpbach, including the Nobel Prize winning biochemist Ernst Boris Chain from Oxford (originally from Germany) and the
Austrian exiles Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek from London, Hans Redlich from Cambridge and Josef Frank from Stockholm. The number of participants continued to grow. While there were roughly 200 participants from ten countries in 1946 in Alpbach, the event was able to attract 300 to 350 participants in 1948, including around 120-150 foreigners from England, France, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Germany.

The Founding of the Austrian College and the College Communities

The Austrian College was founded formally in 1948 as an association and constructed by a group of people that essentially coincided with Otto and Fritz Molden’s circle of friends. It outlined its duties and goals in its first bylaws as the promotion of unity between specialised and general knowledge, between knowledge and action, as well as the fostering of international cooperation. In doing so, the method of the Austrian College was intended to serve as a model for the Austrian educational system.

Otto Molden was elected as the organisation’s first president. Simon Moser was chosen as the first academic head. Other leading functions were given to Alexander Auer, Felix Pronay and Georg Zimmer-Lehmann. Alexander Auer (1915-1994) – much like Fritz and Otto Molden – came from the resistance movement and was incarcerated for long periods of time during the Nazi reign. A polymath, he was interested in a variety of topics, especially arts and culture, and spoke several languages fluently (English, French, Italian) that were of great importance to the Austrian College. However, much like Otto Molden, he never successfully completed an academic degree. Professionally, he worked as the Secretary General of the Austro-French Society from 1948 to 1950. When the Institute for the Promotion of the Arts was founded in 1954 (disbanded in 1972), he took up the position of Secretary General for them as well. Felix Pronay (1920-1991) and Georg Zimmer-Lehmann (1917-1998) also had connections to the resistance movement and later had careers as bankers in the Creditanstalt, having completed their studies of law. While Otto Molden shaped the political aspect, Simon Moser moulded the scholarly focus and Alexander Auer brought important competencies in the fields of arts and culture to the European Forum Alpbach. Pronay and Zimmer-Lehmann did the same in the economic sphere.
Apart from the Austrian College, which also began organising events throughout the year in Vienna as of 1947, various other so-called “college communities” were created in Austria (in Innsbruck, Vienna, Graz, Leoben, Salzburg and Linz), as well as across Europe (amongst others in Switzerland, West Germany, Southern Tyrol or Luxemburg) after the first College Meeting. These communities were also dedicated to contributing to a reformation of higher education “from within and below” and, like the Summer School in Alpbach, came from two core concepts: from the endeavour to create new communities and from the objective to create preparatory seminars for the academic work in Alpbach. On the one hand, the goal of these college communities was therefore to continue the “work of Alpbach”. On the other hand, they were also designed to attract participants to the Alpbach event and to contribute to funding their participation. They were especially active – depending on the people involved – in the 1940s and 1950s. The study group on natural philosophy led by Vienna’s college community went down in literary history, with Victor Kraft as one of the main professorial figures and Paul Feyerabend playing an important role on the side of the students. Kraft was one of the few representatives of the Viennese Circle that was not forced to leave Austria.¹ Feyerabend later became an internationally renowned philosopher and scientific theorist.

¹ The Viennese Circle was a group of philosophers, mathematicians, scientists and academics in Vienna that met regularly from 1924 to 1936 in order to develop and spread a scientific world view.
Transformation of the International Summer School into the European Forum Alpbach

The year 1949 represented an important break in the history of the young Austrian College, as the International Summer School became the European Forum Alpbach. The fact that there had been diverging points of view on the character of the event from its inception and that these were further exacerbated later on played an important role in this development. In 1945, Otto Molden, when speaking of the scholarly duties of Alpbach, voted for a thematically broad "congress of intellectuals" that was intended to support the continued unification of Europe, while Simon Moser advocated for a more scientifically oriented event. Therefore, when Molden presented his suggestion in the lead-up to the upcoming fifth International Summer School that the event be held under the name "European Forum Alpbach", Moser did not agree. The fifth International Summer School was nonetheless titled "European Forum Alpbach" for the first time.

The programme of the conference, which in 1949 expected 500 participants from almost 200 countries, consisted of 15 study groups, general presentations, cultural events, as well as book and art exhibits. Likewise, the first “European Symposia” were held as additional plenary meetings for the first time and the “Symposia of Young Europeans” took place for the last time. The “European Symposia” – though they were not yet known by that name – were subdivided into an Art (or Culture) Symposium (“The Architecture of the 20th Century”), two Political Symposia (“Europe – Unification and Downfall of a Continent” and “The Spirit of True Democracy”), as well as an Economic Symposium (“Europe between Free and Planned Economies”). This development meant that the largest discussion groups focused on politics, economics and arts and attracted several prominent participants to Alpbach. The head of the European Movement, Duncan Sandys, the French politician André Philippe, the Swiss cultural politician and European federalist Denis de Rougemont, as well as the Spanish exile,
philosopher, historian and novelist Salvador de Madariaga all participated in the political discussion. The conclusion of the event included a call for political and economic unity on the basis of increased closeness. This led to the European flag with its green “E” marking being flown for the first time in Alpbach.

The “European Symposia” (or “European Discussions” as they were named in the beginning) also led to another heated confrontation on the alignment of the Alpbach events, which ended with Otto Molden successfully asserting his concept and Simon Moser accepting the expansion of the political, economical and cultural aspects. The new focus of the Austrian College was also subsequently captured in its bylaws. Alongside the previously established goal of working towards unity between specialised and general knowledge, the examination of politics and arts now found their way into the Austrian College’s field of focus – as did the “unification of Europe”, which they intended to support by providing an example of international cooperation. The title “International Summer School” or “International Summer Seminar” remained in the subheading until 1970, from which point on the event exclusively used the name “European Forum Alpbach”. The Austrian College association did not change its name to European Forum Alpbach until 2003.

The European Forum Alpbach in the 1950s – “The Golden Years”

The profile established in 1949 helped the European Forum Alpbach to assert itself in the 1950s. At the same time, the Austrian College, which held a clear pro-Western slant during the Cold War, began to increase its sphere of activities. This intensification of efforts saw the founding of a Research Institute for Contemporary European Problems, established thanks to financial assistance from the United States and affiliated with the Austrian College. This institute at times organised a fairly intensive schedule of presentations and seminars, but did not last for very long.

Academia, Arts, Politics and Economics in one Framework

The programme of the Alpbach event, following its transformation into the European Forum Alpbach, was comprised of study groups, plenary meetings (or “General Lectures”), the “European Symposia”, as well as artistic events. These activities were shaped into an overall theme each year – as had been the case as of 1946 – with the study groups at the centre of the scholarly efforts. The general presentations and the “European Symposia”, which were comprised of lecture cycles and subsequent discussions, offered a platform for the examination of politics, economics and arts. The entire event took place over the course of 21 days. The working languages were German, English, French and Italian. This meant that the study groups were conducted in one of the four conference languages and the plenary speeches were translated simultaneously, if not always into all four languages. Alpbach thereby became quadrilingual and stayed that way – even if not all study groups could be offered in all four languages – until the 1980s, when first French was eliminated, followed by Italian in the 1990s.

The aspiration that the scholarly programme hoped to fulfil remained the connection of groups of scholars and scholarly fields that would not otherwise come together. Moreover, the study groups, modelled after the college system and numbering between 10 and 15 each year, remained a defining structural element. After being announced under a combining
overall theme of scholarly fields such as philosophy, theology, biology or jurisprudence in 1950 and 1951, each study group was provided with a concrete issue to deal with as of 1952. This meant that, for example, in 1956, mere weeks before the Hungarian Revolution, study groups met under the overall theme of “Evolution and Revolution” to deal with topics such as “Overthrow of Values”, “Political and Legal History of Revolution” or the “Revolt as Theme in the Literature of the Twentieth Century”. The “nimbus of a philosophical master-disciple rapport or a scholarly teacher-student relationship” was absent in Alpbach, a feature that was meant to differentiate the Austrian College from the authoritarian lectern teaching style prevalent at universities.

The attendant scholars came from several European countries and the United States, with the event fostering especially good cooperation with the continental European countries and to a lesser extent with the English intellectual circles. In doing so, the path that had previously been taken in the 1940s was continued. It encompassed a large-scale effort to invite scholars that had been forced to leave Austria and Germany since the 1920s due to economic hardship, lack of professional opportunities at the universities, an increasingly anti-Semitic and anti-democratic atmosphere and the political and racist discrimination and persecution methods of the National Socialists.

Examples of such individuals are – on the Austrian side – the economists Friedrich von Hayek, Gottfried Haberler and Fritz Machlup, the composers und music scholars Hans Redlich and Egon Joseph Wellesz, the physicists Erwin Schrödinger and Philipp Frank, the art historian Ernst Gombrich or the sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld. The jurist Georg Schwarzenberger, the historian Golo Mann, the art historian Otto Georg von Simson, the sociologists Julius Kraft and Theodor Julius Geiger, the political scientist Arnold Bergstraesser and the philosophers Kurt Löwith, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer represent examples on the German side.

Friedrich von Hayek, Karl Popper and Erwin Schrödinger had a special place among the afore-mentioned émigrés, as they grew to become regulars in Alpbach, as did Arthur Koestler.
• Friedrich von Hayek, who was born in Vienna, but had already left Austria in the early 1930s, was one of the most important proponents of a liberal economic and political order in the 20th century. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1974 and had a profound impact on the neoliberal turn in the US and Great Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. He attended Alpbach for the first time in 1947 and subsequently attended regularly into the 1980s.

• He was also responsible for the first Alpbach attendance of his friend, Karl Popper, in 1948. Popper, who founded critical realism through his work in the fields of epistemology and scientific theory, philosophy of social sciences and history, as well as political philosophy, was also originally from Vienna and had gone into exile in New Zealand in 1937. Much like Hayek, he became a regular attendee of the European Forum Alpbach, which established Alpbach as an important springboard in the German-speaking world for his way of thinking.

• Erwin Schrödinger, the 1993 Nobel Prize winner for Physics, came to Alpbach for the first time in 1950, after being forced to cancel his participation in 1948 and 1949 despite having been included in the programme. He was even interred at the Alpbach cemetery following his death in 1961. After his studies of physics in Vienna, he held teaching positions at various prestigious European universities and was forced to flee Austria in 1938. He spent several years in Dublin before taking up a guest professorship in Innsbruck in 1950, followed by an associate professorship in Vienna in 1956.

• Arthur Koestler, one the most important political intellectuals and authors of the 20th century and, as a former communist, the author of “Darkness at Noon”, one of the most famous literary criticisms of Stalinism, was born in Hungary and lived in Palestine and various European countries (the last one being Great Britain). He came to Alpbach for the first time in 1957, after a previously planned attendance in 1954 fell through. He was so impressed that he soon began the construction of a residence in Alpbach, which he owned until 1971 and then sold to Fritz Molden. He was a participant of the European Forum Alpbach on several occasions. In 1968 he organised (on the margins of the Forum) his own symposium in the facilities of the Austrian College. It was entitled “Beyond Reductionism: New Perspectives in the Life Sciences”.

In the political sphere, the general presentations and the “European Symposia” in the 1950s dealt with current university issues, as well as questions concerning European integration. Along with Denis de Rougemont, the German publicist Eugen Kogon also gave speeches and Alpbach welcomed its first high-level representative of European integration when the German politician Walter Hallstein attended the event in 1957 and 1958. He was not only heavily involved in the founding of the EEC, but was also the first head of the EEC Commission following the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and remained at its helm until 1967.
In the economic sphere, both the Austrian finance minister Reinhard Kamitz and the Director General of the Deutsche Bank, Hermann J. Abs, regularly attended the Alpbach conference. One of the most important events was on the topic of “Banking – an Artery of European Economic Life” (1954), which attracted around 150 theorists and practitioners from the world of banking. This gathering marked the largest banking conference held in Austria in the past 40 years and it was followed up by another large-scale event on the topic of “Contribution to the Coordination of European Monetary and Financial Policy” in 1957. Topics dealt with in the conference’s cultural platform were, for instance, “Problems of Form in the Contemporary Novel”, held by the Austrian exile Frederic Morton (1951), or “The Musical Theatre” (1954). In 1955, the programme included a much-noticed symposium on the “Experimental Film” with the German experimental filmmaker Hans Richter. Richter had been a part of the Dadaist movement during the interwar period, was close to the De Stijl as well as the constructivist group, and was forced to immigrate to the US in 1933. “The City in the Age of Ideologies”, or the future of major cities, followed in 1957, led by André Wogenscky, Le Corbusier’s office manager.
Furthermore, Alpbach continued to host readings, art and book exhibits, musical performances and, as of 1956, record concerts or listening hours. The event’s programme repeatedly paid special attention to modern art as an important expression of the contemporary age. This resulted in the literary programme featuring readings from the young Austrian author Ilse Aichinger and the Swiss Friedrich Dürrenmatt, as well as a visit by the Austrian writer H. C. Artmann. In the field of music, the premier of the Alpbacher Tanzsere (Alpbach Dance Serenade) “Luck, Death and Dream” (1954), written by the Austrian composer Gottfried von Einem and commissioned by the European Forum Alpbach to commemorate its tenth anniversary, represented a particularly special occasion. This marked the beginning of a series that was continued as of 1957, in which young Austrian composers and their work were presented, a practice that had been started in the field of dramatic arts in 1955. The work of young artists from various European countries (France, Germany, Austria, Poland, Netherlands) was exhibited. In the field of film, the young Austrian avant-garde filmmaker Peter Kubelka was twice invited to attend the Forum.

**Increased participation and a house of its own**

The number of participants (full and part time, in addition to staff) most likely reached the 1 000 person mark for the first time in the 1950s, with the number of participants divided up between 20 and 30 different countries (with a majority hailing from Austria and Germany). Until the mid-1950s, most attendees were students, but the diversity of the participants in terms of social class, career and age group began to diversify thanks to the introduction of the new focal topics.
The increase in participants flocking to Alpbach each year made the necessity for new facilities more acute. The European Forum Alpbach had up to that point held its events outdoors, in the various inns and taverns or in the small elementary school. The groundbreaking for the new conference centre took place in 1951. In 1954, a stone plate with the “Alpbach Elegie” by Paula von Preradović was mounted and the author became the building’s namesake. Construction of the facility was then completed in 1959 and included a relief by the Austrian sculptor Fritz Wotruba, who had been connected with the Austrian College since the 1940s. The financial means necessary for the construction of the centre were partly covered by funds from the American European Recovery Program (ERP) and other loans. Additionally, the Austrian College was forced to contribute a significant sum of money from its own pocket, which brought about the need for the new facility to serve as a source of income. To this end, Alpbach began to host “Winter Weeks”, which included winter sports and a cultural programme, but not particularly “hard intellectual work”. Moreover, the facility also became available for rent to other institutions.

The European Forum Alpbach in the 1960s – Heading towards a crisis

For the European Forum Alpbach, the 1960s represented a decade of important changes within the leadership of the Austrian College. It was also characterised by several crises at the end of the decade that nearly led to the end of the Austrian College and the Alpbach events.

Otto Molden and the European Federalist Party

An initial important change at the head of the Austrian College took place in 1960 when Otto Molden resigned as its president. He stepped down because he had founded the European Federalist International in 1959, which was soon followed by the establishment of the Austrian European Federalist Party. Since the Austrian College saw itself as an association independent of party politics, it would not have been possible for its president to serve in a political position. The goal of the European Federalist International was to contribute to the establishment of a strong, pan-European federal state through the formation of European Federalist Parties in all European countries. However, neither the European Federalist International nor the Austrian European Federalist Party achieved much success.
The Presidency of Alexander Auer

Alexander Auer was named the Austrian College’s new president in 1960 and remained in this position until 1964. The European Forum Alpbach’s programme continued to be composed of the same elements, consisting of roughly 10 to 15 scholarly study groups, the “European Symposia”, presentations, lecture cycles and an artistic side programme. However, due to the increasingly difficult financial situation, the event was no longer held on the same scale as before and was reduced from 20 to 19 days. In addition, it became increasingly difficult to attract interesting speakers, as – according to Simon Moser – the interest in interfaculty conferences had waned and in turn, shorter conventions, lasting only a few days, had experienced an increase in popularity.

The participating scholars were from various European countries and the US. Renowned scholars and philosophers that came to Alpbach were, amongst others, the German sociologist René König, the philosophers Herbert Feigl and Rudolf Carnap, both of whom had once been a part of the Vienna Circle and were forced to emigrate to the US, the historian Eric Hobsbawm, the French sociologist Alain Touraine and the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch. The conference’s overall themes were “Language and World” in 1960, with such study groups as “Psychology and Language”, “Education and Language” or “Law and Language”, and, in 1963, “Labour”, featuring study groups on “Labour as a Factor of Production”, “Labour and Company Organisation” or the “Influence of Modern Technology on the Industrial Labour Production”.

The political discussion was continued with a symposium on the topic of “Great Britain and the European Continent Today” during the “European Symposia” 1960. As of the following year, however, politics and the European theme found themselves in a more marginalised role in the “European Symposia”, with economics increasingly important and the discussion on arts and culture at least somewhat present. In 1961, the “European Symposia” did consist of three individual events. It did not, however, include a separate Political Symposium. From then on, it consisted of an event on the topic of “Capital Formation and Capital Market” in 1962 and, in 1963, a symposium on “City and Countryside in the Age of Technology” and an economic event on “Labour as a Factor of Production in Our Time”. In 1964, there was only one economic discussion on the “Economic Problems of Inflation” on the agenda. Likewise, politics and Europe were also no longer dealt with in the plenary meetings, which was not
only criticised by Otto Molden, who had consistently promoted these areas, but was also due to the stagnation of the process of European integration.

Readings, concerts, book and art exhibitions were, however, still regularly a part of the programme, which led to the observation that the European Forum Alpbach had experienced a shift towards its more artistic side. Readings and music evenings were joined on the programme by the strongly increased presence of record hours. In 1961, the first record exhibition featuring modern classics and an evening with young composers from Cologne were added to the series that had been started in 1957 and focused on the works of young composers. The premier of the “Alpbach Quintet”, written for the European Forum Alpbach by Ernst Krenek, constituted a further artistic highlight in 1962. Krenek was an Austrian-born composer forced to immigrate to the US. He had visited Alpbach on several occasions during the 1960s. Yvonne Georgi, who had previously choreographed Gottfried von Einem’s “Alpbacher Tanzserenade” in 1954, created the choreography. In 1963, jazz was on offer for the first time, as were two concert series by Friedrich Cerha and Kurt Schwertsik’s ensemble “Die Reihe” (The Series) in 1964. In the field of graphic arts, the series on young artists from various European countries (England, Switzerland, Austria) continued and the work of young Czech artists was exhibited. In 1961, French experimental films were shown, before the film genre disappeared from the programme.

The number of participants was declining. After reaching around 600 in 1962, the number of attendees and staff totalled 470 in 1964, with 47% originating from Austria, while a further 22% were from Germany. The rest was split between other countries. Of greater concern for the Austrian College, however, was the increasingly drastic financial situation, which was exacerbated by the fact that debts accrued by the construction of the Paula von Preradović House continued to weigh the association down.

The Presidency of Felix Pronay

The situation became noticeably more difficult in 1964, when Alexander Auer stepped down as the President of the Austrian College in order to take up a position as the head of the cultural division of Austria’s Foreign Ministry and subsequently serve as Cultural Counsellor at the Austrian embassies in Moscow, Warsaw and Paris. The search for a new president proved to be a difficult undertaking, until a new head of the Austrian College was found in the person of Felix Pronay.

During his presidency (1964-1970), the European Forum Alpbach carried on organising study groups, plenary meetings and cultural side events as it continued to be cut down to 19, then 17 and finally 14 days. During this period, a noticeable shift towards economic aspects took place, including the formation of study groups designed to attract a specific target audience. This development was influenced by the difficult financial situation. The “European Symposia”, which had once served as a platform for discussions of politics, economics, arts and culture, disappeared from the event’s programme. Future discussions were advertised solely under the banner of “Plenary Meetings”, with the term “Economic Symposium” (1966) being used for the first time in this context.
The number of study groups hovered between 11 and 16 from 1965 to 1970. Prominent scholars that participated and gave presentations in these study groups included the literary scholar George Steiner, the economist and Austrian exile Fritz Machlup, the philosopher Herbert Marcuse, the Austrian computer pioneer Heinz Zemanek and, once again, Ernst Bloch. The overall theme of 1967 was “Information and Communication. Trends of Technological and Social Development”, which included study groups on “Language and Computers” or “Technical Models in Biology”. In 1968, “Power – Law – Morality” was chosen as the overall theme and study groups on “Law and Justice”, human rights or “Power and Morality in the Drama” were held.

Georg Zimmer-Lehmann (second from left) at the European Forum Alpbach 1968, as Alpbach was overshadowed by the invasion of Czechoslovakia through Soviet troops
Plenary meetings in 1965 dealt with “Europe and America in Literature”, “European-American Relations as seen from Strasburg” or the “Atlantic Partnership: U. S. Investment in Europe”. In 1966, topics included “European Theatre: Programs and Practice”, “Dissemination of Knowledge in Mathematics and Physics” and the “Magic Triangle”. The Economic Symposium, which was now composed of commissions and plenary speeches, included discussions on “Industrial Research” or the “Economic Cycles and Economic Policy”. 1968’s programme included, amongst others, the political cartoon, “Morals and Ideology in Modern Society” and an Economic Symposium on the topic of “The Protection of Private Investments in Foreign Countries”. Furthermore, a roundtable discussion on contemporary Czech literature was scheduled, after having previously paid particular attention to the situation behind the Iron Curtain in the preceding years. However, as the invasion of Prague through Warsaw Pact troops occurred during the European Forum Alpbach, the programme was repeatedly restructured in order to discuss the most recent developments. The Prague Spring and its liberalisation and democratisation aspirations experienced an abrupt end through the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops, a development that spread dismay at the Forum beyond the Czech attendees.

Concerning arts, in 1965, jazz was once again a part of the programme (Friedrich Gulda), as was a larger art exhibition entitled “From Dadaism to Imaginism”. 1966 included an exhibit on “Engaged Art – Social Criticism in the Graphic Arts since Goya” and a drawing of the young Prague graphic artist Jindřich Fischel, which followed the exhibition of the drawings and graphics of young Czech artists in the previous year. In 1968, the first caricature exhibition took place.

**The End of the European Forum Alpbach?**

Whether or not there would be a continuation in 1969 remained uncertain. There had been an increase in the number of participants from 1966 (700) to 1968 (750). However, the debts that the Austrian College had incurred begged the question of whether the association should bring its activities to a close. Furthermore, a discussion started on whether the Forum should halt its activities because its original aim (to contribute to an intellectual renewal in post-war Austria) had been achieved and Alpbach had now lost some of its internationality and relevance in the scholarly principles debates. At the same time, the question of how important scholarship ought to be for Alpbach was repeatedly raised during this period.

When the European Forum Alpbach and its 16 study groups met for the 25th time in 1969, economic questions were not the only ones prominently represented on the programme. The event included a call by Pronay for the creation of an academy for business management, with the Austrian College intending to set up the foundation or to hold preparatory courses for the future lecturers, assistants and tutors of the academy. In 1970, the European Forum Alpbach was held without an overall theme and with a substantial reduction in the number of study groups, but included three consecutive seminars on “Integral Information Systems in Modern Society”, the “International Currency Regime of the 1970s” and on management development. Following Felix Pronay’s demand in 1969 to strengthen the support for the education of economic leaders, this topic played a larger part in 1970 as well. As in 1969, the accompanying artistic side programme was relatively small in scale. Whether or not it would continue on remained uncertain. For many observers, the end of the Forum appeared to have arrived.
The European Forum Alpbach in the 1970s and 1980s – from a new revival to a new crisis

Even if nothing had previously indicated it, the 1970s brought about a new revival under new leadership. This revitalisation not only included the Forum’s continued existence, but also encompassed the establishment of “Alpbach Clubs”, as well as the creation of a new conference series in the form of the dialogue congresses. The 1980s, on the other hand, pointed to a new crisis, but also brought about the introduction of technology discussions, an important programme innovation.

The second presidency of Otto Molden

The foundation of the coming developments was laid when Otto Molden was once again elected as the president of the Austrian College, a position he would now hold from 1970 to 1992. Simon Moser remained in his position as academic head until 1974 and was followed by the German philosopher Hans Albert, who served as lead academic advisor. Among the most pressing issues that Otto Molden had to deal with in his “new old position” was to confront the Austrian College’s dire financial situation. An important step in dealing with this issue was the sale of the Paula von Preradović House, which had been prepared by Felix Pronay. The house was sold in 1971 to the province of Tyrol. The sale included a provision for the house’s continued use as the venue for the European Forum Alpbach.

The “Club Alpbach for European Culture – International”

Subsequent organisational reforms centred on the establishment of the “Club Alpbach for European Culture – International”, which was intended to reawaken the idea of the old college communities. The impetus came from the fact that most of the college communities either no longer existed or their relationship to the Austrian College had been neglected due to the crisis that it had faced. The official establishment of the “Club Alpbach for European Culture – International” took place in 1976. It would subsequently serve as the framework within which regional clubs were founded, in locations that were home to a “larger number of Alpbachers”. Among the first clubs to take up their activities were the clubs in Graz, Rome and in Vienna, followed by Innsbruck, Linz and Munich. In 1985, clubs had been established in Vienna, Innsbruck, Graz, Linz, the Alpbach Valley, Rome, Munich and Amsterdam, with preparatory work for the establishment of a “Club Brussels” underway. The clubs’ activities and stability were quite diverse, mirroring the situation of the college communities.

Programme and participants in the 1970s

The programme of the European Forum Alpbach continued to encompass 11 to 16 study groups, plenary meetings and an arts and culture programme over the course of 13 to 17 days. Additionally, the “European Symposia” were reinstated and included a Political, Economic and Art (or Cultural) Symposium (as they were known from then on). Following debates in previous years on whether a scholarly aspect should be included, these developments demonstrated that scholarship would continue to have a place in Alpbach. The definitive end of the International Summer School era was marked not only by the enhanced importance of the political discussions and the Economic Symposium, which was regularly supplemented by at least one study group on economic and monetary policy issues (under the title of “Seminar on Monetary Policy” or “Banking Seminar”). Its end was further highlighted by the fact that a mere fifth of the 700 to 1000 annual Forum participants were students.
Scholarly study groups had an average duration of eight to ten meetings and were organised under the overall theme of “Science – Society – Politics” with titles such as “Science Planning”, “Society and Technology” or “The Science of History and Politics” in 1971. In 1976, the overall theme of “Limits of Freedom” saw the organisation of study groups on “Foundations of Freedom”, “Freedom and Social Order” or “Freedom and Art”. These developments continued the original aim of fostering general studies and scholarship by tying together a variety of disciplines into the same programme, even if – as was already evident in the 1960s – a stronger focus on the social sciences became noticeable. A large percentage of the scholars in attendance continued to come from Germany. However, Alpbach was becoming noticeably more successful at attracting scholars from abroad (particularly from France, Italy, England, the United States and Israel). The foreign scholars that attended Alpbach included, once again, Ernst Bloch, the London-based mathematician, physicist and scientific philosopher Imre Lakatos, the Italian historian Vinzenzo Cappelletti, the economist and Nobel Prize winner James Buchanan or the Australian neural researcher and Nobel Prize winner John Eccles, who, in 1978, participated in a much-noticed symposium with Karl Popper on the topic of body and soul.

The discussion of politics and economics was continued in 1971 in the “European Symposia” with an economic talk on current international monetary policy issues and a political discussion on the topic of “Where does Europe Go Politically?” At the same time, plenary meetings included talks on scientific policy and scientific planning. An international mayoral discussion followed in 1971, as did an economic discussion on the topic of “Topical International Monetary Problems” with Austrian finance minister Hannes Androsch, who was among the most prominent participants in the Economic Symposia of the 1970s, alongside Jürgen Ponto (Chairman of the Board of the Dresdner Bank), Alfred Herrhausen (Executive Spokesman for Deutsche Bank) and the German entrepreneur Otto Wolff von Amerongen.

A further special guest arrived in 1974 with the participation of the young Club of Rome, a non-governmental organisation with the aim of contributing to a solution of “world problems” through the global exchange of ideas between scholars, economists and politicians. The fact that the European Forum Alpbach played an important part in the Club’s early history and that several founding members had taken part in the European Forum Alpbach in 1969 was a significant factor in their participation. In June of 1975, the Club of Rome organised its own
event with the Austrian College in Alpbach, while the European Forum Alpbach featured a more in-depth discussion of legal policy for the first time, which it maintained into the early 1990s. The Political Symposium in 1976 on “Freedom between Dictatorship and Anarchy” saw not only the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Georg Ackermann, participate, but also marked the first attendance of the British-German sociologist, politician and then-director of the London School of Economics Ralf Dahrendorf.

The programme also included an evening talk on the intellectual situation in Eastern Europe and Russia. Several dissidents participated in the event. In 1978, when the first large Israeli delegation attended Alpbach, the event included a critical examination of the Arab-Israeli conflict with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In 1978, when the plenary meetings included not only an assessment of the Greek-Turkish conflict, but “The Cultural Relations between Persia and Europe” also found itself on the agenda, Hans Kreitler (University of Tel Aviv) and Mohammed H. El Farra (Deputy Director General of the Arab League) shook each other’s hand, an event deemed newsworthy even in Israel.

The arts and culture programme was continued in 1971 with the traditional Art Symposium, in addition to concerts and exhibitions. It would, however, be a while until it was able to gain renewed appeal. The practise of shining a spotlight on young artists that had been established in previous years was continued in 1973. The focus was on young Swiss and Austrian authors (Alois Schöpf, Peter Turrini and Peter Henisch). The Art Symposium on young European artists also dealt with a traditional topic that failed to live up to its previous appeal. 1974 included an exhibition on “30 Years of European Political Caricature”, marking the second time after 1968 that caricatures were exhibited. This practise found its way on to the programme repeatedly in subsequent years (in cooperation with the caricaturists Gustav Peichl and Fritz Behrendt). Another significant innovation was not, however, introduced until 1976, when a theatre workshop was established and the initial discussion of video art (with Horst Georg Haberl) took place. Haberl would later lead the cultural festival “steirischer herbst (Styrian autumn)”. In 1978, the programme included readings by the Austrian authors Friederike Mayröcker and Ernst Jandl, and the initial prize for young Austrian literature was awarded. It was named after Paula von Preradović in honour of her 90th birthday. The award was presented semi-annually from then on until 1990.
In 1979, one of the biggest “agitations” in the history of the European Forum Alpbach took place, when Gustav Peichl, the multimedia artist André Heller and Horst Georg Haberl proclaimed the free state of artists “Artopia”. The study group on “Trial and Error in Arts: Conception – Structure – Emotion” provided the framework for this “state establishment.” Peichl, Heller and Haberl intended to not only use it to discuss new paths in the arts, but also to take these paths themselves. The founding of “Artopia” was not limited to the creation of a “state name” by combining “art” and “utopia” and the erection of border signs. It also included the proclamation of its own constitution, the composition of its own national anthem, comprised of lyrics by André Heller and music by the American rock musician Frank Zappa, and its own national flag. Moreover, “Artopia” also had its own news outlet (“Artopia Presse”) and its own cable television channel, ARF (“Artopischer Rundfunk”). For the participants, “Artopia” was a “great time” that included countless activities and drew support from a number of national and international artists, including a show of support from Andy Warhol in the United States. Nonetheless, the free state of artists was brought to a premature conclusion. The fact that “Artopians” repeatedly drew the ire of the Alpbach population and increasingly dominated the entire Forum, while not shying away from criticising it, played an important part in the decision to shut it down.

Dialogue Congresses on the promotion of exchanges between Western Europe and other cultural areas

The new vivacity that the Austrian College was experiencing as of the mid-1970s was evident in the opening of dialogue congresses. It marked a second series of conferences, held from 1978 until the early 1990s, meant to foster the exchanges between Western Europe and other cultural and economic areas. After the European Forum Alpbach had experienced an increasingly strong shift towards larger geopolitical topics, the second series
of conferences also focused on issues of global exchanges. Unlike the Forum, however, the
dialogue congresses were conferences exclusively geared towards experts that hosted
between 250 to 280 participants. They were designed for specialists in the areas of cultural,
political, economic and social cooperation, as well as experts for historical relations, with a
special emphasis on the following regions: 1978: sub-Saharan Africa, 1979: South America
followed by a “response congress” in Rio de Janeiro in 1982), 1980: Japan, 1981: USA,
1982: ASEAN states, 1983: India, 1984: USA and Japan, 1985: North and Southwest Pacific,
states. A dialogue congress with the member states of the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council
scheduled for 1986 had to be cancelled on short notice.

At first, the dialogue congresses were held in either June or July. However, due to financial
and organisational reasons, they were gradually pushed further back into the second half of
August, which put them in close proximity to the European Forum Alpbach itself. The
dialogue congress in 1983 with India was a very special occasion, as even Prime Minister of
India Indira Gandhi found her way to Alpbach to participate.

Programme and participants up to 1992

During the 1980s, the European Forum Alpbach was composed of the usual programme
streams, which included between 13 and 17 study groups. New programme components
were, however, added during this decade. The event still took place over the course of 14
days, but the duration was cut down in 1990 and 1991 to 12 days. The total number of
participants (full and part time participants, Forum employees and journalists) continued to
grow. In 1988, the event attracted 1 162 participants, up from 870 in 1980.

Scholarly study groups, which generally came together for ten meetings, entitled “Objectives
and Methods of Scientific Cognition”, “The Biological Bases of Ethics” or “Perception and
Artistic Design”, were offered in 1982 under the overarching theme of “World Images and the
Construction of Reality”. In 1986, the main thematic cluster was “Autonomy and Control.
Control Crises in the Modern World” and the study groups were on the “The Problem of
Controlling the Process of Cognition”, “Crisis in the Biosphere and its Effects on Society” and
“Feminism”. Particularly noteworthy in this context is that natural sciences and medicine were back in the study groups with increased frequency and that questions of gender equality were included in the official programme for the first time.

As in previous years, the speakers came from various European countries and the United States, which indicated a decrease in the Forum’s internationality, a reversal of the developments of the 1970s. Among the most prominent participants were, once again, Ernst Gombrich, James Buchanan, the Austrian Nobel Prize recipient Konrad Lorenz, who had previously given a presentation in Alpbach in 1951, John Eccles and, on several occasions, Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek.

The increased attention that the event paid to global issues (especially noticeable in the dialogue congresses) was constantly evident in the political discussions. In 1980, for instance, a visit by the Israeli politician and general Moshe Dayan took place, which was followed by larger symposia on the situation of world peace, smaller plenary meetings on the intellectual relationship between Southeast Asia and Western Europe (1983) and a presentation by Otto Molden on the Euro-Indian movement (1986). Finally, in 1988, Mangosuthu Buthelezi visited Alpbach. During his visit, the discussion was meant to focus on the future of South Africa and the abolition of Apartheid. This event triggered vigorous protests. The main cause was the invitation of the Zulu chief Buthelezi, the Chief Minister of the Homeland Kwa-Zulu and president of the Inkatha party. He was an unusually controversial politician, regarded by many as a collaborator of the white minority regime. The decision to extend an invitation to Buthelezi therefore became one of the most criticized in the history of the European Forum Alpbach.

At the same time, the political discussions also included a critical assessment of the approaching end of Communism in the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, in addition to an analysis of the issues surrounding European integration. In 1991, this led to a visit in Alpbach by Jacques Delors, who is considered to be amongst the most important personalities in the process of European integration. As the president of the EC Commission from 1985 to 1995, he made profound contributions to the renewed invigoration of European integration.
The arts and culture programmes continued to be constructed out of their usual building blocks in the 1980s (readings, concerts and exhibitions). The work of “old friends” (Ernst Krenek, Fritz Wotruba, Paul Flora) was shown on a number of occasions and caricatures were frequently the topic of exhibits. The music programme was able to garner increased attention, in particular the premier of the church opera “The Path to Emmaus” in the Alpbach village church in 1982. The piece had been a special composition for the Forum. In 1983, a symposium on the topic of “The Theatre as a Reflection of its Time” was held with the Brazilian director, theatre theorist and founder of the “Theatre of the Oppressed” Augusto Boal, as well as the East German author Heiner Müller. Other writers that were included in the programme in subsequent years included Martin Walser, Barbara Frischmuth, Friedrich Dürrenmatt (once again) and Rolf Hochhuth.

That the economy maintained its status as an important topic was visible through more than just the continuation of the large Economic Symposium. The (political) economic discussion was enhanced by the introduction of the “Alpbach International Economic Forecast”, which was meant to examine important shifts of trends, and the establishment of an “Seminar on Industry and Trade”. Alongside the leaders of the Austrian banking industry and the Secretary General of the Industriellenvereinigung (Federation of Austrian Industries) Herbert Kreijci, prominent participants continued to include Otto Wolff von Amerongen, Alfred Herrhausen and the stock market and finance expert André Kostolany.

The creation of the “Alpbach Technology Symposium”

Further innovations included the introduction of the “Alpbach Portrait” and the establishment of “Special Study Groups”. The “Alpbach Portraits” showcased four people annually from 1984 to 2000 that had ties to the Forum or had played an important role in the intellectual sphere. Starting in 1980, the “Special Study Groups” were organised by another institution in cooperation with the Austrian College and were primarily meant to assist in financing the European Forum Alpbach. They were also intended to help bring new participants to Alpbach. They are historically relevant mostly because one of them later became the “Alpbach Technology Symposium (or “Alpbach Technology Forum”).
The symposium was initially held under the title “Technology and the Economy” and was organised by the Forschungszentrum Seibersdorf (Research Centre Seibersdorf, now known as the Austrian Institute of Technology) and the Federal Chamber of Trade and Industry. As of 1986, the event was organised by the Forschungszentrum Seibersdorf and the Federation of Austrian Industries. In 1994, the ORF (Austrian state broadcaster) joined as the third co-organiser. Following the departure of the Federation of Austrian Industries in 2009, the Helmholtz Society and the European Research Council (ERC) joined as thematic partners. The name “Alpbach Technology Symposium” has been used since 1990.

The symposium’s programme in the 1980s was a combination of plenary meetings and study groups, which created a similar structure to the European Forum Alpbach. The plenary meetings were intended to foster discussion of current topics in science and technology, while the study groups dedicated their efforts to practical questions and the development of concrete proposals for solutions. During their initial phase, the Technology Symposia had the feel of an “insider meeting” that primarily recruited as speakers Austrian representatives from the realms of politics, economics and various interest groups. With its strong growth during the 1990s, an increasing number of internationally renowned experts and leading scientists made their way to Alpbach. In 1995, when the chemists John Kendrew and Jean-Marie Lehn, the physicist Johannes Bednorz and the economist James Buchanan discussed “The Decisive Moment of Discovery”, the event managed to congregate four Nobel Prize winners around the same table. From its inception, the “Alpbach Technology Symposium” was able to attract significant numbers of participants from the field of politics. This not only meant that Austrian politicians regularly attended the Technology Symposia. They also utilized Alpbach as a platform to announce political projects, which resulted in Alpbach becoming not only a place for technological innovations, but also increasingly for research policy.

A to this day unique project in the history of the European Forum Alpbach was established in 1999, with the creation of “Junior Alpbach”, which was intended to give young people the possibility to spend a day with selected scientists. In 2007, the “Ö1 Children’s University Alpbach” was launched, an initiative that targeted an even younger demographic. Overall,
the “Alpbach Technology Symposium” has grown into one of the most important places to discuss issues of technology development and policy in Austria.

Financial crisis and media criticism

However, before this development was complete, the European Forum Alpbach had to withstand a second existential crisis that unfolded during the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s and threatened to endanger the European Forum Alpbach’s existence once again. A significant contributing issue was the fact that the mountain of debt continued to grow, a result of the expenses overtaking revenues. Additionally, the European Forum Alpbach continued to receive criticism in the media and was faced with accusations that it had lost its attractiveness and internationality, that an ideology dictated by Karl Popper dominated it and that young people generally did not attend the event. Regarding the personnel, calls for changes at the head of the Austrian College grew louder, which led to a second resignation by Otto Molden. Apart from a ten-year hiatus (1960-1970), he was at the head of the European Forum Alpbach for 47 years. Upon tendering his resignation as president of the Austrian College, he announced that he intended to devote himself once again to “political tasks”, namely the development of a nonpartisan movement called “European National Movement”. However, much like the European Federalist Party in the 1960s, this initiative was not particularly successful.

The European Forum Alpbach from 1992 to 2000 – Years of transition

Much like the 1960s, the Austrian College was faced with finding leadership amidst a difficult situation at the beginning of the 1990s. The new leadership was eventually not only able to continue the European Forum Alpbach, but also to take important steps towards recapitalizing and renewing the Austrian College. Additionally, the youth was brought back to Alpbach thanks to a “declaration of love”.

A new president: Heinrich Pfusterschmid-Hardtenstein

In 1992, Heinrich Pfusterschmid-Hardtenstein assumed the role of president of the Austrian College, a position that he would remain in until 2000. A significant reason for his nomination was the fact that Heinrich Pfusterschmid-Hardtenstein had fostered strong ties to the European Forum Alpbach for a long time and was able to bring significant professional experience to the leadership of the Austrian College. Heinrich Pfusterschmid-Hardtenstein attended Alpbach for the first time as a student in 1947 and subsequently led the college community in Graz for several years. Professionally, he entered the diplomatic service in 1956 following his study of law.

Among his most important tasks was the organisation’s financial consolidation. In order to reduce the amount of debt, it was not only necessary to sell off valuables (such as the Wotruba relief from the Paula von Preradović House), but also to follow a rigid austerity programme. At the same time, the trust of the old supporters needed to be strengthened and new sponsors needed to be attracted. Through the implementation of various measures, a long-term process successfully reduced the debt significantly. Innovations in the programme,
which comprised a full 14 days as of 1994, afforded the European Forum Alpbach new impulses and organisational reforms provided the basis for further activities.

The rehabilitation – innovations in the programme and the organisational structures and a youth revolt

A first step towards innovating the programme was taken as early as 1992, as the “Alpbach Summer School on European Integration” was introduced, initiated by the Austrian minister of science Erhard Busek. The main goal of the new summer school was to give between 40 and 60 participants an intimate understanding of the issues surrounding European integration. It developed so well within a short period of time that it was soon expanded to include a “Special Course on European integration” and an “Advanced Course on European Law”. The special course was intended for individuals that were confronted with issues of integration in their professional lives, while the perfecting class was geared towards those with an advanced familiarity of European law that wanted to deepen their understanding and keep their knowledge up to date by undertaking an intensive course.

In 1994, when the European Forum Alpbach celebrated its 50th anniversary by hosting a meeting of the presidents of the neighbouring countries and a visit of the designated president of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, the “Europe Week” was introduced as a new structural component. They would only be around for a few years. In 1995, the “Alpbach Health Symposium” (or “Alpbach Health Forum”) was added, which meant that the programme now consisted of an average of ten seminars and plenary meetings, the “Alpbach Portraits” in the first week of the conference, the Technology and Health Symposia in the middle of the conference and the concluding “European Week” (which included a political portion with study groups, as well as the Economic Symposium), in addition to the artistic side programme. 1996 saw the reintroduction of the “Banking Seminar” within the “European Week”, as it had been missing from the programme during the previous years. The seminars included now also blocked courses, which allowed the organisers to heed the participants’ calls for shorter seminars. Thematically, life sciences played an important role.

In 1998, a reform of the bylaws took place and brought about decisive changes to the organisational structures. This development was not only due to Heinrich Pfusterschmid-
Hardtenstein’s determination to make these changes when he assumed his position as president, but also to the increasingly audible calls for reforms. In particular, the then-chairman of the university students’ representation in Innsbruck and eventual founder of the NEOS party, Matthias Strolz, called for a rejuvenation of the Forum, as well as for a stronger representation of women. Through a “Declaration of Love for the Alpbach Spirit Republic”, he invited attendees to discuss the future of the Forum at the Paula von Preradović House on the 23rd of August 1997. The reform of the bylaws not only created new entities – such as the scientific advisory board – but also contributed to the appointment of younger people to fill them. A few years prior, several women were named to the leadership of the Austrian College. This development came during a period that saw only one woman in a leadership position (and only as of 1988/1989).

In 1999, the “Media Symposium” was held for the first time during the European Forum Alpbach, in cooperation with the ORF and the Association of Austrian Newspaper Publishers. Additionally, the event was once again able to offer a cultural highlight in 1999, after the arts and culture programme had been relatively modest in the early 1990s due to cost-saving measures: the premier of the piece “selbstähnlich (self-similar)” for prepared piano by the Tyrolean composer Wolfgang Mitterer, which celebrated the opening of a new conference centre.

A new conference centre – the new Paula von Preradović House

As the Paula von Preradović House, which had been built by the Austrian College in the 1950s and then sold to the Tyrolean government in 1970, had started to show its age, rendering a modern conference operation impossible, the construction of a new conference centre was an essential condition for the continuation of the Alpbach events. A key prerequisite was the willingness of the Tyrolean government to finance construction, supported by the town of Alpbach and the Tyrolean Tourism Board. The construction itself was completed in an astoundingly short period of time, which meant that the European Forum Alpbach was only forced to use a replacement facility, the new Alpbach secondary school, for a single summer (1998) following the demolition of the old Paula von Preradović House. In 1999, the event was able to return back to its usual spot and move into a modern and enlarged conference centre that once again shared its name with Paula von Preradović.
Heinrich Pfusterschmid-Hardtenstein highlighted the new conference centre as an important symbol for the future of the European Forum Alpbach following its preceding crisis. In a concluding report on his presidency, the development of the conference centre was emphasized alongside the financial restoration and the structural reforms through the introduction of the summer schools and the statute reforms of 1998. The “Alpbach Technology Symposium” dominated the media coverage during the 1990s and provided the Forum with some renown during a difficult transitory period.

The European Forum Alpbach in the new millennium – a new heyday

In the new millennium, the European Forum Alpbach experienced a new high point. Under the leadership of two new presidents, the programme underwent a tremendous expansion and the number of participants increased massively. In particular, more and more young people were coming to Alpbach and the event aimed to increase the participation from Southeast and East European states. The Alpbach network was enhanced through the formation of numerous initiative groups.

The presidency of Erhard Busek

Following the presidency of Heinrich Pfusterschmid-Hardtenstein, the European Forum Alpbach was led from 2000 to 2012 by the former vice chancellor and minister of science Erhard Busek (born 1941). Because his parents had spent their vacations in Alpbach as of 1928, he became familiar with the town and the Forum as a child and attended the event in his various political functions. As minister of science he not only had a hand in the financial restoration of the Forum. He also provided an important contribution towards the renewal of the Forum by suggesting the introduction of summer schools. Additionally, he led the scientific advisory board as of 1998.

Programme and participants

Not only was the financial restoration of the Forum completed during Erhard Busek’s presidency, but the fiscal situation was also provided with long-term stability. In terms of the programme, the year 2000 saw the initiation of several expansions. With the introduction of the “Alpbach Talks”, the conference programme that took place throughout the year (in Alpbach, Vienna, Innsbruck and other cities) was significantly enhanced, as was the programme of the European Forum itself.

In 2000, a “Tyrol Day” was introduced in order to discuss issues facing the region and to provide a “display window” for the research and university location Tyrol. In 2001, the “Alpbach Architecture Symposium” were initiated, which were transformed into the “Alpbach Built Environment Symposium” as of 2008/2009, after topics of architecture and urban planning had been dealt with repeatedly at Alpbach events since the 1940s, though never in their own programme stream. “Networking in the EU” was introduced in 2002 (entitled “Lobbying and Networking in the EU” as of 2010) and marked an additional programme item that dealt with the meaning, opportunities to influence and the nature of networking and lobbying necessary for successful EU work. In 2003, the “Reform Symposium” (renamed “Perspectives” in 2011/2012) were introduced to discuss current topics and to develop
perspectives for the future. The establishment of the “University Forum” and the “Universities of Applied Sciences Forum” in 2007 and 2009, respectively, were the next developments. Their introduction was the result of universities and universities of applied sciences wanting to have their own forum in order to present their research and accomplishments in Alpbach. In 2008, the existing summer schools were expanded by a course on “Health Care and Social System” and in 2010 the “Financial Market Symposium” took the place of the traditional banking seminar and provided a platform to discuss issues regarding the financial markets in a larger societal context.

At the end of Erhard Busek’s presidency, the European Forum Alpbach, which had developed into an increasingly tightly scheduled large-scale conference of 17 days, was comprised of numerous programme streams within the following three overarching columns:

1. the summer schools, introduced since 1992,
2. the seminar week as the academically-oriented traditional core at the start of the forum with up to 16 seminars, led by two scholars each
3. and the subsequent Alpbach Symposia (as an umbrella term for the Political, Economic, Technology, Health, Built Environment and Financial Market Symposium, as well as the “Media Symposium”, which was held until 2004, the “Tyrol Day”, the University and University of Applied Sciences Forums and “Networking in the EU”) as separate conferences with panel discussions and study groups and ranging in duration from two to three days.

In addition, the arts and culture programme continued to accompany the Forum and also underwent enlargement. 2000 saw the introduction of a film workshop, which was held until 2011 and complimented the existing exhibits, readings and musical performances. Moreover, as of 2001, new compositions commissioned by the European Forum Alpbach were presented regularly. These were follow-ups to the performance of Gottfried von Einem’s “Alpbacher Tanzserenade” in 1954.

The number of participants, which was at 1 150 in 1997, was growing alongside the expansion of the programme from approximately 2 500 people in 2002 to over 4 000 people (including 677 presenters) from 64 countries in 2011. Along with an enormously enlarged number of attendees, an increasing number of scientists, scholars, business people and artists descended upon Alpbach, including prominent individuals such as the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, James Buchanen once again, EU Commissioner Viviane Reding, the sociologist Saskia Sassen, the Austrian artist Hermann Nitsch, the Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi or the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Giving young people the opportunity to participate at the European Forum Alpbach and providing scholarships on a larger scale to make their attendance possible was an important concern for Busek. Scholarships for participants had been around for quite some time. However, the size of their endowment had been fluctuating throughout the years and, following a low in the 1980s, didn't begin to increase until the 1990s. In the new millennium, scholarships were increased from 413 full and partial scholarships in 2002 to around 700 in 2011, with a particular focus on assisting young people from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Busek’s steadily increasing interest and engagement in the Central European region throughout the years were key contributors to this development, as was his desire to use his presidency of the European Forum Alpbach to bring young participants from former communist states behind the Iron Curtain, as well as from the successor states of the Yugoslav War, to Alpbach.
Initiative groups, clubs and summer schools abroad – the Alpbach network

The strong increase in young participants at the European Forum Alpbach led to an enormous revival of the Alpbach network, which had been initially founded in the 1940s along with the college communities and was reawakened in the 1970s through the Club Alpbach for European Culture.

A key-contributing factor was Strolz’s addition of a first “Initiative Group” in Innsbruck to the (then) existing clubs. With it, he intended to generate a newer, more dynamic and increasingly open generation of the old club idea. This development then engendered the creation of further initiative groups and clubs in Brussels (“Team Europe”), Vienna, Graz and later on in many other cities. The Alpbach network was thereby enlarged to over 30 regional clubs and initiative groups in over 20 countries by 2011/2012. The goal of the initiative groups and clubs was still to carry on the “spirit of Alpbach” throughout the year, to organise
their own events and international network get-togethers and to attract participants to the Forum. Furthermore, they also took on the task of creating their own scholarships for the forum and formed a standing committee on the organisation of a special side programme for scholarship recipients. After many of these initiatives were viewed somewhat critically initially, several of the events that were developed within these formats – such as the Speaker’s Night, the International Evenings or the fireplace chats – have made it onto the official programme. Moreover, the initiative groups and clubs have increasingly exerted influence on the existing programme.

Alongside the groups in Graz, Lower Austria, Vienna and Southern Tyrol, the initiative groups in the Southern and South-eastern European countries have been particularly active over the past few years. Their initiatives include the development and running of summer schools in the Alpbach tradition by the Club Belgrade and the initiative group in Kiev. In 2007, the Club Belgrade organised the “ASSEI Belgrade” (Alpbach Summer School on European Integration in Belgrade) for the first time and has since regularly gathered students from across the region in summer schools, while the “ASSEI Kiev”, organised by the initiative group in Kiev and attended by participants from Belarus, the Baltic States and the Caucasus countries, was only held twice (2010 and 2011). A particularly special project was the exhibition “€uroXibition”, organised by the Club Alpbach Belgrade and the Initiative Group Kosovo. It exhibited photographs taken by ten photographers and highlighted their view of Europe. After the opening in Pristina in December 2011, it was also shown in Belgrade, Alpbach, Brussels and Vienna.

The presidency of Franz Fischler – current developments...

Since 2012, the former minister of agriculture and EU commissioner Franz Fischler has headed the European Forum Alpbach (born 1946) and has ushered in the newest phase of the European Forum Alpbach, one that stretches beyond the present into the future. A native Tyrolean, Franz Fischler first attended the Forum in 1987 as a speaker in the study group on the “Rediscovery of Agriculture and Forestry as the Vital Basis of the Postindustrial Society” and served as vice president of the Forum since 2010. So far there have already been a number of innovations during his tenure as president, which have continued the European Forum Alpbach’s process of change, a development that picked up speed in 2000.

Among the important new programme developments is the introduction of the “Legal Symposium” (which had been prepared by Busek), an innovation that marked the reestablishment of a programme stream that had previously been a part of the Forum in the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, in 2012 the redevelopment of the Tyrol Day brought about an increased focus on Tyrol as a European region. 2014 saw the establishment of the “Alpbach Higher Education Symposium”, which replaced the University and University of Applied Sciences Forums and will now serve as the platform for discussions on the development of the postsecondary educational sector.

The past few years, which have been shaped thematically by the fields of democracy, Europe and sustainability, have been primarily marked by the development of new formats that are meant to focus on the interactions between participants, the acquisition of new competencies and the solving of concrete problems. To this end, “Innovation Labs” have been organised throughout the year with the aim of bringing together diverse groups of people (international “impulse givers”, young decision makers, academics) in order to contribute constructively to the reform dialogue. Additionally, the European Forum Alpbach itself has also seen more interactive formats introduced. Examples include the creation of a
media academy and “Alpbach in Motion”. The media academy is intended to give young journalists from across Europe the chance to gain practical experience, while “Alpbach in Motion” represents a kind of retreat for young economic leaders.

New partnerships were also constructed through the foundation of the “Alpbach-Laxenburg Group” in cooperation with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), which is meant to serve as a new think tank. The group’s work is not limited to Alpbach’s summer event, but is intended to provide the Forum with important impulses, much like the Innovation Labs.

The number of participants has risen once again in recent years and in 2014, across all programme streams of the European Forum Alpbach (the summer schools, the seminar week and the various symposia), totalled 4,551 people from 67 countries. In this context, enabling young people to attend the Forum represents a central concern for Franz Fischler. In 2014, this led to 771 scholarship recipients taking part in the Forum, with the majority of scholarships coming from initiative groups and clubs. These groups and clubs have grown to consist of 36 associations in 25 countries (Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Great Britain, Italy, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Middle East, Montenegro, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine) in 2014 and include a supranational group, the Club Alpbach Senza Confini (Austria – Slovenia – Italy).

People’s desire to flock to the Forum, which still takes place over 17 (in 2013 over 20) days, is clearly greater than ever. Therefore, in 2014 a financial contribution by the province of Tyrol, Southern Tyrol and Trentino, as well as the town of Alpbach and the Board of Tourism Tyrol laid the foundation for an expansion of the conference centre, opened in 1999.
…and a look into the future

The current path of developing new formats, which began in 2012, will be continued in the coming years. In fact the European Forum Alpbach will introduce new innovations in 2015, as two new summer schools will be held. The “Alpbach Summer School of Entrepreneurship” will focus on teaching young researchers to successfully take a scientific idea and develop it into a commercial success, while the “Alpbach Summer School on Facilitation and Participatory Leadership” will train participants to lead group processes in a participatory and solution-focused manner. Additionally, “Culture First” will aim to give art a status boost in 2015 by integrating it into the separate programme streams. Artists will give food for thought at the opening of each symposium, in the form of “interventions”. The expansion of the conference centre is scheduled to be completed by 2016. Another rise in the number of participants thanks to the new conference centre is not, however, intended. Instead, the increase in space is meant to facilitate the new formats and dialogue-focused processes. The topics that will be at the centre of the Forum’s work in the coming years will be established soon.

However, the outlines of what the coming years’ work will entail have already been established. The Forum will continue to foster inter- and trans-disciplinary thinking, as well as international dialogue and European integration. Most of all, the Forum aims to remain a place of encounter for young and old, as well as for interested parties from different backgrounds. Even if the Forum has undergone several changes throughout its history and has introduced numerous new topics and programme streams due to increasing societal complexities and financial necessities, many of its core values have thus remained the same.
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