



Europäisches Forum Alpbach 2012

Generalthema: "Erwartungen – Die Zukunft Der Jugend"

Erfahrungsbericht - Autor: Stefano Giacomoni*

If I were a man of marketing I would say: "Alpbach – A *priceless* experience". That would be my personal payoff to synthesize the amazing time I had in Tyrol, without any shadow of a doubt.

I spent almost six months in Linz as an Erasmus student, and I had the feeling that the two weeks I stayed in Alpbach were like an intensive Erasmus period. Intensive in terms of time, intensive in terms of stuff to manage with every single day, intensive in terms of number of people met, intensive in terms of thoughts risen there. A lot of questions, but few answers, which is not necessarily a negative outcome, since it is important to pose the right questions before giving answers. And I think we posed a lot of right questions up there.

I have to admit I did not know much about the European Forum Alpbach before coming this year, but I find simply a beautiful idea to make smart and highly motivated young people from more than 50 countries meet and discuss about Europe with well-known experts (included Nobel Laureates). I wonder why only once a year...

I also think Alpbach is an ideal place where to set this event. Vienna, Rome, Paris, Brussels would not be the same. Alpbach is less "institutional". It is formal, but also informal. Moreover, life in there is less frenetic than the one in a big city and the surrounding peaceful landscape makes you think. *Think* is what we need the most and we generally do the least, due to our frenzy life.

Why should I recommend an experience like this? Because Alpbach made me think, a lot. For instance, I attended a seminar called "Youth Transitions: Falling Through or Flying Over the Cracks" held by Howard Williamson (Professor of European Youth Policy, Faculty of Business and Society, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd) and Dragana Avramov (Director and Senior Scientific Fellow, Population and Social Policy Consultants, Brussels). It was not my intention to take part in this

seminar, but after the inspiring presentation during the first evening of the Forum I immediately changed my mind. I am currently living some transitions (i.e., I am getting my Master's Degree soon, and then what?) and so I felt this seminar close to my experience. It was useful to focus on the transitions that we, young people, are facing nowadays. It definitely helped to make order in me, and I feel more comfortable about my future now. Thus, maybe Alpbach came at the right moment for me.

I met a lot of bright students from all around the world and thanks to this experience I have broadened widely my Skype contacts list. Looking at the geography of my list, it ranges from the United States to Azerbaijan, from Austria to Vietnam. We talked lively a lot, and even if we have different backgrounds and different cultures, we are not so different. We see the world with the same eyes, sharing high expectations for the future. We did not talk much about fear, preferring topics such as challenges, transitions, and hope.

Someone at this point might think it was a boring 24-hour a day conference. Let me assure you it was not so. Indeed, there were also parties, walks in the mountains, volleyball and chess tournaments, picnics in the meadow, art exhibitions, film projections.

I appreciated also living together with my Austrian colleagues. I would like to make some preliminary remarks about this. I come from Italy, and I received this scholarship when I was in Linz at Johannes Kepler University as an Erasmus student. When I knew that I was nominated to come in Alpbach I was bubbling over with joy, of course, but at the same time I was also a bit worried. Especially when I knew that everyone else was Austrian, because I thought I could have been left out, ignored, not at my ease. But I was completely wrong! I had of course some disadvantages with the language, because my German is a bit more than elementary, but our time was simply great. We did parties, we got on well, life in apartment was pretty good, and, moreover, I took the chance to improve German. I think I spoke more German in two weeks in Alpbach than in six months in Linz! We had a lot of fun, and we are planning a reunion soon.

I want to really thank the "IG Alpbach Oberösterreich" and the sponsors to have given me this great opportunity. I encourage people to take part in the European Forum Alpbach, and in general to take the chance to go abroad, in order to face a different culture, to learn and practice another language, to see things with different eyes, to learn something new, to overcome the clichés.

But my suggestion is GO! Because you can read reports like this of people that went abroad, but some things cannot be written, they can only be experienced. Alpbach is one of them.

Did I bring the “spirit of Alpbach” back home? I guess so, I hope so, because if you do not bring the spirit of Alpbach with you, once you come back it remains just a beautiful conference.



* Final-year student of Engineering and Management at Università degli Studi di Padova, Vicenza, Italy
Exchange student at Johannes Kepler Universität, Linz, Austria
stefano.giacomon@gmail.com