



## A View in the Mirror

### The German-Speaking Regional Meeting in Zurich, 17-19 February 2011

The picturesque Zurichberg-Mountain with its magnificent view over the city was a more than perfect setting for this year's German-Speaking Regional Meeting. More than 50 participants from 12 (!) different jurisdictions filled the auditorium to the last seat. This is a clear sign that AIJA's 40 % German speaking members are very active group.

The seminar, organized by the SCILL-Commission, focussed on what makes excellent attorney's advice. AIJA member and consultant Christoph Vaagt opened the seminar by explaining that excellent consultancy skills cannot be taught, but only experienced. No sooner said than done, we had one-on-one interviews to discuss events in each other's professional experience, which we remember as excellent professional advice. Together, we considered what factors (other than sound legal advice) make a good advisor and what constitutes the basis of a healthy client-attorney relationship.

Christoph Vaagt then explained his "wheel of excellence", discussing the elements "personality development", "soft skills" and "professional skills". On the basis of the elements of this wheel, he encouraged each participant to analyse his and her individual strengths

and weaknesses. Next, we analysed the different approach in customer-client relationships in various other professions, including psychologists and doctors, concluding that some of the techniques used by these professions may also be valuable tools for attorneys.

Christoph shared his views on the types of law firms presently operating in the German, Swiss and Austrian markets, ranging from "routine" firms, "grey hair" firms which presently dominate the market and "rocket science" firms. Christoph's controversial view is that grey hair firms will disappear from the market as there is a clear tendency towards routine firms.

The second day focussed on the development of an attorney's personality in the stages of a typical carrier path. Each of us reflected on the skills that we have acquired at different stages of our carrier and which skills we need to further develop in the years to come. The day was rounded off by one-on-one interviews where we transported ourselves 5 years into the future and looked back at how we developed our skills in that time. Coincidence or not, the bright spring sun came out just at that time, so that we exchanged the meeting room for the terrace.

All in all, the seminar provided an attractive and inspiring mixture of lecture, interaction, group work and self-reflection, in a very open atmosphere inviting to relaxed networking (as always at AIJA). The wish to have a German-Speaking Regional Meeting each year, and to offer similar soft skill topics was expressed more than once.

According to a settled rumour, Swiss people set their clocks by the trains, because they always run on time. After experiencing the perfect Zurich public transport system, I can confirm that this rumour is true. We thus arrived exactly on time for a perfect Friday evening of Swiss Cheese Fondue in a truly original "Chässtube". I would be delighted to share with you what happened thereafter at the "Klub Plaza". However, I am being told that "what happens at AIJA stays at AIJA"; so let me just say the following: We had a great night.

Once again, thank you Oliver, Josef and Christoph and all the other people who made this event happen. We had a wonderful time and I am sure that everyone took home a set of tools to improve their own consultancy skills as well as excellent memories of Zurich.

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