

European Society *for* Research *on the* Education of Adults

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Dear ESREA associates,

This edition of our newsletter comes in a context of great uncertainty and sadness over the effects of the COVID-19 disease outbreak. This virus has already taken too many lives, despite the confinement measures taken in most countries and the tireless efforts of health professionals. But the pandemic has also revealed dysfunctional regimes, ignorant or incapable leadership, has discredited authorities and made inequalities impossible to ignore. It has exaggerated what goes unnoticed or is accepted in normal times. The virus has not been a great leveller. Its victims are more likely to be the older ones and the underprivileged of the society, poor, black or displaced people, people living in ghettos and refugee camps. For some, the effects of the pandemic will be devastating; for others, a spur for re-thinking policies, re-organising work, re-assessing what essential work is and who is providing it, for making education and training fit for the digital age, for improving collaboration in research.

Most of us belong to the privileged ones (sick leave is not an impossible luxury, health care is universal due to well-developed welfare state provisions, work from home is possible) and yet, the virus has affected us in an unprecedented way. How are adult education researchers doing in the midst of the corona crisis? How are they coping in their home offices and with the completely new everyday life? We come from different countries that follow different strategies on how to deal with the virus. From Italy to Sweden our lives haven't been affected in the same way. We asked ESREA members to report on the effects of the pandemic on their lives and work and to share their experiences with our community. Here they are the letters from Corona-Europe.

Yours,
Alexandra

1. Letters from (Corona) Europe

A LETTER FROM ITALY

As inmates, I take my yard time walking, running, and jumping in the slash of light soaking the east wall in my courtyard. At lockdown, two months ago, plants were still sleeping, now they have blossomed and smell good. Blackbird watches me. In this silence, every sound is magnified. The courtyard is small and closed, I cannot see outside, but I hear the ambulance sirens (many!) and bells knelling. Yesterday, a burning smell: where did it come from? The world seems so far, in lockdown. My region, Lombardy, Milano, has the record of cases. People die (two in my extended family, uncountable friends and acquaintances, no funerals, of many we do not even know). I miss my mountains, my freedom, but I am lucky. I have a job, a family. Resources. I wonder what we will learn from this. Public discourse is covid-orientated: the daily bulletin of the infected, dead, healed, the decrees and penalties for transgressors, but not many seem interested to the social, psychological, relational consequences of such a drastic change of life. Can we learn from adversities? How? I ask the people I work with (at a distance): educators, social workers, teachers in adult schools. They tell stories of solitude and desperation. There is not much help for those who live unlivable situations: family violence, unemployment, extreme poverty, homelessness (ironically, someone was fined for violating lockdown).

What scares me most is denial: performing the same old life as if nothing happened. People became hyper-active, just to exist, not to feel the loneliness. Individual responses to fear, uncertainty, are different and unexpected. It is a matter of adult education: the micro, meso and macro factors allowing us to learn, even to transform, thanks to crises.

It started like an unexpected holiday for me. Free time! Then, I ended up (as many others) working more than ever, breath-hold, beached on my sofa 12 hours a day, wearing a nice blouse on old sweatpants. Alone. Off paced, forgetting to eat, brush, bath, piss, breath. A brutalization. Then, my son and husband started smartworking (why do they call it smart?), home became populous, and human contact awakened a sense of care, a desire to talk, discuss, understand. This brought me nearer to my tension, feel my anger and fear... But always breath-holding. Hold tight, it is not for long!

Then, it became clear that it will go on for a while, how much we do not know... and there will be changes. What is coming? Are we prepared to face global systemic change? I am gathering data and ideas about the future. Meanwhile, I work on what I have: myself. After years of research in education, embodied narratives and aesthetical practices, I told myself: you are an adult woman, a learner, you do not need to stay beached on the sofa, but to breath and feel. Go out. And some days ago, walking in that slash of light, I smiled to myself.

Laura Formenti



A LETTER FROM SPAIN

Dear colleagues and friends,

I hope that all of you, your families and friends are fine. I was asked to write some lines about the situation of the corona virus' pandemic in Spain. First, we have to think of all the people who have lost a relative, a friend or their job. We must never forget that this is a painful situation, with a lot of suffering, uncertainties and sometimes solitude. But at the same time we witness situations in which there is plenty of solidarity among people. Another thing that I need to express my homage for some of the essential people in this crisis – at least in my country: the workers of the food shops, pharmacies and supermarkets; the workers of the Public Health System; the police visiting older people or celebrating in the streets

the birthday of the kids; the drivers who bring trucks full of food and other products to the villages and towns; the pilots that are going to and coming from – mostly China – in an amazing shuttle service with airplanes full of sanitary products; the teachers, of course, and a lot of anonymous people that are taking care of us by doing jobs usually not well paid and not socially recognized, as the refuse collectors for instance.

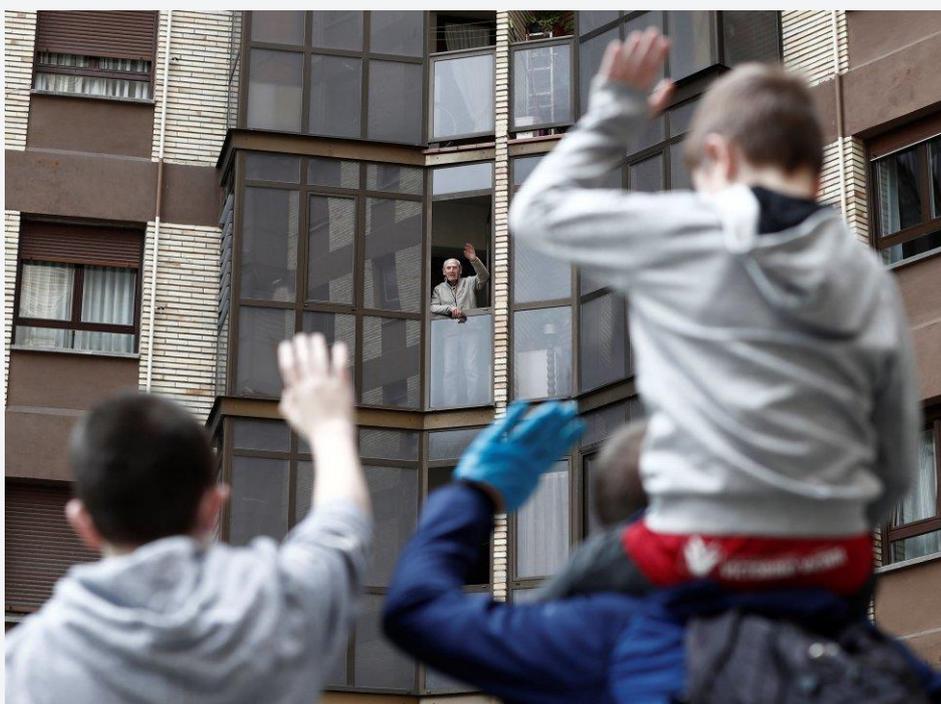
Fortunately, the country is ruled by a Government that has situated the common people in the first place. It is also 'ruled' by scientist. I cannot talk about Spain without naming Dr. Fernando Simon, an expert in epidemiology, a veteran in the fight against Ebola. The two fascist parties in Spain – yes, I know, one is enough but Spain is different: we have a fascist party, and a right-wing party reconverted to fascist one – attack him, and the science, following the Trump' style: dangerous ignorance and demagoguery.

Me? I am fine, thank you. All my relatives and friends are fine. Suddenly, my teaching takes place only digitally. I have no problem with it because, in this second term, I don't have to teach in a classroom, as I am doing the supervision of internships and dissertations, and I am able to deal with it by e-mail and skype.

I was expected to go to Vancouver for the AEGT 2020 Conference next June, but it was cancelled. Apart from the supervision of students, I am writing a paper, some reports about adult education and learning in Spain, and a teaching material about Freire. And, of course, I am reading literature.

I was also asked to send a picture. I like this picture. I can tell you the history behind it: on the 26th of April, it was allowed that children under 14 can return to the streets for walking and playing after almost 6 weeks of confinement. The two kids in the picture – retrieved from the newspaper *El País* – (never forget the sources!) decided to go and visit their grandfather, but they can only do it from the street. The life and joyfulness are coming back to us slowly.

Emilio Lucio-Villegas Ramos



A LETTER FROM GERMANY

I have been asked to reflect from a personal perspective on my life after the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. There are a magnitude of diverse and even ambivalent impressions coming to my mind: Limited access to public life, challenges in making the daily shopping, substantial limits to travelling, following the media coverage, scepticism if all good-minded measures are really effective and needed, trying to understand the arguments of different experts, home-schooling my son, cancelled national and international conferences, more time on the own balcony, growing tomatoes, relaxing experiences, becoming aware of the own privileges, solidarity with other people and other regions/countries, mourning for the dead and their relatives, not being allowed to attend a funeral of a relative because of limited attendance... That list could be even much longer and still far from being comprehensive.

What bothers me most when thinking of ESREA is, if we can continue to work internationally? Perhaps in a few weeks or months we will return very quickly to the old life, maybe with an even increased acceleration. Perhaps with badly damaged economies and new basic needs, but nevertheless Corona might be 'solely' a catastrophe but not a turning point. Actually, I hope for that, but I'm not sure. I see a certain danger that life after the Coronavirus will be much more framed nationally or even regionally for years to come. Who will dare to organize an international conference in near future? Digitalized forms can provide alternatives and support conferences planers to deliver in other forms, but my experience after a myriad of video-conferences is being rather very much aware of the brave new digitalized worlds and

their limits. I see a serious danger that the international dimension of adult education research might be seriously damaged for years.

And I'm bothered by the outlook for adult education itself. The shut-downs were and still are serious hits to many adult education providers and their staff. Many institutions and organizations will be the 'collateral damages' (a terrible phrase) of the measures taken against COVID-19. Other providers and especially digital platforms might be the big winners of the crisis. The landscape of adult education might look a lot differently after the crisis. There might be happening improvements (e.g. forced digitalization), but a lot of work established by years or even by decades of hard work and creativity might be lost. I doubt if this can be rebuilt easily. Especially underprivileged learners might experience the biggest disadvantages and are much harder hit by the crisis. It is rather a myth that the virus hits all people equally hard. Overall, I hope for an ESREA community which is being active now and in the next months and demonstrates that my fears are totally exaggerated. And I'm hoping for an enriched public discussion which perceives and discusses the development from a much, much broader perspective than mainly a rather narrow medical and epidemic disciplinary perspective. Interdisciplinary approaches seem to be desperately needed. Where are they?

Bernd Käßlinger

A LETTER FROM PORTUGAL

In Portugal, these days of isolation due to the Pandemic situation have been a big challenge for our physical and mental health. The load of work almost double for those who are in telework, and having children at home who are having synchronic virtual classes, which make the scenario even worst. Springtime outside is creating conditions for a sudden blooming of all flowers and fruit trees in my small garden. But the daily feelings of fear, incredulity and sadness, along with a naive attitude of waiting for a 'magic solution', that will make the virus disappear before the discovery of the vaccine, make everyday life a mixture of contradictory emotions. After 10 years of fighting against the idea... we decided to adopt a dog from the municipal kennel. So, the family has increased a bit.

The crisis led to worsening many social problems, especially increasing inequalities. More and more families are asking for help to feed their children; specially in more rural regions School Directors are trying to mobilize citizens and enterprises to offer computers to poorer children; communities are showing an internal mobilization capacity, creating public spaces with 'storage boxes', where food or other goods (like agricultural products) can be left for those in need; some conflicts in multicultural housing places have been noticed in the media and this might 'wake up' nationalist and anti-immigration values... which could be a very serious step backwards in maintaining democracy and social peace.

Slowly, Portuguese citizens are getting used to a 'new normality' since Monday, 4th of May. The use of facial masks in public transports and other public spaces and stores, schools, and so on, are required, but in the eyes of people we can see fear and a sense of impotence.

Our higher education courses continue with various adaptations, but several adult education non-formal courses were suspended. Many adults don't have digital literacy competences to continue their training during this period, nor were the institutions prepared to face such a crisis. Considering the older population, poverty and isolation are probably affecting even more those who live alone, especially in low density regions. All the social answers that implied regular meetings for doing things together, as the Universities for Seniors or Day Care Centers, are still closed. Unfortunately, many people are being 'left behind' due to many structural and situational factors.

Being a positive person and always believing in our human capacity to rise after the biggest battles, I sincerely think that the worst is yet to come. We will all be put to the test in the very near future, in our different professions and roles. The ability to overcome the harmful effects of what is happening to the world will certainly depend on the solidary attitude of each one of us, working together to restructure the common good. The economy is important, as the engine of development, but first we must respond to people's needs, ensuring a dignified life for all.

Cristina C. Vieira

A LETTER FROM GREECE

The 2019-20 coronavirus pandemic first appeared in Greece on 26 February 2020. Following the confirmation of the first three cases in Greece, on 27 February all carnival events in the country were cancelled.

From 9 March onwards, our daily lives changed gradually to a lockdown mode since all school trips were banned, all sports games were to be played with no fans attending and all school championships were cancelled.

On 10 March, the operation of all schools, universities, daycare centres and all other educational establishments were suspended. All our courses are taking place by distance since then, with many of our students in the university feeling more obligated to participate than when the courses were face-to-face.

The strictest measures though came on 23 March, when the Greek authorities announced restrictions on all non-essential movement throughout the country. Since that date, movement outside the house was permitted only for seven categories of reasons. This was a radical change to my daily schedule. To leave my home (I was using rubber gloves and mask that I changed regularly during my time outside home) it was required to carry my police ID, as well as a signed attestation or an SMS in which the purpose or category of movement was stated.

My daily routine –besides the fact that I had to cancel all my trips around Europe for project meetings and seminars– did not change much though; I continued doing my research using new tools this time; I read more literature than usual; I watched many theatrical performances online and visited virtual museums and galleries, and I cooked more than I used to.

Starting on 4 May, movement will be free without the need to send a text message or carry a certificate indicating the valid reason for being outside, but only within one's regional unit of residence. The use of face masks will be mandatory for employees and customers in all closed places as well as in public transport.

Overall, the measures put in place in Greece are among the most proactive and strictest in Europe and have been credited internationally for having slowed the spread of the disease and having kept the number of deaths among the lowest in Europe. My immediate feeling with the nationwide lockdown was that of disappointment on how little we humans learn from our past. I sincerely hope this pandemic will make us refocus on what our real needs and priorities are, and behave in a more humane and benevolent manner; to our fellow humans and the environment. I missed to say that the air was fresher during the lockdown...

George K. Zarifis



Omprelles, Zogopoulos, Thessaloniki

A LETTER FROM CZECH REPUBLIC

The rise and rapid evolution of the global pandemic were met with extreme surprise and stress in the Czech Republic, at least initially. The ensuing developments confirmed many expectations about the potentials and limits of different areas of social life. I appreciate that social analysis, which is my profession, provided me with at least some ground under my feet in reflecting the situation. In spite of that, my reflection is necessarily highly subjective and provisional.

To many of us, new and intensive light has been shed on the fact that we are living in a society (with its power dimensions) and that one should not underestimate government and politics in the broadest sense of the terms. There is now one more reason to believe that society is not isolated from nature. Our fragility (both personal and collective) has manifested itself as an important trait of the human condition. One can newly appreciate the extent to which social reality is socially constructed and the role in it played by emotions and values. Paradox is my basic impression with regard to values and

behaviour. We have seen a surprising wave of solidarity, on one hand, and intolerance to all those deemed to be (potential) sources of contagion, on the other hand.

'Sociological imagination' now seems more natural with respect to a number of social institutions, including the family, school, science, culture, work, or the socially regulated space (especially in our cities). One gratifying observation is how people have missed culture and mastered alternative, ICT-based ways of keeping in touch with culture. I have mixed impressions regarding science (due to conflicting instances of expertise).

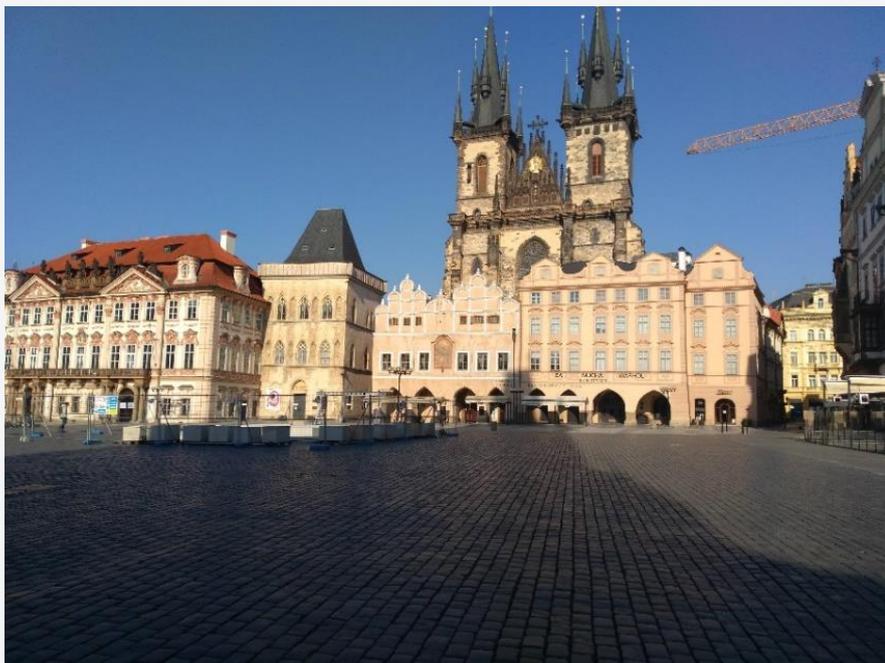
In the broadly defined area of care, a reassessment of the dominant interpretation of merit has proved to be necessary, not only in terms of gender relations (from health care to social services to the family).

Dwindling job opportunities are increasingly seen as a serious problem. Issues of non-standard forms of employment and poverty of a large percentage of Czech households are coming to the fore.

In the realm of education, the motif of deschooling society has gained traction as schools in their traditional forms are no longer taken for granted. There has been increased interest in 'learning networks', adults' mutual learning (not only) on a non-commercial basis. The 'tests of character' experienced in intimate relationships have brought new learning opportunities. As a result, the boom of online courses of music, dance, cooking and such has been paralleled by advice on how partners can protect their relationships. Activities of non-formal leisure education have gone online, perhaps mainly because they do not want to go out of sight of their (potential) participants pending the return to 'normality'. Adult educators who have lost their jobs for lengthy time periods are now facing serious difficulties. They exemplify the state of increasingly uncertain prospects in the entire personal services industry. Intensive workplace learning has affected and will continue to affect many occupations, health care and social services perhaps most strongly so.

The question remains to what extent we will be able to deal with the world as a whole in future – since it is a characteristically interdependent world that we live in. Both a question mark and an exclamation mark are hanging over our ability to overcome presentism and populism with their tendency to downplay long-term vital problems such as the global climate change.

Martin Kopecký



Deserted Old Town Square in Prague where a replica of a mid-17th century plague column has been constructed since the beginning of 2020



(Ab)normal scene for March or April 2020

A LETTER FROM SERBIA

This is the 50th day of the state of emergency in Serbia. The fourth one of my life. I clearly remember the one in 1999, during the NATO bombing. I was 15. This one was announced without the decision from the Parliament. As it was explained, it had to be done quickly for “the good of the nation”. Out of 50 days of the state of emergency, I spent 28 days in self-isolation as on 16th of March I came back from Kiev. Serbia did not introduce lockdown, but curfew, meaning that citizens could not leave the house at all, first from 8 pm until 5 am, and then from 5 pm to 5 am. However, it was completely forbidden to older citizens (65+) to leave their home. During weekends it was noticed that people were using their free time to go to the parks, and citizens were proclaimed reckless and disobedient, the characteristics that are often uncritically considered to be innate to the people from Balkan, following the postcolonial analysis of Maria Todorova. Consequently, it is often heard that “only strict measures can discipline childish Serbian people”, who in spite of recommendation leave their houses. This belief was misused by Serbian government to further introduce draconian measures. Therefore, they decided that we cannot leave the house from Saturday 1 pm, until Monday 5 am. However, even after this unusually long curfew, it was noticed that on Saturday morning the streets were full, without taking responsibility for having people, in fear, go out to buy groceries. Therefore, next weekend the curfew lasted from Friday 5 pm until Monday 5 am, and during the Orthodox Easter from Friday 5 pm until Tuesday 5 am. However, people can walk their dogs from 11 pm until 1 pm. Recently it was allowed for older people to walk around their houses during the curfew for 1 hour. Any critical comment to the introduced measures was dismissed with the argument that in the corona time we should not be political. On the 1st of April, a journalist was arrested on charges of causing panic and unrest for reporting on the difficult situation in the Clinical Centre of Vojvodina.

We feel that our brains are put to boil. Betting Centres and gyms were open on 27th of April. We still cannot leave the house after 6 pm. The citizens have begun to rebel. Every day at five past eight we make noise from our windows¹. This act of rebellion was famous during Milošević regime, and now we are doing it again. We learn and act by making noise, to be heard, to express our anger, to express our desire to live in a democratic society, and above all, to feel togetherness and to acknowledge our presence in a public space. It is a kind of education through noise. Media in Serbia are not free, but we are finding a way to be heard from within isolation.

Maja Maksimović

¹ [The video is made by the author of the text from the apartment window on the last day of the curfew.](#)

2. Announcements – Conferences, Network Meetings and Calls for papers

ESREA Conferences

June 4-7, 2020 – Vancouver, Canada

International Research Conference at the University of British Columbia. (ESREA as a partner organisation)

Adult Education in Global Times.

<https://edst.educ.ubc.ca/aegt2020/>



June 25-28, 2020 – Athens, Greece

4th Biennial Conference of the Network Transformative Process in Learning and Education (TPLE) and the Hellenic Adult Education Association.

What we know and don't know about transformation: Building a new community in research and praxis.

<http://www.esrea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ESREA-TPLE-2020-First-call-for-papers-2019-10-31.pdf>



October 15-17, 2020 – Faro, Portugal

ESREA Conference of the Network gender and Adult Learning.

Gender and adult education in the era of social and cultural changes in Europe: (new) risks and challenges.

<http://esrea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/1st-CFP-Gender-and-adult-education.pdf>

Call for Cases

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), has launched a **call for cases on technology-enhanced literacy learning and education for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons** (IDPs). For more information visit:

1. Project webpage: <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/call-cases-innovative-literacy-learning-and-education-refugees-migrants-and-internally>
2. SNS <https://twitter.com/UIL/status/1257211714220838912>

The call (survey) is available in three languages, Arabic, English and English.

Call for Papers: Adult and Continuing Education's Response to the Global Covid-19 Pandemic

The journal *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* is planning a special issue on the field's response to the global pandemic. Submissions can be made here: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/nhaehrd>

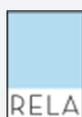
3. Extraordinary General Assembly

The ESREA extraordinary General Assembly, which took place as online ballot (04.03. – 28.04.2020), came to the decision to amend the Articles of Association. From now on the Board of the Society consists of the Chair, the Vice-Chair and the Secretary. Chair and Vice-Chair may be elected for no more than two consecutive periods of 3 years each. Andreas Fejes, Marcella Milana and Alexandra Ioannidou constitute the Board, as required by the German Civil Code.

The amendment was necessary to better fit the legal conditions to which ESREA is subject due to the move to Germany and ensures the smooth operation of everyday business of the Society.

Thanks again to all members who casted their vote!

4. RELA



The **European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA)** is a refereed academic journal creating a forum for the publication of critical research on adult education and learning. RELA is published on behalf of ESREA and can be found at our webpage: <http://www.esrea.org/publications/rela/>

Call for **open** papers here: http://www.rela.ep.liu.se/documents/Call_for_Open_Papers.pdf

5. Publications

All publications of the ESREA networks can be found at: <http://esrea.org/publications/books-from-the-networks/>

6. How to become a member of ESREA e.V.

As a member you pay a reduced participation fee for all ESREA events and you will receive regular information on current research on adult education via the ESREA mailing list and the ESREA newsletter. As an individual member you have the right to vote (by online postal ballot) at the annual general meeting.

In the case of institutional membership the following applies: every single employee of a member institution is entitled to participate in ESREA activities at a reduced fee. However, at the general assembly, each institutional member has only one vote.

If you want to become a member the process is the following:

1. Download the membership application form at: <http://esrea.org/about-us/membership/>
2. Fill in the form and e-mail it to: ESREAsecretary@die-bonn.de.
3. If your membership application is approved by the chair you will receive a confirmation by mail within two weeks.
4. We will then issue an invoice for your membership fee: The fee is 50 Euros for individual members, 25 Euros for students and PhD students and 150 Euros for institutional members. **Payment of membership fees can only be made through an international or EU bank transfer to the account indicated below. Cheques are not accepted. Any foreign bank fees are to be borne by the applicants.**

ESREA bank details for payment of membership fee:

Bank: Sparkasse KölnBonn

Account holder: European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) e.V.

Account number: 1934820174

IBAN: DE73 3705 0198 1934 8201 74

BIC: COLSDE33XXX

VAT Number: DE324070933

7. Forthcoming newsletters

Deadlines for 2020

- August 10, 2020
- November 13, 2020

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