



Adult Educators in Time of Crisis: Well-Being, Changes in Identity and Professional Practice in European Adult Education

7th Biennial conference

of the ESREA Research Network for Adult Educators, Trainers
and their Professionalisation (ReNAdET)



29 October 2021 (10:00 CET-16:00 CET)

**Organised by ESREA ReNAdET
and Open University of Cyprus**

Invitation for paper proposals

The principle of ESREA-ReNAdET biennial meetings is to bring together researchers, scholars, and expert practitioners in the field of adult education and vocational education and training, to present and exchange their ideas on the role/s of adult educators and vocational trainers in Europe, as well as to discuss issues relevant to their professional status, identity, learning, and development.

This year's one-day extraordinary meeting suggests an emphasis on the impact of crisis on adult educators' practices, roles, and well-being. Any type of crisis –be it natural disaster, health pandemic, social, political or economic disruption– is exacerbating pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable adults (i.e. those living in poor or rural areas, girls, refugees, persons with disabilities and forcibly displaced persons) to continue their learning, affecting at the same time the roles and practices of the professionals involved. It is now more than obvious that COVID-19 caused a global crisis that has rendered social inequalities –related, but not limited, to disability, employment status, immigration status, income, language, race, and social-class– more visible and piercing.

More specifically, the current COVID-19 crisis has resulted in unparalleled changes of teaching and learning practices in our field (new learning modalities, significant increase in online teaching), as well as in social and professional life and well-being for those immediately involved (work status, lack of direct face-to-face interaction with learners, revision of existing roles and practices). Much of the training that had started as face-to-face in classroom environments is now



being pursued online. Furthermore, individuals are being encouraged to use the time freed up by short-time work schemes to take up new training.

From the onset of the pandemic, adult education and training professionals were immediately tasked with implementing distance learning modalities, often without sufficient guidance, training, or resources. In many contexts, professional development has moved online or been disseminated via telephone and video applications. Web-based class meetings and messaging applications have become useful tools and new ways of communicating with learners and the education community, but some marginalized adult educators and learners may have missed out on such support. As such, the current COVID-19 crisis provides a powerful test of the potential of adult education professionals. It also highlights the key limitations in our field, including for example the prerequisite of adequate digital skills, computer equipment and internet access to undertake training online, the difficulty of delivering traditional work-based learning online, and the struggle of teachers used to classroom instruction. Among numerous concerns, the social and economic vulnerability of many adult learners has been dramatically foregrounded, highlighting the social inequalities that continue to characterize much of our field. As many services close and social distancing practices continue, difficult-to-reach and underserved populations face further obstacles to adult education.

In response, our own engagement with teaching has largely shifted online in the last year. This situation yields risks as well as opportunities for our profession. We live in a society with a pernicious digital divide, and while technology might be a suitable way to facilitate adults' learning in some circumstances, not everyone has reliable access to an Internet connection nor the digital literacy skills to engage in self-directed learning in a virtual environment. eLearning can further serve to disadvantage the most vulnerable groups in society. The current situation has also been challenging for many of us who have research and service responsibilities in addition to teaching. Although some can work from a home office, access to critical resources and competing personal and family responsibilities may considerably affect productivity. Many of our colleagues may not feel well-prepared for digital education, and institutions and workplaces might have to engage with online modes of working and telecommuting more than they are accustomed to.

It will be important to capture and learn from these experiences. They may offer prospects for research. It will also be fascinating to see how far learning and work shifts toward online and distance modalities once the world begins to recover from COVID-19.

Some of the questions to be addressed in the **7th meeting of ReNAdeT** are the following:

- 1- To what extent has the current health crisis affected the status, roles and practices of adult education professionals?
- 2- What will adult education's place be in responding to the massive reorganization of the European workforce?
- 3- In what state will we find our universities and adult education centers?

- 4- Will they offer more online courses, or increase the proportion of digital literacy skills as part of their learning programmes?
- 5- How are adult educators themselves responding to and coping with this situation?
- 6- Are freelancers and those independent training specialists well protected?
- 7- What will the impact of the crisis be on different service modalities?

Having the COVID-19 pandemic as a triggering example of a crisis with immediate impact on our profession, the idea is to discuss the kind of support adult educators need in order to respond effectively to the various challenges placed due to the pandemic but also any type of crisis, as well as to deliberate on the expected new roles and practices that may be required in the near future by the professionals in our field.

A **limited number of papers** (max. 20) will be presented. Interested contributors may choose – but are not limited to – from the following shortlist of sub-themes:

- Adult educators' readiness to respond to extreme measures due to COVID-19 crisis (institutional lockdowns, working in online context, change of teaching and learning routines).
- Development of professional and social identities of adult education professionals in periods of crisis (change as mode of survival in the field, setting different priorities that may contradict current identities and roles).
- Personal histories of change and transformation during periods of crisis (new roles, new practices, new visions of adult education realities).
- Adult educators' personal and professional well-being (disruption of personal and professional routines, online teaching from home and turning personal space into workspace, fear of unemployment).
- New modalities of adult teaching and learning (on-line learning, virtual settings, development of digital skills).
- Research during periods of crisis (new aspects of field research in adult education settings).
- Addressing the digital divide in adult education settings (access of adults with low digital skills, raising motivation for participation in online programmes).
- National and European adult education policies and ad-hoc policy interventions that affect the role, competencies and activities of adult educators during COVID-19 (existing or planned interventions that may support and/or empower adult educators and adult learners at risk of social exclusion).
- Focus on gender (for both learners and educators) through empowerment activities during periods of crisis.



Guidelines for submission of paper proposals and mode of delivery

Proposals are invited for full papers only. Paper proposals should be sent as an attached file [in *.doc, or *.docx, format]. They should not exceed one A4 or 1000 words (max. 2 pages); they must include a title and keywords, but not the author/s name/s, affiliation or institution/s.

Please send **in a separate sheet** your professional/personal data (name, institutional affiliation, phone, fax and mail). All abstracts for paper proposals **must be submitted by June 1 2021** to the following email addresses: gzarifis@edlit.auth.gr; maria.gravani@ouc.ac.cy and esrea.re-nadet@yahoo.com.

All paper proposals will be blind reviewed by the scientific committee. Acceptance will be confirmed by **August 29th 2021**. Paper presentations must not exceed 15 minutes in time length.

Important Dates

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| ➤ 1st June 2021 | Deadline for submission of paper proposals |
| ➤ 1st July 2021 | Registration begins (no fees or charges for participants) |
| ➤ 29th August 2021 | Acceptance of paper proposals will be announced |
| ➤ 26th September 2021 | Final deadline for registration (no fees or charges for participants) |
| ➤ 10th October 2021 | Deadline for submission of the final paper (5000 words max.) |

Scientific Committee

- Bonnie Slade, University of Glasgow, UK.
- Carmel Borg, Malta University, Malta.
- George K. Zarifis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki-AUTH.
- Larissa Jögi, Tallin University-TU, Estonia.
- Maria Brown, Malta University, Malta.
- Maria Gravani, Open University of Cyprus-OUC, Cyprus.
- Michael Murray Maynooth University, Ireland.
- Regina Egetenmeyer, Würzburg University, Germany.
- Susanne Lattke, German Institute for Adult Education-DIE, Germany.

Organising Committee

- Maria Gravani, Open University of Cyprus
- Nearchos Nearchou, Open University of Cyprus
- Constantina Savvidou, Open University of Cyprus
- Christiana Ioannou, Open University of Cyprus
- Andri Piliri, Open University of Cyprus
- Eleni Papaioannou, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports & Youth.



Conference Arrangements

Language

The language of correspondence and presentations in this meeting is **English**.

Venue

Teleconferencing platform will be announced by **OUC**.

Participation Fee

The conference is **free of charge** for all participants.

Registration

A conference registration page will be available by **1st July 2021**. It will be accessed from the ReNAdET website <https://renadet.weebly.com/>

Contact

For questions and expression of interest, please contact:

- gzarifis@edlit.auth.gr
- Maria.gravani@ouc.ac.cy
- esrea.renadet@yahoo.com

More information about the conference will soon be available at:

<https://renadet.weebly.com/>



Organising institutions

ESREA (www.esrea.org): The European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) promotes and disseminates theoretical and empirical research on adult education and learning in Europe as well as debates on education and training practices within the field of adult education and learning. Network meetings such as this conference are places for exchange of research and discussion.

OUC (<https://www.ouc.ac.cy/index.php/en/>):

The Open University of Cyprus (OUC) is a public university offering exclusively open and distance education. It was established in 2002 and enrolled its first students in 2006. The OUC's mission is to open up higher education to all and promote lifelong learning, allowing everyone to tailor their educational path, irrespective of age, time, location or life circumstances. With students in 60+ countries, programmes offered in Greek and in English at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels in both traditional and cutting-edge scientific fields organized across three Faculties (Humanities & Social Sciences, Pure & Applied Sciences, Economic Sciences & Management), OUC is developing into a leading institution in promoting open & distance education in Europe. Being a research-oriented institution, the OUC hosts a number of research labs that operate with national & European funding, participates in several nationally and internationally funded research and development projects, and is a member of several renowned university networks.

ESREA Membership

Membership of ESREA is open to all individuals and institutions engaged or interested in research on the education of adults and adult learning. To become a member of ESREA fill out the form available at: www.esrea.org/membership and send back to the secretariat according to the address on the form.