

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

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**“There have been as many plagues in the world as there have been wars, yet plagues and wars always find people equally unprepared. When war breaks out people say, *it won't last, it's too stupid*. And war is certainly too stupid but that doesn't prevent it from lasting.”**

**Albert Camus, The Plague**



image: Alekos Fasianos

# 1. A plague and a war

Alexandra Ioannidou,  
ESREA Secretary

The past two years we have been experiencing both, a plague and a war. A plague that turned out to be pandemic and now is becoming endemic. And a war in Europe. And we were equally unprepared. We thought that a war could never happen again, not on this continent. We thought that we kept war imprisoned in thick history books and had given the keys to democracy and enlightenment.

At the secretariat we are stunned by the Russian attack and deeply saddened by the suffering currently being inflicted upon the people of Ukraine. We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine who are currently fighting for their freedom and their fundamental rights for self-determination in a sovereign state in Europe and are suffering great losses. We also stand in solidarity with the Russian civil society, who are themselves horrified by the invasion in the Ukraine and are publicly speaking out - under extreme danger - against Putin's leadership's course of war. The open letter of Russian scientists published a few days after the invasion has disappeared from the web. We are aware that besides the terrible human suffering, this war will lead to setbacks in international scientific cooperation.

On March 1, 2022, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on Russia's aggression against Ukraine (2022/2564(RSP)) by 402 votes to 163, with 89 abstentions. The resolution calls for "*...the immediate suspension or termination of funding for all EU-funded research and innovation cooperation programmes with Russia and the suspension of interregional programmes.*"

The text further states:

*"... The EU should reconsider its current [Partnership and Cooperation Agreement \(PCA\) with Russia](#) and limit cooperation to areas of common interest. Global challenges such as climate change, energy security, digitalization, artificial intelligence and counterterrorism require selective cooperation. Closer cooperation will only be possible if Russia fully implements the Minsk agreement to end the war in eastern Ukraine and begins to comply with international law."*

Research Commissioner Mariya Gabriel announced on March 2022 that the EU Commission had stopped all payments to Russian entities involved in EU research and innovation projects. The EU Commission would also not launch any new cooperation projects with Russian universities, research institutes and companies. The signing of further contracts has been suspended until further notice.

We deeply regret the consequences of these decisions for our Russian colleagues and partners. But we condemn the Russian aggression which has already cost lives on both sides and has changed the lives of millions of Ukraine people.

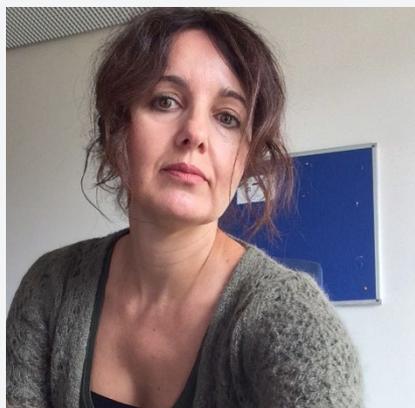
## **News from the European Research Area**

On 18 January, the European Commission published a guide providing advice to national research institutions and universities on how to deal with foreign interference. The guide can help EU universities and research institutions develop a comprehensive strategy to address risks and challenges from abroad, covering the most important areas, which are divided into four categories: Values, Governance, Partnerships and Cybersecurity. The proposals to combat foreign interference are not

binding but highlight some ways in which higher education institutions and research organisations in the EU can preserve their core values, including academic freedom, and protect staff, students, research outputs and assets from potential threats in the context of international cooperation.

The European Commission has published [a working paper](#) on previous EU investment in research and innovation and its contribution to Covid 19 research results. By linking internal and external data, about 3,000 relevant publications could be identified. The analysis of publications from EU-funded projects concentrated on three questions: (i) to which Covid-19-related publications has EU funding contributed? (ii) what are the main characteristics and subject area of each publication? (iii) what are the main findings on Covid-19 to which EU funding has contributed?

EU research ministers adopted a new policy agenda for the European Research Area (ERA) 2021-2024. Among the planned initiatives is the reform of research evaluation in the EU. The reform should not only focus on the direct research performance of individual scientists, but also include research careers and research institutions. The European Commission will implement the new initiative with the help of a so-called Coalition of the willing, consisting of 20 research institutions, research funding organisations and national evaluation agencies. The initiative will be launched at the beginning of February 2022 and is to develop concrete reform proposals by the end of the year. There is criticism though from science, as it is feared that the initiative could lead to a shift in competencies in European research policy and that the evaluation of research performance in the future would no longer be solely science-driven but would be subject to the primacy of politically motivated research paradigms.



## 2. ESREA's Thirty years making hope practical and despair unconvincing; a view from the life history margins

Linden West,  
Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

### Introduction

Thirty years is a long time in European history, for adult education scholarship and to plant progressive seeds of hope. Thirty years brings echoes too of Europe's darker angels: of religious wars, of 1914-45, and the Cold War. 1992 however was a time, to paraphrase Raymond Williams, to make hope practical and despair unconvincing. A good moment for adult education and collaborative scholarship, if also the beginnings of neo-liberal ascendancy. ESREA's history is rich and complex but often written from the centre, about policy developments, or the general organisation of adult education. This short, personal essay brings another perspective: from the margins of intense involvement with one network. The view is partial, if also informed by time on the Steering Committee and involvement with other Networks.

I first participated in the Life History and Biography Network at its second meeting in Vienna in 1994. Vienna for me was a special place: a focus of part of my first history degree. The course encompassed the eclectic spirit of life and energy among Jewish intellectual Mitteleuropans spanning the German speaking worlds, at the turn of the twentieth century. A world of Freud, Kafka, Karl Kraus, Klimt, Walter Benjamin and others. A world soon to be enveloped by the dark Angel of history.

My mind was distracted in Vienna, between the intensity of my first meeting and visiting places where people like Freud worked. 19 Bergasse, for instance, although most of the ancient artefacts inspiring Freud were long gone, as was the famous couch (I was training to be a psychoanalytic psychotherapist at the time). Freud fled Vienna in 1938 as the Nazi jackboots entered the city. The Network meeting was redolent with hope and committed people, if also reminders of a troubled past. There was Agnieszka Bron whose own history embodied European trauma, forbidden as she had been to return home to her native Poland after a year's study in the United States. She was labelled a rebel and troublemaker because she supported Solidarnosc. She was separated from her young son and husband, eventually to reunite in Sweden.

Women were well represented at the various meetings: including Gunilla Härnsten, Vittoria Gallina, Elisabeth Brugger, Christine Josso, Edmée Ollagnier, Barbara Merrill, Marianne Horsdal, Kirsten Weber and Laura Formenti to name but a few. The difficult history between Germanic speaking and Francophone peoples provided one compelling backcloth. Colleagues like Gaston Pineau, Pierre Dominicé, Wilhelm Mader and Peter Alheit, and myself, were born just before, during or at the end of the Second World War. The European project seemed an imperative to us. History mattered, while life history added depth, texture and singularity to the interpretive process.

### **Breakdown in Brussels**

Pierre, Peter, and Agnieszka convened the Network. Pierre liked Peter's metaphor of learning as 'patchworking', encapsulating the idea of educational biography as a quest for meaning making across diverse experience. Peter was already a renowned sociologist. He wrote of that feeling we have of being the organisers of our lives. We plan for the dream job, political careers, homebuilding or seeking a good match. We can live under an impression that our lives are in our own hands, but this is partly illusion. Fate deals blows, like illness, a loved one dying or losing a job; or for Freud, home and country. Peter and Pierre eventually disagreed over the direction of the Network. Pierre focused more on individual lives and their learning potential, while Peter asked what biographies can teach us academically of the workings of the social order, within a sceptical academy. 'Great Britain should come to the rescue', declared Pierre, and I took over convening.

### **Snowing in Anghiari**

It was snowing in Anghiari, the city of autobiography, in Tuscany, at the 2005 Network Conference. Here lay another tension. Some southerners complained of northern ignorance of the conceptual and research traditions of countries like Italy. Laura Formenti talked of an Italian approach to biography in adult education, both narratively focused and systemically inspired, mindful of two parallel processes: the making of a narrative self through portraiture, life histories, myths, legends; and of a relational self through the qualities of interpersonal communication. Hers was a systemic view of life and learning and she also insisted on changes to the conference culture: more dance, music, movement, voice, collage, drawing, painting, less intellectual austerity. Some of those from darker climes felt uncomfortable but the Network flourished.

### **'Steering' committee?**

'ESREA is its Networks', many insisted. There were tense times between the Steering Committee and particular Networks, partly structural as Network representation weakened because of an electoral system in which they had little direct purchase. The Committee did good things – not least establishing the journal RELA, but sometimes it acted more like a Network in its own right, pursuing a distinct agenda. It is good that ESREA, later, became more harmonious and cooperative.

And now 2022 marks a year where, in general, critical, collaborative scholarship is more difficult, civility and democracy are in decline while populist currents segue into the dark seas of fascism. Notwithstanding, the LHBN, along with others, made hope practical and despair unconvincing in small and beautiful ways. Its scholarship illuminated the profound if contingent potentialities of learning lives. Good seeds got planted in the 1990s, blossoming into continent-wide resources of hope.



Linden West

Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

# 3. ESREA as a relevant forum for scientific development of (young and not so young) researchers

Paula Guimarães ,  
Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal

I am sharing my personal and professional experience as a researcher in adult education and the role ESREA has had in my development. My purpose is to argue that becoming an ESREA member has been a relevant experience, allowing me to develop transformative learning as a researcher. For this purpose I am writing briefly on two different moments in my scientific and professional development, following a timeline in my career as an adult education researcher in which ESREA has been central. My ultimate aim is to tell young researchers, namely those finishing their PhD, that ESREA is a relevant forum for developing knowledge and skills in adult education research.

## **A first moment**

### **Getting to know a scientific field that I didn't know about**

After finishing a higher education degree in International Relations at the University of Minho, I got a job at the Unit for Adult Education of the University of Minho in 1992. Some of my professional duties included research. I didn't know much about adult education by then, except that it could include literacy programs and second-chance education courses in regular schools. During the ten following years I had the chance to read about adult education as the University of Minho had and still has today a very good library in adult education. I was also able to join several international research project on policies in adult education, non-formal / popular education and learning in the workplace. In several meetings I attended within these projects, I met colleagues that were then establishing ESREA and attempting to build a specific identity for an organisation that is today a reference in adult education research. These were colleagues with whom I shared (and still share today) reflections on adult education as a scientific field, such as Licínio C. Lima (who was my boss and my Masters' and PhD supervisor also), Barry J. Hake, Henning Salling Olesen and Michal Bron Jr., among others, as well as Peter Jarvis.

My first participation in a international research project was a UNESCO report on the state-of-art of adult education in Portugal, coordinated by Barry J. Hake. The first interviews I have ever made to Portuguese researchers in adult education were done within this project in 1993. These interviews allowed me to grasp the specificities of my country in this particular scientific field. I had the chance to read scientific articles and books of English and French speaking researchers. Their discussions were pertinent but it was not always easy to use their theoretical frameworks and concepts when considering the Portuguese historical development, especially in popular education during the 1970's, after the Democratic Revolution. This project was a very good opportunity for me to reflect on theoretical approaches, methodological challenges, the specificities of the Portuguese situation and of the national theoretical discussion and the variety of practices to be studied that adult education included.

My first attendance of an ESREA event was the triennial conference that took place in Lisbon in 2001. I was giving a paper on adult education in Portugal after this country became a member of the European Union in 1986. I was trying to discuss the influence of such supranational organisation in national public policies. After presenting my paper Tom Schuller (that I had never met before) asked me what was my research question and the theoretical framework for my paper. I had finished my Masters' in adult education in 1999 on learning in the workplace, but was obviously facing difficulties in setting a research question and a theoretical framework to interpret data and develop an argument in policy studies. I was embarrassed but this question committed me to keep on doing research. Becoming a member of ESREA afterwards and meeting on a regular basis other adult education researchers was important for my identity building as a researcher and becoming more specialised in a specific domain of adult education, such as policy studies.

In 2005, I was asked to stand for the ESREA steering committee. I started then to join the steering committee meetings, held in very different higher education institutions all around Europe. I had the chance to discuss different theoretical and methodological issues with several colleagues from different countries. With António Fragoso and Emilio Villegas-Ramos I shared several insights and positions that we used to call "reflections from the Southern coalition" as we were Portuguese and Spanish, countries from the South of Europe and we understood the specificities of adult education in the Iberian peninsula. This was an opportunity to enlarge my knowledge and skills in research, to understand differences in doing research when considering the North and the South (of Europe and of the world), to feel more confident in presenting and defending arguments within theoretical and methodological discussions.

## **A second moment**

### **Building my identity as an adult education researcher: writing my PhD and positioning myself in scientific terms**

It was in August 2005 that I joined the summer school of the Graduate School in Lifelong Learning - University of Roskilde, in Denmark. By then I met senior researchers such as Betina Dausien and Kirsten Weber, among other. Their reflections on adult education were very innovative to me. It was then that I also met other PhD students such as Andreas Fejes, Martin Kopecky and Rosanna Barros (that I already knew as we were both PhD students at the University of Minho) and understood that all the loneliness that I felt, all the troubles and questioning were common also among other students. This summer school showed me that my first PhD project was too wide as Stafan Larsson, the moderator of my group in this summer school, argued when I presented my paper. I intended to discuss democratic adult education in public policies in Portugal after the Democratic revolution in 1974. After this summer school attendance I narrowed the focus of my PhD based on a clearer study object. A narrower scope of my research made it easier to work on a specific theoretical framework and allowed me to collect data that I was capable of interpreting. After a few years, I was able to finish the PhD and to apply to a different job in another higher education institution in Portugal. In 2012 I changed job and became assistant professor at the Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa (Portugal). After 9 years of joining the steering committee, I started a less engaged involvement ESREA's management activities as I didn't stand again for election for the steering committee. Since then I have a more committed and regular work in adult education research. During the last decade, my attendance of networks and triennial conferences as well as the publishing in RELA and in books edited by ESREA members have been relevant opportunities for keeping on researching in adult education and for publishing my research. It became clear that my

research interests were mainly devoted to adult education policies, but that I was also interested in some other topics that I have worked on with other ESREA members from many different countries. Scientific writing has been to me a significant process to reflect critically on research I and others develop and on how I and the others do it. In parallel, conferences' attendance and scientific writing in co-authorship have also allowed me to observe the development of researchers and understand changes in research topics and methodologies, and to grasp the relevance ESREA activities have in training researchers. The feeling of belonging to a (research) community of practice is a significant outcome of joining ESREA activities. Additionally, ESREA is a research organisation that sets the ground for research collaboration and for the critical understanding of adult education on an Western and global scale. This has been very important for me; and it is also important for other (young and not so young) researchers.



Photo – Rosanna Barros, myself, Andreas Fejes and Martin Kopecky (that joined in 2005 the University of Roskilde PhD summer school) with Henning Salling Olesen (in the. centre), at the ESREA triennial conference (Belgrade, in Serbia, September 2019).

## 4. New Faces in ESREA



The ESREA Network Policy Studies in Adult Education has a new co-convenor: Pepka Boyadjieva (The Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academic of Sciences) will support the three co-convenors Rosanna Barros (University of Algrave), John Holford (University of Nottingham) and Marcella Milana (University of Verona) in this funktion. Vida Andreja Mohorčič Špolar (University of Ljubljana), longstanding coordinator of the network, has stepped back; we would like to thank her very much for her engagement all these years.



Sofia Saleem will support the ESREA secretariat from April 1. Sofia is studying Gender and Development Studies at the University of Bonn and is currently writing her PhD thesis on gender codes in textbooks in school education in Pakistan. Leonie Ziehm, the previous assistant to the secretary, will step back after finishing her Master at the University of Cologne. We will miss Leonie and wish her the best of success in her next steps!

## 5. Announcements – Conferences, Network Meetings and Calls for Papers

### ESREA Conferences, Seminars and Seasonal Schools

March 28, 2022

3rd Zoominar of the ESREA Network Migration, Transnationalism and Racism on '[Decolonizing' Intercultural and Citizenship Learning with International Students in Canada? Exploring the Possibilities'](#)  
Online Event

May 16 – 20, 2022

ESREA Spring School for Doctoral Students on '[Research on Adult Education and Transformation: Mapping Possibilities and Embracing Complexity'](#).  
Austria, University of Klagenfurt  
[Call for Applications](#)

June 6, 2022

Preconference of the ESREA Network Migration, Transnationalism and Racism on 'Contextualizing racism and migration: time, place and generational perspectives in anti-racist praxis'  
Scotland, University of Glasgow  
[Call for Papers](#)

~~June 27 – July 1, 2022~~ [\\*Postponed to 3-7 July, 2023\\*](#)

12th research seminar of the ESREA Network History of adult education and training in Europe on 'Adult education and learning for social change in the 19th-20th centuries: Ideas, movements, and circulation of knowledge'

Austria, St. Wolfgang

[Call for Papers](#)

Due to the current covid situation, the seminar has been postponed to 3-7 July, 2023.

July 1 – 31, 2022 with online event on July 27, 2022

The ESREA Network Working Life and Learning will be involved in the International WIL Unconference on 'New Problems. New Solutions'.

UK, Pearson College London

[More information](#)

July 14 – 16, 2022

ESREA Conference of the Network Access, Learning Careers and Identities on 'Adult education in times of crisis and change: perspectives on access, learning careers and identities'

Portugal, University of Algarve

[Call for Papers](#)

July 18 – 20, 2022

ESREA Conference of the Network Gender and Adult Education on 'Gender and Adult Education in the era of social and cultural changes: (New) risks and challenges'

Portugal, University of Algarve

[Call for Papers](#)

September 29 – October 1, 2022

ESREA Triennial Conference on 'New Seeds For a World to Come. Policies, Practices and Lives in Adult education and Learning'

Italy, University of Milano Bicocca

[Call for Papers](#)

November 03 – 05, 2022

ESREA Conference of the Network on Education and Learning of Older Adults (ELOA) on 'Education and Learning of Older Adults – individual, local and global perspectives'.

Portugal, Bragança

[Call for Papers](#)

### **Other Conferences, Announcements and Calls**

The International Association of Social Educators is organizing its 20<sup>th</sup> World congress in Lausanne, Switzerland, from September 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The theme of the conference is 'Temporality in Educational Action'.

[Registration Website](#)

## 6. 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/>

Current thematic issue of RELA: Vol. 13 No.1 (2022) '[Open Papers](#)'

## 7. ESREA's partners: Strong partnerships with other scientific associations

ESREA and the **Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding for partnership and collaboration. The Memorandum between ESREA and the **American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)** has also been renewed. Those partnerships have the potential to strengthen common ties among adult, continuing, and community education associations on an international and even transnational scale. ESREA and SCUTREA, as well as ESREA and AAACE seek to form strong partnerships based upon the commonality of goals, expressed in their respective mission, vision, and values.

## 8. Publications from ESREA and members

### ESREA Book series

Research on the Education and Learning of Adults Series: Rob Evans, Ewa Kurantowicz & Emilio Lucio (2022): *Remaking Communities and Adult Learning*. Leiden: Brill Sense (Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 11). Open Access: <https://brill.com/view/title/62896>

### Publications from the Networks

Access, Learning Careers and Identities: Merrill, B., Vieira, C., Galimberti, A., Nizinska, A. (2020). *Adult education as a resource for resistance and transformation: Voices, learning experiences, identities of student and adult educators*. Coimbra: University of Coimbra/ University of Algarve/ ESREA.

[Link to Book](#)

Transformative Processes in Learning and Education: Nicolaidis, A., Eschenbacher, S., Buergelt, P., Gilpin-Jackson, Y., Welch, M., Misawa, M. (2022). The Palgrave Handbook of Learning for Transformation. London: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84694-7>

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

## 9. ESREA 30 years anniversary survey

ESREA has conducted a survey to get to know its members and friends better. The focus of the questions is especially on ESREA networks, activities and the personal experiences that members and friends have with ESREA. It is still possible to take part in the survey until 18 March. The results will be presented at the triennial conference in Milan. Please follow the link to participate in the survey: <https://die-bonn.limequery.com/525418?lang=en>.

## 10. How to become a member of ESREA

Membership in ESREA is open to individual and institutional members. As a member you will get a reduced fee at ESREA activities, information in the field of research on the education of adults through the ESREA mailing list and newsletter. As an individual member you have the right to vote at the general assembly that takes place each year (online through postal ballot). As an institutional member, all employees of your institution are entitled to participate in ESREA activities at a reduced fee. Note that institutional members have only one vote in the general assembly.

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

1. Download the document at: <http://www.esrea.org/about-us/membership/>
2. Fill in the membership application form and e-mail it to: [ESREAsecretary@die-bonn.de](mailto:ESREAsecretary@die-bonn.de).
3. Within two weeks at the latest you will receive a confirmation of your membership by e-mail
4. An invoice for your membership fee will be issued: 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. Cheques are not accepted. Any foreign bank fees are to be borne by the applicants.**

ESREA Bank details for 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

# 11. Forthcoming newsletters

## Release dates in 2022:

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December 2022



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