

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

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Dear members,

ESREA is celebrating 30 years anniversary! In December 1991 in the Folk High School Oud-Poelgeest near Leiden, in the Netherlands, the vision of a democratic decentralised research association on the education of adults was born. The first meeting of the elected steering committee took place in Vienna in 1994 and since then the association continues to engage with the challenges (old and new) facing adult education in these fast-changing times, while at the same time preserving its distinct identity. The formation of the Society in 1991 on an ad-hoc basis was a revolution; its further development is an ongoing evolution.

We are more than delighted that two of the protagonists of the early years agreed to recall these days and share their reflexions with us. With Barry Hake, the first Secretary, and Kjell Rubenson, then Chair, we start a series of snapshots on 30 years ESREA history throughout the year.

I hope that you will enjoy the trip back in time as much as I did.

Yours,
Alexandra

1. There will be more celebration

Dear ESREA members,

As the vaccination of the world population is moving forward, I hope we all can see some light in the future. With hope of hugging or kissing our near and dear ones, and meet up with colleagues and friends again, maybe at an ESREA conference. Within this situation, ESREA is celebrating its 30 years anniversary - and maybe it could be a celebration of hope!

The steering committee of ESREA has made several plans for how to celebrate our anniversary. These include amongst other things a few short reflections in this newsletter from some of the founders of ESREA, and a call for papers to RELA on the theme of 30 years of adult education research and 30 years of ESREA. There will be more celebration opportunities and activities further on - so keep an eye open.

Let's continue to keep a distance and keep safe for the coming months until we can meet again!

Andreas Fejes
Chair of ESREA

2. ESREA as a pan-European forum

Barry J Hake

At the end of the 1980s, much was changing on the European landscape with both direct and indirect impacts on practice, policy, and research regarding the organisation of adult learning. Amidst ferment provoked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, long-standing forms of co-operation between adult educators from West and East were rudely disrupted by regime change in the East and deepening neo-liberalism in the West. These reconfigurations came together in deregulated adult education marketplaces dominated by commodification of adult learning together with the myth of individual employability. At both national and European level, public policies were characterised by retreating state provision of adult education services and the emergent hegemony of privatised work-place learning.

Given the political context of orchestrated neo-liberalism, it was surprising, but notably significant, that European initiatives to promote more rigorous empirical research were first launched at regular meetings of historians of organised adult learning committed to comparative policy research on varieties of capitalisms during European modernisation. More significantly, in 1989, 1990, but particularly in 1991, conferences organised by the European Bureau of Adult Education, established in 1953, provided a forum in Europe to mobilise support for co-operative initiatives. When the European Economic Community established the Erasmus Programme for student and staff mobility in 1987, this had encouraged new fora contributing to European research initiatives. Erasmus networks for adult education were based on Leuven and Bremen, but systematic support for a collaborative European research network was

provided by the Bremen network. Meanwhile, national associations for adult education, together with national research institutes, had also demonstrated interest in co-operating with a European research network, with support also expressed by UNESCO and OECD. By early September 1991, after three years of lobbying of European colleagues, I was convinced that a strong broadly-based constituency could be mobilised to support a European organisation for co-operative research activities.

Fortunately, my colleagues in the department of adult education the Leiden University agreed to my proposal that I be allowed to devote one day per week to organisational tasks involved in establishing ESREA. A key question involved recruiting a respected senior researcher with an international reputation for empirical research to chair a meeting of interested parties. Aware of Kjell Rubenson's research on participation in adult education, I met him in 1991 at an international conference on labour-market related training, organised in Amsterdam by the Dutch Minister of Education. When inquired whether he would chair a launch meeting, Kjell agreed. I mobilised my Dutch folk high school network to secure funding for accommodation and meals for participants at a meeting in Folk High School Oud-Poelgeest, near Leiden. Those present at this inaugural meeting, 6-8 December 1991, agreed to establish a European Society for Research on the Education of Adults, ESREA was born! Discussions in Leiden focused on a democratic decentralised association of individual and institutional members electing a steering committee every three years. Furthermore, we envisaged a European research association comprising self-organised research networks, with the newly established network on cross-cultural influences in the history of European adult education serving as our example. Lively discussions in Leiden clearly established that ESREA would focus on thematic networks with early proposals including life history and biography, labour market and work, adult literacy, social movements and community-based learning, cross-cultural history, continuing professional development, active citizenship, gender, and migration, ethnicity, racism, and xenophobia.

Looking back in 2021, key strategic features characterised ESREA's early history. With little funding available, ESREA was dependent on the good will, enthusiasm, and commitment of SC members and network convenors. ESREA's first brochure was translated in French by Pierre Caspar at CNAM in Paris († 2020). With a provisional unelected steering committee, the strategy in 1992-1993 was to consolidate and extend ESREA's geographical range with meetings held in Manchester in July 1992, but more importantly Seville in 11-14 December 1992, thus establishing a presence in Spain and Portugal. Kjell and I led a network seminar in Linköping, 7-10 August 1993, devoted to 'Popular Adult Education and Social Mobilisation in Europe'. This was held at the folk high school on the university campus, organised as a 'study circle.' During the second afternoon, adult educators from Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, who were attending a course on adult education in Sweden, joined us. This was yet another example of how ESREA worked at grassroots level to link individuals, organisations, and movements in often unexpected, but invigorating ways. In this regard, one must refer to ESREA's efforts to organise meetings in the Baltic, Central Europe, and the Balkans to increase active membership. Particularly important was the work undertaken by Zoran Jelenc, Ljubljana, Michal Bron, Uppsala, and Jindra Kulich, during the early 1990s, in organising national and regional networks. Despite military activity elsewhere in ex-Yugoslavia, the first ESREA seminar in Ljubljana took place, 10-12 October 1993. National reports on the countries in transition, co-ordinated by Zoran, and my report on western Europe, were part of ESREA's State of the Art Study in 1995 and were included in UNESCO's 1999 world report on research on adult education.

Elected in late 1993, the full ESREA steering committee met in 1994 in Vienna. With support from the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs in Vienna, the first ESREA triennial conference took place, 18-22 September 1995, at Federal Institute for Adult Education at Strobl with the theme of 'Adult learning and social participation.' With grants for young academics and PhD students from the Baltic, Central Europe, and the Balkans, this conference firmly established ESREA as a pan-European organisation with a meaningful presence on the landscape of research into the social organisation of adult learning in Europe.

As a footnote on material cultural history, this intense period of European 'networking' took place pre-1995. Communication in early ESREA was made possible by letters, telephone calls, stencils, photocopies, and fax messages, with the Internet, as Web 1, only becoming available in 1995, and Web 2, particularly the social media, as recently as 2004.



First meeting of the elected ESREA Steering Committee in Vienna in 1994
(Photo taken by Gerhard Bisovsky)

(Left to right) Maurizio Lichtner, Centro Europeo dell'Educazione, Frascati, Italy, ex-officio; Stanislav Hubik, Mendel-University, Brno, Czech Republic; Peter Alheit, Universität Bremen, Germany; Kjell Rubenson, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada; Etienne Bourgeois, Université Catholique de Louvain la Neuve, Belgium; Licinio Lima, Universidade do Minho, Portugal, ex-officio; Jukka Tuomisto, Tampereen yliopisto, Finland; Richard Taylor, University Leeds, United Kingdom; Pierre Dominice, Université de Genève, Switzerland; Agnieszka Bron, Linköpings universitet, Sweden; Bastiaan van Gent, Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands; Barry Hake, Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands, secretary.

SC members not in the photo: Ursula Apitzsch, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (1954-2015) Pierre Freynet, Université d'Angers, France; Zoran Jelenc, Andragoški center Republike Slovenije, Ljubljana; Gerhard Bisovsky, Volkshochschule Meidling, Wien, ex-officio; Andrea Waxenegger, PhD student, Universität Graz, Austria, ex-officio

3. 30 years of ESREA: the hour of birth

Kjell Rubenson

This year ESREA celebrates its 30th anniversary. For the past thirty years the organisation has gone from strength to strength. While I cannot claim to be an unbiased observer, I am more than willing to argue that it has become the leading adult education scholarly organisation in the world. I cannot imagine that any of us who, on a dark grey December day in 1991, attended the first meeting on establishing a European scholarly society could have imagined the richness and variety of presentations at the ESREA 9th Triennial European Research Conference in Belgrade in 2019. The conference gathered several hundred participants from all over the world delivering some 150 paper and symposia sessions.

While one can marvel at the growth of ESREA I am also struck by how quickly the organisation found its form and what we see today is very much in line with the early blueprint. The initiative for the meeting in December 1991 came from Barry Hake in Leiden, who with support from his Department invited a group of scholars to contemplate the creation of a European research society. In addition to Barry, the group consisted of Peter Alheit (University of Bremen); Agnieszka Bron (University of Uppsala); Pierre Dominicé (University of Geneva); Bastiaan van Gent (Leiden University); Walter Leirman (University of Leuven); Kjell Rubenson (University of Linköping); Dick Taylor (University of Leeds); Jukka Tuomisto (University of Tampere); and Alexandra Withnall (University of Warwick). With a few exceptions, this was largely a rather junior group of scholars from Western European countries who by no means represented the field of adult education in Europe or its leadership. The group was astutely aware of its limitations, particularly the narrow geographical representation and the absence of many of the more famous names in the field. The former was something that could be handled by active recruitment and the latter was something that some most likely saw as a strength rather than a weakness in their search for a more distinct focus on scholarship. In the discussions that took place with some of the leading representatives of the field, it became clear that on the whole they wanted to see a more traditional focus where adult education as a field of practice was more clearly articulated. While highly sceptical of the suggested direction they did not actively try to discourage ESREA as it emerged, but rather sat back expecting it to vanish from the scene quite quickly. A strength of ESREA has been that during these 30 years it has never diluted its original mission to promote and disseminate theoretical and empirical research on the education of adults and adult learning in Europe through research networks, conferences and publications.

During discussions at the first meeting it became increasingly clear that ESREA should try to find new ways for organising its work and not copy the traditional model with a yearly conference consisting primarily of paper presentations. The opinion was that such a strategy would not be conducive to more concerted efforts to build in-depth knowledge around key issues in adult education. Instead, the backbone of the organisation should be the establishment of rather freestanding research networks where the meetings should follow quite similar practices allowing for thorough analysis and reviews of pre-submitted papers. In the best of worlds these networks can be seen as an attempt by ESREA to realise Jackall and Vidich (1995) classical understanding of social theory, namely that: *Theory is the historically informed framing of intellectual problems about concrete social issues and the resolution of those problems through the analysis of empirical data* (p. viii)¹. I think that it was in this ethos that one attempted to resolve the tension between adult education as a field of study and a field of practice. Whether or not ESREA has been successful in this respect is something I leave for others to judge.

Considerable thought went into the naming of the organisation. In choosing *The European Association for Research on the Education of Adults* and not “Adult Education” we wanted to move away from a disciplinary understanding of the research field and stress its multidisciplinary nature. The hope was that this would stimulate cooperation across disciplinary boundaries and broaden the membership of ESREA. Without any deeper analysis it is abundantly clear that this never came to materialise.

¹ Jackall, R. and Vidich, A.J. 1995. Series preface. In Stanford, M Lyman (Ed) *Social movements: critiques, concepts, case-studies*. New York University Press: New York.

While recognising that ESREA's strength was its informal organisation with loosely linked networks, there was also an awareness that this was also its weakness. The hope was that by establishing a strong secretariat that was firmly rooted in and supported by the host department, the shortcomings could be addressed. I am convinced that the chosen solution has been the major reason for ESREA's success and we should all feel much gratitude to the people that took on the secretarial position and the departments that so generously supported them.

The first meeting gave considerable attention to how to make ESREA a truly European society and we managed relatively quickly to recruit members and leaders from the former East European block and Southern Europe. Another hot topic was publication strategy and various ideas for a journal, book series and newsletter were raised. However, it was not before information technology allowed the establishment of an online journal that the issue was resolved and ESREA could launch a first-rate scholarly journal, RELA. This was the final building block in realising the dreams of the 1991 founding meeting and with the journal in place ESREA can with confidence look forward to its next 30 years.



ESREA Interim Board, Seville in December 1992 (Private Photo)

(Left to right) prof. Peter Alheit (Bremen), Dr. Gerhard Bisovsky (Vienna), prof. Ursula Apitzsch (Frankfurt), prof. Kjell Rubenson (Linköping), Dr. Sallie Westwood (Leicester), prof. Walter Leirman (Leuven), Dr. Barry Hake (Leiden), prof. Pierre Casper (Paris), prof. Bjarne Wahlgren (Copenhagen) and prof. Manuel Broncano (Seville, the host).

4. In Memoriam: Sabrina Jelenc Krašovec (1968-2020)



It was with very great sadness that we learnt that Dr. Sabina Jelenc Krašovec – professor at the Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana – has left us after a serious illness at the end of 2020.

Mrs. Sabina Jelenc Krašovec was associate professor for adult education at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Head of the Department of Educational Sciences (2013-2016), and co-editor of the international journal *Studies in Adult Education and Learning/Andragoška spoznanja*. She served in the international editorial boards of the academic journals – *European Journal for Research on Education and Learning of Adults*, *Andragogical Studies*, *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* – and was the co-editor of various international monographs (e.g. “*Learning across Generations in Europe: Contemporary Issues in Older Adult Education*”). In her research work, she has collaborated with the Universities of Belgrade, Krakow, Wroclaw, and Dublin, as well as with ESREA networks, particularly with *Education and Learning of Older Adults* and the *Between Global and Local - Adult Learning and Communities*.

At the beginning of the career, her scientific research was focused on critical thinking of adults and the role of adult educators in promoting critical reflection. Initially, her academic work stemmed from authors from humanistic psychology, and later, the context of critical theory prevailed in her work. She focused on sociology of adult education, critical educational gerontology, comparative adult education, and counselling and guidance in adult education. She was committed to the development of target groups in adult education as an area that studied marginalized social groups, especially the vulnerable ones and those without a voice. The basic intersection of her research work was modern society and older adult education. She analysed the education of older persons in the light of active citizenship, public space, social well-being, empowerment, community and critical educational gerontology. She published more than fifty articles and eleven monographs.

Finally, Mrs. Sabina Jelenc Krašovec believed in the transformative power of education and learning in all stages of life. We admired her commitment to just relations, to providing possibilities of education to vulnerable groups, which are frequently overlooked, and the inclusive opening of educational institutions. She knew how to address people with her personal enthusiasm, for which she was highly admired among her students and respected by her colleagues. We shall keep our dear colleague, professor, researcher in our hearts and memories.

Borut Mikulec,
Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

5. New Faces in ESREA



The ESREA Access, Learning Careers and Identities Network has a new co-convenor: Antonio Fragoso (Algarve University) will support the two convenors Barbara Merrill (University of Warwick) and Andrea Galimberti (University of Milano-Bicocca) in this function. Adrianna Nizinska (University of Gothenburg), longstanding coordinator of the network, has stepped back; we would like to thank her very much for her engagement all these years.

All information on ESREA networks and their convenors can be found at: <http://esrea.org/networks/>



ESREA has a new membership and website administrator: Leonie Ziehm is the new assistant to the Secretary. She studies Educational Science with a focus on adult education (University of Cologne). You may contact Leonie under ziehm@die-bonn.de

We warmly welcome the new faces and look forward to working together.

6. Announcements - Conferences, Network Meetings and Calls for papers

Conferences and network activities

The ESREA Network on **'Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning'** (ADCAL) invites interested researchers to participate in a series of virtual discussions on 'learning from experiments in democracy'. The first discussion took place on the 25th of February. Two more will follow on **the 26th of March and the 30th of April**.

[Call for Papers](#)

March 4 – 7, 2021 Poland, Wroclaw

ESREA Conference of the Network Life History and Biography Network

Conference on 'An Ecology of Life: Discourses, dialogue and diversity in biographical research'

Please find the attached conference poster [here](#).

[Call for Papers](#)

April 29, 2021

Book Launch Conference of the Network Working Life and Learning and Pearsons College London on 'Applications of Work Integrated Learning Among Gen Z and Y Students'.

June 3 – 6, 2021 AEGT2021 Canada, Vancouver

ESREA is partner organisation in the Adult Education in Global Times: An International Research Conference (AEGT2021) – organised by the Department of Educational Studies (ubc.ca)

July 15 – 17, 2021 Portugal, University of Algarve ++++ postponed to July 2022++++

Conference of the ESREA Network Gender and Adult Education

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

[Call for Papers](#)

September 16 – 18, 2021 Spain, Seville

ESREA Conference of the Network Between Global and Local – Adult Learning and Communities

Conference on 'Looking back for the future. Reconsidering adult learning and communities'

Call for Papers

Oktober 29, 2021

ESREA Conference of the Research Network for Adult Educators, Trainers and their Professionalisation

Conference on 'Adult Educators in time of crisis: Well-being, Changes in Identity and Professional Practice in European Adult Education'

Call for Papers

Additional Calls for Papers

The **Journal Andragoška spoznanja/Studies in Adult Education and Learning** is currently working on a new issue on “Adult education in the field of health: The importance of sozio-cultural circumstances and interdisciplinary”. Abstract deadline is March 15th, 2021.

Call for Papers

Certificate Program

The Continuing Education Center of the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) proposes a new Certificate of Advanced Studies on «**Life Narrative and Biographical Coaching**». The program will start with a new cohort in September 2021. Participation is on-site only and instruction is in French. This program is led by Dr. Michel Alhadeff-Jones (University of Fribourg, Institut Sunkhronos, and Columbia University) with the participation of European scholars and practitioners specialized in the field of life history, narrative approaches and biographical research. Registrations are open online until March 31, 2021. For more information or to register, please consult:

<https://www3.unifr.ch/formcont/fr/formations/detail.html?cid=2173> . For any query, please contact directly Michel Alhadeff-Jones (maj@sunkhronos.org)

Seasonal School

The series of the seasonal schools on '**International Perspectives on Education Policy**' (IPEP) will be continued with a summer school in Aalborg from August 29th – September 3rd , 2021.

Please find the attached [handbook of the summer school here](#).

7. 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/>

The latest issue of RELA on “Capitalism(s) and the future of adult education policy” is available as free open access at: <https://www.rela.ep.liu.se/contents.asp?doi=10.3384/rela.2000-7426.2021121>

Call for papers for the new RELA issue on ‘30 years of research on adult education, 30 years of ESREA’. Submission deadline is the 30th of April 2021. For more information, please click here:

http://www.rela.ep.liu.se/documents/Call_for_papers_ESREA_30_years.pdf

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

8. Publications

Annika Wilmers & Sieglinde Jornitz (eds.) (2021). International Perspectives on School Settings, Education Policy and Digital Strategies. A Transatlantic Discourse in Education Research. Barbara Budrich.

You can download the free open access version from the website of the publisher:

<https://shop.budrich-academic.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/9783847416609.pdf>

Rosanna Barros, Paulo Gomes Lima, & Márcio Azevedo (Org.). (2020). Rumos da Educação e Formação de Jovens e Adultos em Portugal e no Brasil - um balanço comparado de políticas e práticas. Natal: Editoria IFRN-Brasil. E-BOOK.

[Com Prefácio do Professor Doutor António Nóvoa, Posfácio do Professor Doutor Moacir Gadotti; e comentários do Professor Doutor Licínio Lima e do Professor Doutor Timothy Ireland]

{ISBN: 978-65-86293-01-2}

Disponível em: <https://memoria.ifrn.edu.br/handle/1044/1835>

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

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

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.
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

10. Forthcoming newsletters

June 2021

September 2021

December 2021

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