



Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education (TEAE) Network

Research Retreat Symposium 2025

Transforming Work-Life Balances

18-20 June 2025

Venue: University of Malta, Malta

First Call for Proposals

How do we navigate our work-life balance? What does the way we hold work, and the way we hold life tell us about ourselves? What subjective value do we place on our jobs? One way to look at how we balance work in complexity (Watkins, & Marsick, 2023) and time for leisure is to think of it in terms of improvement and optimization. Another, deeper way to think about it is to question the distinction itself instead of optimizing it. Some scholars even argue against separating work and life altogether, viewing any divide as artificial. In academia—perhaps more than in other fields—we often conflate our identities with our jobs, the titles we hold, the positions we have earned, and the research we conduct. The questions we pursue in our work often reflect our own life experiences and engage in intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation (Koulaouzidis, Eschenbacher, Romano, & Soeiro, 2024). In this context, the statement "*I am my job*" resonates strongly. Yet, it raises significant inquiries: Who are we beyond our professional roles? What constitutes our deeper sense of purpose?

We learn or don't learn to navigate our work-life balances throughout our careers and at different times, we need to reassess this balance. What if we struggle?

How can we navigate the intense pressures of the academic and research world — a system that often feels oppressive, highly bureaucratic, and fiercely competitive — when what we truly need is a more humanized and collaborative environment?

How can we move to a place of possibility from a place of difficulty? Every crisis offers moments of decisions to move beyond our current way of being in the world (Eschenbacher, & Fleming, 2021). We become aware that we are not trapped by one way of looking at the world or being in the world. Our struggle becomes a moment of emancipation (Koulaouzides, 2021). There is another, deeper layer to the question of how we can navigate our work-life balance, one that is tied to today's struggle. Morgan Housel articulates how this relationship has evolved; historically, factory workers could visibly see the results of their labor, and upon departing the workplace, their workdays concluded. But when our job is to think – and in academia to produce impactful research, we do not detach from work once we leave the office – our days don't end. As academics, we don't work only in our heads, but we think and behave through problems and research questions, and we feel like work never ends.

We can't simply disconnect from our work once we leave the office. Our strong identification with our work, combined with the ability to work from anywhere with an internet connection,

means our responsibilities are always with us. Does work ever truly end? It often doesn't feel that way. How can we navigate and maintain a sustainable work-life balance when the boundary between the two is so unclear?

Below is a list of questions we invite researchers and scholars to explore in their proposals:

- What is the struggle within your current research?
- How does your work reflect your experiences?
- How does your research reflect and connect to transformation and/or emancipation?
- How do you balance your work-life balance around your research?

Research has shown that having control over our time is key to happiness and that this very control has diminished. How can professionals cultivate the capacity to rest in a perpetually demanding environment? How can we disengage from work while maintaining productivity? Furthermore, how can we effectively assimilate and reflect upon our professional experiences, allowing for growth and potential transformation?

These questions create the framework for our forthcoming TEAE network event. In the 2025 research retreat symposium of the TEAE network we will gather in formal and informal events to examine the aforementioned fundamental questions and in an environment that promotes both scholarly exchange and time to reflect and engage. The objective is to rethink and enhance the manner in which we organize our research, our professional and personal life and foster connections within our community. Join us in our endeavor, share with us your ideas for discussion! Let's transform our work-life balances and our way of working together!

Where and when



18-20 June 2025



We welcome you to submit your proposal!

Saskia Eschenbacher, Akkon University Berlin, **George Koulaouzides**, Hellenic Open University, **Alessandra Romano**, University of Siena, **Dina Soeiro**, Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra

The conveners of the ESREA Research Network on Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education

Proposal and paper guidelines

We welcome proposals for theoretical papers, empirical research and experiential sessions. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is **February 15th, 2025**. Full papers (max 2,000 words) to be submitted by **May 15th, 2025**.

Proposals should not exceed 500 words (without references), including title. Please submit name of the author(s) institutional affiliation and contact details on a separate page. Please submit your proposal as a word document (using APA 7 as a citation style) to the following email: teanetwork@gmail.com

The conference language is English, and the following criteria will be used to review proposals:

- (a) the relevance to transformative and emancipatory adult learning theory or practice.
- (b) the relevance to the conference theme;
- (c) the clarity of the theoretical framework; and
- (d) the clarity of the method and implications for experiential proposals.

The proposals will be peer-reviewed by a committee composed of a panel of researchers and scholars from the field of transformative learning and adult education. Notification of acceptance will be sent by the end of March 2025.

Conference fees (early bird deadline 1st May 15, 2025):

ESREA member: **100 €**

Non-member: **125 €**

Postgraduate students: **75 €**

Publication: An edited e-volume with papers from this event will be published.

TEAE Research Network

The mission of the “*Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education*” ESREA Network is to promote a space for enhancing international dialogue and research on transformative and emancipatory adult learning. We aim to co-create a vital community in Europe that is devoted to cultivating research, scholarships, and projects about how learning can promote personal, societal, and global transformations. See the webpage: <https://esrea.org/networks/transformative-and-emancipatory-adult-education/>

For further information on ESREA, follow this link: <https://esrea.org/>