

**Call for Applications for the ESREA Doctoral School
September, 14–18, 2026, Universität Klagenfurt (Austria)**

The Klagenfurt Research Retreat (KRR)
Research on Adult Education and Transformation
Mapping Possibilities and Embracing Complexity



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Place and date:

[Universität Klagenfurt](#) (Austria), Department of Educational Science, Research Unit for ALE & VET

The doctoral school starts on **Monday, 14th of September 2026 at 2pm** with the registration and the opening ceremony, and the closing is on **Friday, 18th of September 2026 at 1pm**.

Faculty:

Eva Cendon, FernUniversität in Hagen (Germany)
Irene Cennamo, Universität Klagenfurt (Austria)
Fergal Finnegan, Maynooth University (Ireland)
Laura Formenti, Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca (Italy)
Chad Hoggan, North Carolina State University (USA)
Monika Kastner, Universität Klagenfurt (Austria)
Peter Schlögl, Universität Klagenfurt (Austria)

The doctoral school is organised in cooperation with [ESREA, the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults](#).



The Klagenfurt Research Retreat (KRR) 2026
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An invitation to a research retreat

The doctoral school on *Adult Education and Transformation* is conceptualised as a research retreat, offering a convivial space for intensive scholarly exchange based on discussion and reflection with doctoral students and an experienced faculty who are inspiring and enthusiastic. Universität Klagenfurt's green campus is close to Lake Wörthersee with its parks and promenades, and provides the perfect setting for **networking, scholarly conversation, contemplation and leisure activities.**

Adult Learning and Education and Transformation

We are living and working in a period of profound change. It is worth bearing in mind that Adult Education was constituted by and as a response to complex and often highly disruptive social modernisation processes. Crucial to the formation of a complex and varied field of Adult Education as we know it have been changes in the life course, shifts in employment and career paths, new patterns in migration, alterations in family structures, intimate relationships and ways of understanding gender, demographic transitions, the democratisation of everyday life, the corrosion of traditional patterns of community interaction, changes in social and educational policy, and political struggles for equality. Consequently, transformation at various levels and on different scales has long been a defining theme for researchers and practitioners alike, with a strong focus on the role of adult education in promoting empowerment and emancipation.

We understand Adult Education to be a broad and diverse field encompassing the life wide and lifelong learning processes of adults. This includes popular and citizenship education as well as vocational education and training, work-based learning, professional development, and university continuing education. Adult Learning and Education (ALE) therefore encompasses both institutionalised learning, which is defined as planned educational activities, as well as informal learning which is self-directed and related to life-world, workplace and social contexts. ALE is a field subject to transformation processes, aiming to initiate or support individual and collective processes of change and transformation.

The Klagenfurt Research Retreat (KRR) creates space to explore how ALE can actively and collectively shape the future towards a more sustainable and just society. The retreat is intended to be open to researchers interested in the ALE research field, providing an opportunity to discuss issues that have been a mainstay of ESREA's various network conferences and triennial events in the past, and that remain significant and pressing today.

The [ESREA Seasonal Schools](#) aim to support doctoral researchers by encouraging collaboration and networking between experienced researchers and beginners.

A convivial and immersive environment and a dialogical ethos

The KRR aims to create a convivial space for deep dialogue, reflection and discussion on the transformative nature (in *statu nascendi*, in progress and/or as result) of adults' being, living, working and learning in interaction with society, the environment and politics throughout their lifespan. It enables participation in and contribution to the international debate.

The KRR intends to create an immersive space away from routine and day-to-day demands with the main aim of fostering holistic learning processes. It brings together researchers, including doctoral students and faculty, in a pleasant and stimulating location where academic work is combined with social activities. Following andragogical principles and emphasising the idea of a research retreat, the KRR takes place over five days and includes dialogical forums, workshops and writing labs, as well as leisure activities and social events.

Putting doctoral researcher needs and interests centre stage

The KRR will explore the doctoral projects, needs and interests of the participants, both as individual researchers and as a group of doctoral students. We work in small groups and in plenary workshops. Drawing on debate and reflection, we focus on theoretical perspectives and methodological issues, putting transformation in relation to ALE centre stage. The faculty provides doctoral supervision and support to enhance the research projects and ensure high-quality doctoral education.

We welcome doctoral students interested in exploring transformation and ALE in broad terms including social justice, work, demography, history, policy, economic change, digitisation, politics, human rights/democracy/autocracy and autocratisation, gender, migration, social movements, sustainability or the relationship between humans and the wider environment.

As a starting point for the KRR we offer some broad questions that we intend to explore together:

- What professional values and/or practical challenges or problems fuel our research on ALE related to societal change?
- How do we understand and conceptualise social and educational change and transformation in relation to individuals, communities and society as a whole? What ideas, concepts or theories are needed to understand or question the current conjuncture?
- What methodologies and methods are required to research ALE in times of change and transformation?
- How does (the) research relate to educational practice and society? How can the results be disseminated in both academically and socially adequate ways and in new, future-oriented ways?



Application procedure:

The number of participants is limited to 20.
The participation fee is 250 Euros.

A limited number of bursaries will be available. These will cover both the participation fee and accommodation costs. However, they will not cover the full cost of expensive travel, e.g., long-distance flights. Recipients of a bursary are requested to choose cost-effective travel arrangements.

Applicants are asked to submit the following information in one PDF by **8th of March 2026 at the latest**:

- Brief biographical information, including your name, institutional affiliation (if applicable), email address, postal address and phone number, and the name of your study/doctoral programme and university, including faculty and department.
- The working title of your doctoral research project, along with an abstract of no more than 200 words, elucidating the purpose, theoretical framework, research question, methodology/methods, and expected impact on science, professionals, and society.
- A brief sketch of no more than 300 words of how the topics outlined in this call interest you, how they relate to your research question and your motivation to participate. This should include the questions you wish to explore at the KRR, the important issues and challenges you are facing and your expectations of the faculty.
- Clearly indicate whether or not you require a bursary. A KRR bursary is only applicable to those with no institutional affiliation or other funding possibilities. Please check other funding possibilities before applying for a KRR 2026 bursary. If you are applying for a KRR 2026 bursary, please state whether or not you are an ESREA member.

Incomplete applications cannot be considered. Please submit your application through the [INDICO conference tool](#).

Acceptance notifications will be sent out by 15th of April 2026. Accepted participants will then be asked to pay the participation fee by 6th of May 2026 at the latest.

Contact information:

Please get in touch with the local organising committee if questions occur: KRR@aau.at