



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

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Dear ESREA Members and Associates,

As summer approaches, we're reaching out one more time before the break with a new edition of the ESREA Newsletter.

While we're all eagerly anticipating the upcoming Triennial Conference, there's also plenty happening across the ESREA networks. In this issue, you'll find rich reflections – one of them even in poetic form – on two recent events held by the Life History and Biography Network and the Migration, Transnationalism and Racisms Network. These contributions speak volumes about the vitality and creativity that continue to shape our network activities.

You'll also discover several exciting new publications emerging from within the networks – clear signs of the ongoing scholarly energy across our community.

Looking ahead to autumn: ESREA's annual General Assembly is just around the corner. Think it's just routine bureaucracy? Not this time (and really, not ever – or at least not only!). This year, members will elect a new Steering Committee for the 2026–2028 term. Now is the moment to reflect on whether you might want to stand for election. It's a unique opportunity to help shape and support the future of this vibrant community. The Secretariat is accepting nominations until mid-September.

We wish you an enjoyable and inspiring read – and, of course, a beautiful and restful summer full of sunshine, fresh energy, and time to recharge.

Best wishes!

Susanne

News from Presidium and Secretariat

Presidium Meeting, 6–7 May 2025 in Prague



The Presidium met in Prague on 6–7 May. Traditionally, the last meeting before a Triennial Conference takes place at the venue, which gives the Presidium the opportunity to inspect the location directly and make final arrangements and arrangements against this background.

During the meeting, the Presidium members had the opportunity to engage with the designated keynote speakers and other colleagues involved in organizing the upcoming Triennial. They also toured the venues for the plenary sessions and workshops and even had the chance to “test” the planned location for the conference dinner. All Presidium members expressed their great satisfaction with the ar-

rangements made by Martin Kopecky and the University of Prague and were confident that everything is well on track for a successful Triennial Conference this September.

To further support the participation of PhD students, the Presidium also decided to suspend the current three-year waiting period for ESREA bursaries. In future, PhD students may apply for and receive a bursary more than once within this time frame, provided that sufficient bursary funds are available. However, in cases where the number of applications exceeds the number of available bursaries, preference will continue to be given to first-time applicants.

Plans for setting up an ESREA online archive have also been pushed forward, and a call for tenders has been agreed upon for a research assistant to help identify existing material.

General Assembly, 3 November 2025

The date for the 2025 General Assembly has been set for 3 November 2025, 2.00–3.30 p.m. (CET). The General Assembly will once again take place online. At this year's General Assembly, a new Presidium consisting of 8–12 members will be elected for the term 2026–2028. Calls for nominations for the Presidium have been circulated via the email distribution list.

People in ESREA

Michael Topp joins ESREA editorial staff



Michael has started working for ESREA on 1 April 2025. He helps maintaining the website and the newsletter and gives a helping hand with preparation and follow-up of board meetings and events. As part of the “Knowledge Transfer” department of the *German Institute for Adult Education, Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning (DIE)*, among others he is also part of the editorial team for the → “[weiter bilden](#)” journal, and creates publication material with Adobe InDesign.

ESREA partnerships: Enhancing links and dialogue between research and practice

ESREA at the DGfE

On 25 March 2025, a digital information event was held for interested members of the DGfE Division for Adult Education (Germany), in which Steffi Robak (member of the ESREA Presidium) provided information about the activities of ESREA. The meeting was moderated by Maria Kondratjuk (board member of the DGfE Division for Adult Education).

Website of the DGfE Division for Adult Education:

→ <https://www.dgfe.de/en/divisions-subdivisions/division-adult-education>

ESREA Events

Conference Reports

Participation, beauty, and meaning. A research retreat on the past, present and future of biographical inquiry. ESREA Life History and Biography Network, 4–7 March 2025

Imagine 20 people, barely knowing each other, squeezed shoulder-to-shoulder, hip-to-hip, on chairs, sofas, and even the staircase of Rob Evan's home in Costarainera, a beautiful hamlet on the Ligurian coast in Italy. They have travelled here from Cyprus, England, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, India, Italy, Norway, and Scotland. They were curious and disorientated: What is a research retreat?

After 32 years of regular annual conferences (since 1993), this year the Life History and Biography Network has decided to try something new. Why? – Let's go back to March 2020, when our conference in Canterbury was suddenly decimated by the absence of the whole Italian group and one of the convenors (myself), locked down by the pandemic. Our world



seemed to fall apart. Many said, "This will not be in vain, this crisis harbours a great opportunity!" Do you remember?

In those years, the University of Wrocław, Poland, generously offered to host two conferences: online in 2021, then in presence in 2022. But we felt that our sense of community was in danger. This is the essence of a research network, especially when its focus is adult education and biographical research, where relationships and dialogue are a core issue. Biographical research requires authentic conversation and deep contact with the embodied, emotional, valuable, and practical relationships that an adult can have with oneself, others and the world.

For me, this network has been there since 1993, as a safe space for a diverse group of learners and people – not only academics! – where I grew as a researcher. A critical examination of my “normal” experiences in conferences pushes me to challenge the standard way of doing, to ensure quality, meaning, and relevance of my research. Not an easy task.

So, 2023 and 2024 were dedicated to experimenting with new ways of doing. Patrick Wallin at Trondheim University in Norway organized a bottom-up event, offering a space to share criteria and actions. We changed the traditional pattern of conferences – proposal-blind review-acceptance or refusal – and devised a dialogic system for reciprocal feedback, sharing all our texts far before the meeting. We dared to write in more diverse and creative ways: research reports and projects, of course, but also autoethnographic texts, poetry, and multimodal texts. Several online gatherings, in the preceding months, allowed us to discuss and prepare the network meeting. The presence of artists-activists-researchers and an acute desire to share brought us to alternate research presentations, group discussions and workshops with performances, reading aloud a book, and outdoor activities. A similar pattern was followed in 2024 in England at Northumbria University, thanks to Helen Woodley who hosted us. In the meantime, the network was shrinking due to retirements and structural reasons (is biographic research in danger, after years of flourishing?). This is the background where our research retreat on → [“Participation, Beauty, and Meaning”](#)* was born.



So, there we were, at Rob’s house in Costarainera. As convenor of the network and co-organizer of the retreat I felt nervous while saying “you know, there is no program”. Normally at conferences you or-

ganize all the presentations in standard slots of time and space. A disciplined structure where many feel at ease: they do their thing, then relax, listen, or go for a ride in town. In a research retreat, it is possible to explore other possibilities and the “presentation mode” leaves bay for participation and improvisation, a mode where everybody is co-responsible for the process and for making decisions about what to do with the available space, time, and resources. I am nervous but I trust this people and Rob – he has carefully prepared everything, even transportation

TRUST THE PROCESS & LET’S SEE WHAT HAPPENS

The wind from Cipressa plays with my thoughts
– how much longer will you keep ruffling them? –
while I just notice the good air and warm sun of Costarainera.
Along with the music of voices, of silences, of laughter,
and the sweet scent of honey and the bitter one of coffee.
Then the faces, the hands, the eyes, the walks and the dances.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

So I remember the timeless days when I met the surprising
family of researchers –
but I call them the story weavers.
I don't know if I belong to this family,
in fact, they opened their door to me.
They welcomed me, fed me, and they already knew my story.
They gave answers to questions I didn't even know I was
nurturing.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

I didn't understand many things, but for sure story weavers
come from many places on Earth:
Norway, Israel, Italy, England, Romania, France, India, Ger-
many
and far, far beyond.
They speak many languages – sometimes your language is your
home –
Perhaps because they travel a lot to exchange precious
treasures: the embroidery of their stories.
With other weavers, from all over the world.
There's something good about mixing words, accents and
pronunciations,
about understanding and misunderstanding,
about being understood again and again within a Universal
Language.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

The story weavers don't just weave stories.
In fact, they artfully sew complex, shimmering plots,
through very curious instruments:
some through dance, some through myths, some through
psychology,
some through photography, some through medicine, some
through philosophy,
some through drawings and some through fairy tales.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

The story weavers maybe weave stories to take care of Beauty.
The beauty of Mother Earth and all the creatures in her womb.
The beauty of the Truth that each one brings to the world.
The beauty of infinite Meanings from infinite stories: maybe we
won't be able to take part in all of them, maybe we can only
listen. Or observe. Or Trust.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

In those timeless days the story weavers also wove some pieces
of my story:
someone with the red wire of their incredible story,
someone with the expert needle of their profession,
someone with the breath of their ancestors – may they always
be blessed –
someone with love for their own children and for their
grandchildren, and for all the children to come,
someone with tears for their own chains,
someone with the wisdom of the Ages,
someone with the power of creation of coloured crayons and
apple pie.

Now I trust the process and see what's happening: Life!

Anna-Lisa-Beatrice

TRUST THE PROCESS & LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS

Il vento di Cipressa gioca dispettoso tra i miei pensieri
– quanto rimarrai ancora a scompigliarli? –
mentre avverto appena l'aria buona e il sole caldo di
Costarainera.

Insieme alla musica delle voci, dei silenzi, delle risate
e al profumo dolce del miele e a quello amaro del caffè.
Poi i volti, le mani, gli occhi, le camminate e le danze.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

Così ricordo i giorni senza tempo in cui ho conosciuto la strana
famiglia dei ricercatori
– ma io preferisco chiamarli 'i tessitori di storie'.
Non so se appartengo a questa famiglia,
in effetti mi hanno aperto la porta di casa. Mi hanno accolta,
sfamata,
e conoscevano già la mia storia
e davano risposte a domande che ancora non sapevo di nutrire.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

Non ho capito molte cose, ma di certo i tessitori di storie
vengono da tante parti della Terra: Norvegia, Israele, Italia,
Inghilterra, Romania, Francia, India, Germania e molto molto
oltre.
Parlano tante lingue – a volte la tua lingua è la tua casa –
Forse perché viaggiano molto per scambiarsi tesori preziosi: i
ricami delle loro storie.
Con altri tessitori, da tutto il mondo.
E' bello mescolare
Parole, accenti, pronunce, capire e non capire,
ed essere sempre e comunque ri-compresi in un linguaggio
universale.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

I tessitori di storie non tessono solo storie.
In effetti cuciono con arte complesse trame cangianti,
attraverso strumenti assai curiosi:
chi la danza, chi i miti, chi la psicologia, chi la fotografia,
chi la medicina, chi la filosofia, chi i disegni e chi le favole.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

I tessitori di storie forse tessono storie per prendersi cura della
Bellezza.
La bellezza della Madre Terra e di tutte le creature nel suo
grembo.
La bellezza della Verità che ciascuno porta al mondo.
La bellezza di infiniti Significati da infinite storie:
forse non potremo prendere parte in tutte,
forse potremo solo ascoltare. O osservare. O riporvi la nostra
Fede.

Trust the process, and let's see what happens.

In quei giorni senza tempo i tessitori di storie hanno tessuto
anche alcuni pezzi della mia storia:
qualcuno col filo rosso della sua incredibile storia,
qualcuno con l'ago esperto della sua professione,
qualcuno con il soffio dei suoi antenati – che siano benedetti
sempre –
qualcuno con l'amore per i propri figli e per i figli dei figli,
e per tutti i bambini che verranno,
qualcuno con le lacrime delle proprie catene,
qualcuno con la saggezza dei Tempi,
qualcuno con la magia dei pastelli colorati e della torta di mele.

Now I trust the process and see what's happening: Life!

Anna-Lisa-Beatrice

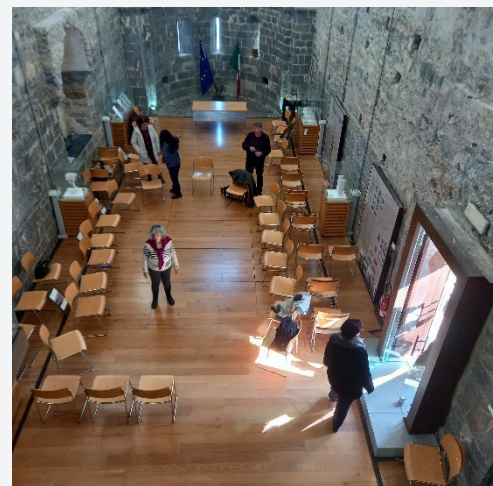
from the coast to uphill, and filled the fridge with huge
amounts of *melanzane*, *carciofi*, and *pomodori* for the
many vegetarians among us.

The retreat was prepared: participants met online (five
meetings between October and February), writing and
reading each other's work, and offering feedback. Each of
us wrote a proposal for paper/project discussions, posters,
and more narrative texts. There are many ideas for work-
shops (too many to be managed in three days?). Yet, the
start was disorientating. How could we manage the ten-
sion between the need for some organization/direction
and the desire to let the process guide us?

I do not really remember how we decided to start with one
activity that would engage everybody: a workshop pro-
posed by Paola Rigoni, a newcomer to the network. She
guided us to silently listen to each other. Bravely, we chose
vulnerability as a topic: very autobiographic, very challeng-
ing. But yes, research retreating is challenging. So, after
Paula's invitation, we left the room in couples. For me,
that start was a real blessing. While listening to Carmel, I
felt totally absorbed by her story and I forgot my need to
control.

This is how it started. The three days flew away in small
group discussions, projects' presentations, outdoor activi-
ties, dances, drawing, and preparing food, coffees and
teas, rushing for a last-minute purchase at the small shop
ruled by Ida. We trusted the process, as written in a beau-
tiful poem by Annalisa, playing with the wind and sun, the
music of voices, silences and laughter, the scent of honey
and coffee. We became "story weavers", a family of re-
searchers who can open the door, welcome, feed, and an-
swer to "questions I did not even know I was nurturing".
The mix of our languages – understanding and misunder-
standing each other – built a universally human language
of participation, meaning and beauty.

We are processing now,
preparing for a collective
workshop that will be
held at the Triennial
Conference in Prague.
Biographical research
has grown in variety; we
are aware that this way
of doing could exclude



more structured paradigms and methodologies. So, we will try to enlarge our fam-
ily by welcoming new voices, in search of a balance between regular conferences
and more collaborative, transformative and aesthetic ways of meeting and sharing

our research on adult lives and learning. By emphasizing networking and reciprocal knowledge, we trust that we can fuel dialogue not only among researchers, but with practitioners, artists, decision makers, and citizens.

My deepest thanks go to Rob Evans, who made that event possible and was a great Amphitryon. And to each and all the participants at the retreat: thank you for your capacity to play the game, to weave sensitive and deep conversations, and to support each other. – See you in Prague, hopefully!

* See the retreat's official flyer at:

→ <https://esrea.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Call-LHBN-2025-ESREA.pdf>



6th International Conference of the ESREA Migration, Transnationalism and Racisms Network Navigating Uncertainty: “Migration and Anti-Democratic Challenges Today”. University of Graz, Austria, 22–23 May 2025



The 6th International Conference *Navigating Uncertainty: Migration and Anti-Democratic Challenges Today* was hosted at the University of Graz, 22–23 May 2025.

We are delighted that we were able to welcome 55 international guests and 45 students to our conference. Linda Morrice opened the conference with her inspiring keynote speech on “Where is the hope? Post-colonial logics and racialised borders in refugee access to Higher Education”.

In 20 parallel sessions and panel discussions, complex topics related to migration, adult education and the rise of anti-democratic forces were discussed and various perspectives and insights into current challenges and responses were offered.

This conference focused on the intersection of migration, anti-democratic tendencies and the role of adult education in our uncertain times. It explored

both the difficulties and threats faced by migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as well as their agency and engagement. It also looked at civil society and different forms of activism as a learning environment and social initiatives that oppose discrimination, racism and anti-democratic tendencies. The aim of the conference was to reflect on and demonstrate what responses adult education can provide to these challenges. In this context, adult education can be seen as a catalyst for democratic participation, social change and collective solidarity.

Historically, adult education has played a central role in facilitating transitions and overcoming crises during social upheaval. However, this conference sought to look at migration as more than just a crisis. The presentations and discussions also explored the transformative potential of migration for individuals and societies, empowering people to raise their voices and contribute to the development of a heterogeneous, solidary and democratic society.

Against this backdrop, the notion of hope, solidarity, community and resistance has shown us ways for the future in which adult education can make an important contribution to overcoming the challenges in these uncertain times.

We would like to thank all speakers and participants for sharing their research, perspectives and thoughts. Without you and your contributions this exiting conference would not have been possible – thank you!

On behalf of the network convenors:

Angela Pilch Ortega, Tetyana Hoggan-Kloubert, Annette Sprung, Marcin Starnawski



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Conference Notes

The Network “Between Global and Local – Adult Learning and Communities” held its conference 12–14 June 2025, in Wrocław, Poland. Event title: “*Critical Learning for Sustainable Development: Communities' and Universities' Discourses.*”

Conference Website: → <https://bgl2025.dsw.edu.pl/>

The two ESREA networks on Access, Learning Careers and Identities” and “Working Life and Learning Network” held a joint conference on “*Learning careers, higher education and workplaces: Supporting transitions in times of complexity*” 25–27 March 2025 at the University of Rennes.

First impressions on LinkedIn: → <https://t1p.de/learning-careers-and-identities-impressions>

The “Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education (TEAE)” Network organised a Research Retreat Symposium 18–20 June 2020, at the University of Rennes, France. The Subject was “*Transforming Work-Life Balances*”.

Some impressions will follow in the next ESREA newsletter edition.

Developments in EU Research Policy

Council adopts European research area policy agenda for the next three years

On 23 May 2025, the European Council reached a political agreement on a recommendation to adopt the European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda 2025–2027. The agenda aims to implement the pact for Research and Innovation collectively. Long-term, structural measures include Open Science, Knowledge Valorization, and Research Careers. There will also be thematically oriented actions on artificial intelligence in science, research security or alternatives to animal testing. The proposal published on 28 February also mentions the planned EFR legislation (ERA-Act), which intends to create equal competition conditions in member states by harmonizing regulations and contributing towards achieving the goals of the EFR beyond what can be achieved through voluntary cooperation activities.

- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/de/press/press-releases/2025/05/23/council-endorses-the-european-research-area-policy-agenda-for-the-next-three-years/>
- https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2025-02/COM_2025_62_F1_PROPOSAL_FOR_A_RECOMMENDATION_EN_V5_P1_3951028.PDF

Publications

RELA Journal



The **European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA)** is published on behalf of ESREA. RELA is a refereed academic journal creating a forum for the publication of critical research on adult education and learning.

Recently published:

Vol.16 No. 2 (2025): Open Papers

→ <https://rela.ep.liu.se/issue/view/458>

All RELA issues can be found at: → <https://rela.ep.liu.se/>

Open RELA Calls for papers

Topic: **Arts and adult education**

Submission deadline: 31 October 2025

→ <https://rela.ep.liu.se/libraryFiles/downloadPublic/165>

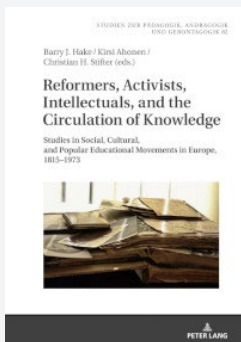
Open papers may be submitted any time, see the call:

→ <https://journal.ep.liu.se/RELA/libraryFiles/downloadPublic/19>

Keep checking: All upcoming calls will be made available at → <https://rela.ep.liu.se/cfp>

Publications from ESREA Networks

Network “History of Adult Education and Training in Europe” - New Book Publication



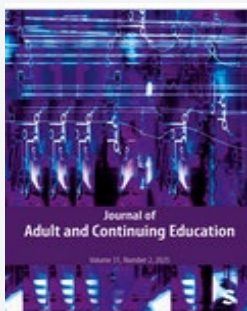
Hake, B. J., Ahonen, K., & Stifter, C. (Eds.) (2025).

Reformers, Activists, Intellectuals, and the Circulation of Knowledge. Studies in Social, Cultural, and Popular Educational Movements in Europe, 1815–1973. Peter Lang.

→ <https://www.peterlang.com/document/1522910>

Please note: A public online presentation is planned by the book editors. Keep checking the ESREA Communication Mails for updates.

Network “Policy Studies in Adult Education” – Special Issue JACE



Barros, R., & Mohorcic-Spolar, V. (Eds.) (2025). Europeanisation of adult education – prospects and challenges. Special Issue. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 31(2). SAGE Publications.

→ <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/adua/31/2>

Save the Date: Forthcoming Events

ESREA General Assembly 2025

3 November 2025, 2.00–3.30 p.m. CET

Venue: Online. The link will be sent out together with the invitation and agenda two months before the meeting.

ESREA Triennial 2025

24–27 September 2025

“Dialogue in and through adult education and learning”

Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

→ [Conference website](#)

ESREA Network Events

13–15 May 2026

Conference of the ESREA Network on Policy Studies in Adult Education:

“Adult Learning and Education. Widening the scope for action”

University of Hamburg, Germany

→ [Call for papers](#)

→ [Conference website](#)

Seasonal Schools

1–5 September 2025

“Transitions in ageing. An interdisciplinary framework for research”

Lake Como School of Advanced Studies

Villa del Grumello, Como, Italy

→ [Further information](#)

How to become a member of ESREA

Membership in ESREA is open to both individual and institutional members. All members get a reduced fee at ESREA activities, information in the field of research on the education of adults through the ESREA mailing list and newsletters. Individual members 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. Please download the document at → <http://www.esrea.org/about-us/membership/>
2. Fill in the membership application form and e-mail it to: → esrea_sec@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 EUR for individual members, 25 EUR for students and PhD students and 150 EUR 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:

Bank: Sparkasse KoelnBonn

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

About this Newsletter

The ESREA Newsletter is the association's newsletter for ESREA members, published three times a year – in February, June, and October – by the ESREA Secretariat.

It shares news and updates from the ESREA Board and Secretariat, from our networks, and from individual ESREA members – especially when their work has an international angle and might be of interest to others in the community.

We're always looking forward to receive contributions from ESREA members! These can include (but aren't limited to):

- Events like conferences, doctoral schools, research retreats, or online symposia
- New publications such as edited volumes or special issues
- News about recently completed PhD theses
- Awards and recognition received by members
- Updates on ongoing or recently finished (international) projects

Contributions can be brief or more in-depth, and images are welcome too. We encourage both informative reports and more reflective pieces. Opinion articles on European developments in adult education (research) are also very welcome.

If you would like to contribute, please contact the ESREA Secretariat at: → esrea_sec@die-bonn.de

Newsletter release schedule

Planned in 2025/2026:
end of October 2025,
end of February 2026,
end of June 2026

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