

Action Plan for ESREA 2014-2016

As defined in the statutes, ESREA is devoted to encourage and support the advancement of high quality research on the education and learning of adults in European countries. Hence, an ongoing reflection on the field, its evolution, and ESREA's role in it, is promoted by ESREA in its conferences, seminars, and publications (RELA, book series etc.). The research on the "History of ESREA", published on the website in 2014, was accompanied by an invitation to all associate members to strengthen this reflexive process in their meetings and activities.

The current context of Adult Education and Learning in Europe presents lights and shadows, constraints and complexities to be taken into account. On one side, Adult Education and Learning has become a political priority within the Lifelong Learning area of the European Union and OECD, as recognized in many policy documents and in the implementation of several research projects. On the other side, a narrow view of both education and research risks to diminish the role of research, its freedom and potential to bring forth new and critical views. There is a need, then, of both a deep reflection and new strategies, to position ourselves in this context, and to be able to offer possibilities to our associate members.

ESREA's Steering Committee adopted a triennial Action Plan (the first one was in 2011-2013) as a tool to define its priorities, policies and actions to be taken to achieve ESREA's aims and to offer concrete means to ESREA's associates to develop their research within an open, inclusive and active community. The 2014-2016 Action Plan strengthens and defines aims and strategies for the next three years. It is a positioning of ESREA in relation to the current context of Adult Education and Learning in Europe, through an active policy of outreaching as a way to enlarge and diversify our community, the creation of better and more visible links between the SC and ESREA's 12 research networks and their many conferences, as well as with other European and national organisations, the enhancement of its publishing activities, the contribution to the training of new researchers, and a way to be active in the discussion about policies at European level.

1. Outreach and recruitment activities

The SC prioritised the aim to increase membership, both institutional and individual, and to widen the spectrum of its members. In fact, while ESREA has a strong position in some parts of Europe (North/West countries), other parts (South/East countries) are under-represented, or totally absent. Hence, languages and cultures of research that are present in ESREA are not representative of the variety and richness of cultures in Europe.

Outreach and recruitment activities in the next period will be specifically aimed to find more equilibrium between North and South, East and West, as well as voices and cultures of research.

Identified actions during the next period:

- Internal membership recruitment through the research network membership lists. The Steering Committee will draft a letter to the members of what ESREA does and why it is important to become a member.
- Conferences and activities will be organized as far as possible in countries that are not very present in ESREA. Network convenors will be invited by the Secretary to take this responsibility and monitored on a yearly base. The SC will have this as one criterion when going through the tenders for the triennial conference 2016.
- The Steering Committee members will take responsibility to participate, when possible, in conferences or other activities that are organized in southern/eastern countries.
- To sustain active participation by individuals who do not have the financial support to travel to a conference, possibilities for ICT presentations will be explored e.g. for the triennial conference. The secretary will be responsible for this action

2. The role of research networks and conferences and the cooperation with national associations

This area contains inside relationships, between the SC and research networks, and outside relationships, with national associations.

a. The twelve research networks are the backbone of ESREA and the SC needs to build a closer collaboration with them and their activities. In order to do so, convenors should get more insight into the work of the SC, and also the other way around.

Identified actions during the next period:

- After each SC meeting the Chair and the Vice Chair will write a newsletter to the convenors in order to keep them updated.
- Each network website needs to be updated, unified and revised. The Chair and Secretary are responsible for this action.
- Actions related to the triennial conference 2016. The secretary will be responsible for this action and communicate it to the conference organizer's:
 - o A meeting of all the convenors will be organized during the triennial conference 2016.
 - o Specific activities will be included in the triennial conference 2016, to give visibility to the networks and what they do.
 - Two research networks can be responsible for organizing a workshop profiling exciting new perspectives (or something similar) in their areas.
 - Encourage proposal for network's sponsored symposia profiling networks perspectives on the conference main topics.
 - Plan a roundtable on the future of adult education research in which representatives of different networks (or a sample of them) discuss their views on the way forward – drawing on the works and views of the network they represent.

- Asking one or more network convenors to be discussants on keynote presentations.
- Name badges, which specify membership of networks.
- The research network should have a table at the conference.
- RELA should also have a table at the conference, and organize a session to discuss what is a good research paper, and “meet” the Editors opportunities.

b. Many organisations and associations are institutional members of ESREA; SC members are active participants in national and international networks. All these relationships and collaborations are very important to the aims of ESREA stated in items 1 and 2; they can sustain networking and bring resources.

Identified actions during the next period:

- SC members and all Network Convenors should be aware and active as ambassadors for ESREA within their networks and make sure that ESREA is always properly presented, discuss its aims and role whenever possible, foster individual and institutional membership, invite people to send proposals to other network conferences and to RELA, etc.
- SC members are expected to participate when invited to public activities organised by other organisations and associations within the area of adult learning and education. If a member cannot participate to an important event, the invitation should be forwarded to the rest of the SC.
- ESREA is open to collaborate with local, national and international organisations and associations that have similar aims. Specific actions can be taken by the SC in relation to co-joint projects.

3. Publishing activities

In the previous action plan, this was the prioritized action and it was successful with the launch of the open access journal RELA, as well as the re-launch of the book series now published with SENSE Publisher. Now it is important to maintain and encourage network convenors to prepare and submit book proposals as well as to encourage conference participants to submit papers to RELA as a further step in their academic writing.

Identified action during the next period:

- Open a discussion with the research networks about topics of interest for RELA. The RELA editorial board is responsible.

4. Engaging in the training of new researchers and research capacity building

The SC decided to give a concrete signal of ESREA's engagement in the training and learning of new researchers. ESREA already has quite a strong tradition and experience of being a place where new researchers and doctoral students are able to meet, learn and enhance their research

capacities, as well as to grow as researchers in adult education, to develop one's identity within a learning community, and to build good network relationships with other scholars.

Universities and doctoral schools can also profit from their involvement with ESREA, since the logic of networking is becoming more and more dominating in our academic cultures. Adult education and learning can suffer, in some countries, from a lack of resources. Then, the creation of solid collaborations in training can be useful in many regards.

Identified actions during the next period:

- Sustain the building of stronger collaboration among different institutional members, i.e. in the form of a consortium of institutions (entailing 5/6 six universities) that would be able to apply for a EU grant. In the long term, this could lead to a summer school under the auspices of ESREA. The Chair takes the task to explore this possibility.
- Give a concrete support to existing summer schools that are coherent with ESREA's aims, through their identification and publication in a list, and through bursaries. The SC will identify criteria and circulate a document, to be published in the website, to inform organisers of the summer schools about this possibility.

5. Participation in policy research at European level

This item has been debated for a long time. The position of the SC is not to participate directly in the political arena but to maintain a clear view on the context and on the evolution of policy in adult education and learning, also inviting policy makers to ESREA's activities, when this is possible and useful. The SC emphasise the importance to distinguish between policy as a field and focus of study within the broader field of adult education and learning, and policy as a context that influences several fields and foci of study in adult education and learning. The SC considers equally important to distinguish between the sharing of information about policy and policy-relevant happenings (e.g. Issuing of documents and strategies, conferences and seminars by political bodied and/or their agencies, etc.) from activities aimed at stimulating academically relevant debates on these policy and policy-relevant happenings.

Identified actions during the next period:

- The ESREA research network on policy studies in adult education has a specialized expertise for stimulating academic relevant debates and it is important to discuss possible forms of cross-networks activities (e.g. webinars lead/run by PSAE but organized in collaboration with relevant networks on topics of mutual interests).
- Several SC members, Network convenors and/or individual members can contribute to information sharing (e.g. a devote section of the newsletter on What's new on policy or the like).