



ESREA Research Network  
**History of Adult Education and Training in Europe**  
European seminar Paris, 4-6 July 2018: Call for proposals

**Pioneering Women and Men in European Adult Education  
(19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

The history of adult education has mostly focused on institutions: on their education or training activities, on the challenges these activities were supposed to respond to, or on ideologies in which they were rooted.

In this kind of research, some personalities have been recognized as influential figures for their role as initiators, leaders or inspiring examples. As in other domains of activities, researchers in adult education have more often focused on men rather than women. Although their contribution to the development of adult education in Europe was essential during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when no - or few - governmental adult education policies existed, there are many significant figures who do not feature in the literature.

Given the importance of individual actors in early European adult education, surprisingly little has been written about these people, their biographies, motivations, and practices to promote the education of adults.

The aims of this European seminar are:

1. To explore biographical trajectories of theorists, initiators, and activists ~~or~~ of various forms of adult education, and to analyze what led them to become 'pioneers' in adult education. This requires reflection on the meaning of ~~an~~ 'adult education pioneer'. Biographical information concerning the family and social backgrounds, education, career, sources of inspiration, as well as their contacts and networks will provide the basis for understanding their contribution. Furthermore, it is also important to discuss the social and historical context for their social commitment. For this reason, collective dimensions, for example social movements, should not be forgotten although the focus will be on individuals. The pioneers in adult education should also be examined in the national, international, political, social and cultural contexts of the period.
2. To identify new figures, more particularly women pioneers, who, up to now, have not been recognized to the same extent as men. This may lead to devoting more attention to a wider range of adult education initiatives than has been the case up to now, including paying attention to women's discourses claiming their rights to adult education and the activities they advocated.
3. To provide the basis for a European biographical dictionary, listing or documenting not only biographical notes, but also reflecting on different issues by the papers.

For example, which kind of significance did level of education, forms of knowing, religious conviction, or political ideology have in the process of becoming an adult education pioneer? As for the variety of their motivations, is it possible to distinguish between the motivations of male and female actors, or male and female way of acting and thinking? Is it possible to make comparisons between different countries or different periods in history? How did the fact that adult education was promoted and initiated by individual actors impact on the nature of these activities? Or did it not?

The intention of this European seminar is to develop a framework for the future biographical research and documentation of significant figures in adult education. Therefore, presenters are asked to structure their papers portraying an adult education pioneer in two parts: first part describing the biographical trajectory of this figures, second part analyzing her/his ideas, action, or theorizing on adult education.

The richness of discussion will depend on the variety of the studied pioneer profiles and of the national contexts they belong.

Please send your proposal by the end of February 2018 to both co-convenors:

- Kirsi Ahonen [kirsi.a.m.ahonen@gmail.com](mailto:kirsi.a.m.ahonen@gmail.com)
- Françoise F. Laot [francoise.laot@univ-reims.fr](mailto:francoise.laot@univ-reims.fr); [francoise.f.laot@orange.fr](mailto:francoise.f.laot@orange.fr)

Acceptance of papers will be confirmed by the end of April 2018.