

Hall of Fame – induction symposium

November 8, 2024, Florence

Dear colleagues,

As you can imagine, there have been significant people in my life ...

Let me quote the first one: ‘It’s all about two words starting with an S and two with the letter D – namely **Sharing** and **Stealing** as well as **Dreaming** and **Dancing**’.

This memorable, shortest possible way of describing endeavors for establishing and carrying out an Adult Learners’ Week has accompanied me throughout my nearly 30 years of work in awareness-raising as well as other opportunities to foster adult learning and education. Therefore, thank you, **Sir Alan Tuckett!**

The second man in my professional life has been SIAE’s first director **Dr Zoran Jelenc** who will turn 90 next year. He’s been a visionary and a fierce advocate for lifelong learning since 1996 (the European Year of LL). Therefore, in Slovenia we named our learning festival the Lifelong Learning Week (LLW).

And then there is my late **father**. His life was challenging, heavily marked by poverty and the 2nd World War. He struggled with addiction, had little education, worked at construction sites ... He was an absent father ... But I remember very clearly that he had a special gift – he was a great storyteller! I strongly believe that he passed this gift on to me. He passed 40 years ago but I feel that today he is with me, supporting me and cheering for me right now.

On the female side of my supporters, there have been lots of women who affected my life. For this purpose, I chose only three, but they stand for larger communities.

Dr Nataša Potočnik, the present directress of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) and my accompanying person at this event. She is here on behalf of our staff – present and past. They all have taught me that ALE is something special, worthy of great dedication and craftsmanship. I have learned from them a lot, they have been my role models, and I have followed into their steps. On the other hand, all these years I’ve been granted a lot of creative freedom, so that today, I can proudly say: **I did it my way** (or, like Robert Frost put it in his poem: ... *I took the road less travelled by*).

Gina Ebner, general secretary of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), representing the ALE community in Europe with strong ties world-wide. Each contact, each collaboration, especially that involving advocacy for learners and ALE in general, has been an invitation to join this joyful and powerful movement. It has also been an acknowledgment of the right course of our work in Slovenia and a lighthouse for better orientation in this ever-changing world. So many friendships, so many transfers of practice, knowledge, wisdom ... resulted from this.

And finally, the **maternal side of my ancestors** – my mother, grandmother, great grandmother ..., who in times of distress, especially during my youth, told me never to

cry or give up but to **learn and work**. This has been instilled in my personality ever since and has safely guided me until now.

And then, there have been opportunities and challenges ...

For someone growing up in a communist regime, it was life-changing when I received the **American Field Service scholarship** and spent my last high-school year (1975/76) in the USA, in the beautiful state of Maine. At this crucial age of 17, this experience considerably widened my perception of the world!

By chance, I shifted from my first job – based on my education in the field of economy and information science – to SIAE. I knew close to nothing about andragogy, but its practice felt close to my heart – and I believe that this is what matters the most. I do not hold a PhD in this field, but it feels that I earned an imaginary one through engaging passionately in real life ALE. In a way, I'm receiving the acknowledgement for this today, and I am grateful.

And then all the opportunities that came along: in addition to the LLW, a fellowship with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in 1997/1998, cooperation with DVV International in Southeastern Europe ... Recently, the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (2012–2024), most recently the national coordination of the European Year of Skills ...

I have never said no to new venues of work and luckily, this widened the scope of our institute's work and enlarged cooperation and partnerships – at home and abroad.

My humble vision for ALE or actually, an invitation: Let's create **meeting places** and **opportunities** for people from all walks of the ALE community – learners, representatives of profession and practice, policy, academia, even media – **for dialogue and interaction**. Interaction that includes the **Sharing** and **Stealing**, the **Dreaming** and **Dancing** – in the widest and most noble sense of these four words.

Thank you.

Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education

Short speech at the induction ceremony:

Dear Gina, Uwe, Per ... the whole EAEA community – thank you for believing in me and nominating me for the Hall of Fame (HoF).

Thank you, the HoF and HoF European Chapter as well the University of Florence for organizing this magnificent event and accepting me into this distinguished community of HoF members.

I have already talked about some significant people in my life, but have not mentioned my present family (my partner, two daughters, a grandson ...) yet. I appreciate that despite the toll my great work commitment takes, they still respect, accept and love me. And I love them back.

But you know, they do not all have two legs only.

When a lot of exchange has taken place, many words and thoughts have been expressed, I get this urgent need for **silence, nature, the quiet wisdom within and above me/us** ..., and for caressing my animals (one dog, three cats, sheep, geese ...). After looking for a few moments into their eyes, I am revitalized.

Very soon tonight, I will be at this point of needing seclusion.

But not before I express my appreciation to you all for celebrating (*dancing and dreaming*) with me/us tonight and telling you that I'm looking forward to interacting (*sharing and stealing*) with you tomorrow, in the conference, and in the future.

Thank you.

Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education