

IN MEMORIAM
André Schläfli (1950 – 2025)

Alan Tuckett and Sturla Bjerkaker

Former director of the Swiss Lifelong Learning Association (SVEB) from 1991 – 2016, André Schläfli passed away unexpectedly in Cyprus 22 November, and we are many friends and adult educators in Europe and globally who mourn the loss of a good friend and colleague.

André was first and foremost a Swiss, but to get inspired for his work “at home”, and to inspire colleagues abroad, he became for many years an active member of the executive board of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and later, from 2011 – 2016, the European Vice-President of ICAE, the International Council for Adult Education. In 2012, he was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Hall of Fame (HoF), where he also later became the Chair of the Board. He also initiated the European Branch of the Hall of Fame – HoFE, which under his leadership grew to be an important part of the Hall’s activities.

I (Alan) first met André in 1991, just after he was appointed to transform SVEB into a lifelong as well as life-wide community learning association. He had an unusual background for our work, having previously been a banker, but it gave him skills in budget management we learned to appreciate! He brought energy, organisational skills, an enquiring mind and enduring passion to adult learning and education. As well as work as colleagues in EAEA, I worked closely with him and Ruth Jermann over the launch of the nationwide LernFestival. It was creative, innovative and full of fun.

I (Sturla) met André around the turn of the millennium. He had been working for some years to create an Adult Education Law in Switzerland, and I was invited to present the Norwegian legislation. We

became close friends, and we worked together both for ICAE and for the Hall of Fame, and we had numberless discussions where we sometimes could disagree but always ended up friendly.

Over the 25 years he led SVEB, he persuaded legislators to adopt the law enshrining financial support for Adult learning and education as well as a secure financial footing for SVEB's work, which was realized in 2017. He pioneered work on professionalisation and certification of the teaching workforce.

André played a key role in securing Swiss Co-operation funding for the work of ICAE, which lasted for several years. Andre was a bright, hardworking and stimulating colleague and friend, never shy to challenge adult educators' orthodoxies, but always a loyal and committed partner in the work. He will be hugely missed.