

Conference of the ESREA Network on Policy Studies in
Adult Education

Adult Learning and Education: Widening the scope for action

13-15 May 2026, University of Hamburg, Germany

Programme Overview	2
Keynotes and Policy Dialogue	3
There is a Crack in Everything – That’s How the Light Gets In: The Paradoxes of Agency in a New Era of Austerity and Illiberalism	3
Keynote: Eastern Africa Adult Education Struggles, Rising Geopolitics and Aid Shifts: Practical Wisdom and Resilience	4
Policy Dialogue	5
Paper Sessions and Symposia	6
13. May 2026: 15:15 - 17:15 Parallel Sessions 1	6
14. May 2026: 09:00 - 11:00 Parallel Sessions 2	7
14. May 2026: 13:30 - 15:30 Parallel Sessions 3	8
14. May 2026: 16:00 - 18:00 Parallel Sessions 4	9
15. May 2026: 11:00 - 13:00 Parallel Sessions 5	10
Visit to the Green Bunker, St. Pauli	11
Conference Dinner (Self paying)	11
Venue	12
Public Transport	13
Hotel Recommendations	14

Programme Overview

13. May			
11:00		Registration	Foyer
13:00	13:30	Welcome and Opening Session	Lecture Hall
13:30	14:00	Coffee Break	
14:00	15:00	Keynote by Bernd Käßlinger: <i>There is a Crack in Everything – That's How the Light Gets In: The Paradoxes of Agency in a New Era of Austerity and Illiberalism</i>	Lecture Hall
15:15	17:15	Parallel Sessions 1	Seminar Rooms
17:30	19:00	Visit of the Green Bunker, St. Pauli	Subway Station Feldstraße

14. May			
09:00	11:00	Parallel Sessions 2	Seminar Rooms
11:00	11:30	Coffee Break	
11:30	12:30	Keynote by Robert Jjuuko: <i>Eastern Africa Adult Education Struggles, Rising Geopolitics and Aid Shifts: Practical Wisdom and Resilience</i>	Lecture Hall
12:30	13:30	Lunch	
13:30	15:30	Parallel Sessions 3	Seminar Rooms
15:30	16:00	Coffee Break	
16:00	18:00	Parallel Sessions 4	Seminar Rooms
19:00		Conference Dinner	Vo Uu Restaurant (Asian Fusion Kitchen)

15. May			
09:30	10:30	Policy Dialogue	Lecture Hall
10:30	11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00	13:00	Parallel Sessions 5	Seminar Rooms
13:00	14:00	Lunch	
14:00	14:30	Information about the Network	Lecture Hall
14:30	15:00	Closing Session	Lecture Hall

Keynotes and Policy Dialogue

13. May, 14:00 – 15:00 Lecture Hall

There is a Crack in Everything – That’s How the Light Gets In: The Paradoxes of Agency in a New Era of Austerity and Illiberalism

Prof. Dr. Bernd Käpplinger, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, Germany

The call to „widen the scope for action“ adopts an almost paradoxically optimistic stance, demanding proactive engagement at a time when the research and practice of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) appear to be increasingly on the defensive. This defensive posture creates further paradoxes, often masking the structural shortcomings or failures within existing ALE subsystems—the current struggles surrounding the German integration system being a prime example. This keynote critically yet constructively interrogates the conference theme. It explores the widening discrepancy between rhetorical claims of emancipation and the structural realities of the field. The analysis examines whether current counter-strategies truly expand agency or merely represent reactive maneuvers against a progressive loss of autonomy and shrinking spaces.

Crucially, ALE is analyzed not merely as a passive victim of external political crises, but also as a field that has, for decades, sometimes sustained funding logics and performance indicators that undermine democratic substance. It has frequently succumbed to what the Call for Papers aptly describes as "anticipatory obedience" among professionals and providers. Having long been instrumentalized as a societal "repair shop," ALE now finds itself constrained by a New Austerity and rising Illiberalism, as its traditional "repair function" seemingly hits its limits. The inquiry suggests that "widening the scope" remains a placebo as long as ALE is functionalized to merely stabilize democracies or foster resilient citizens without addressing the root causes of instability and vulnerability. True agency requires a radical departure from present economic logics that degrade education to a tool for some specific market adaptability.

The contribution argues that counter-strategies must move beyond mere survival management and muddling through. Instead, the field must reclaim its political core and seek alternative socio-economic paradigms. By challenging researchers to distinguish between symbolic resistance and actual structural change, this keynote seeks to provoke a necessary debate within the ESREA community: Is ALE research sometimes merely celebrating its own marginalization, or is it effectively disrupting populist and right-wing turns with positive visions that go beyond a defensive status quo? In conclusion, the keynote explores perspectives for genuine optimism. The crises we face—from the climate emergency to the rise of populism—create "cracks" in the established political economy. These cracks offer ALE the opportunity to reposition itself: not as a "repair shop" for a broken system, but as a laboratory for democratic and economic revival. Progress, it is argued, requires a renewed capacity for utopian thought to move beyond focusing on wicked problems.

Dr. Bernd Käpplinger, Full Professor for Continuing Education since 2015 at Justus-Liebig-University Giessen in Germany. Previous employments at Humboldt-University Berlin and the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and German Institute for Adult Education in Bonn between 2001 and 2015. Member of ESREA and former member of the Steering Committee. Fields of research: Program Planning, Participation, Guidance, History of Adult and Continuing Education.

14. May, 11:30 – 12:30 Lecture Hall

Keynote: Eastern Africa Adult Education Struggles, Rising Geopolitics and Aid Shifts: Practical Wisdom and Resilience

Dr. Robert Jjuuko, Gulu University, Uganda

The field of Adult Education in Eastern Africa is facing an existential threat, worsened by aid shifts that are partially triggered by rising geopolitics and populism. Even after starting to recover from the shocks of the narrowed ‘education for all’ (EFA) narratives of the 1990s and millennium development rhetoric, Adult Education is currently under severe pressure.

The current isolationist paradigms adopted by some global North governments have led to budget cuts for programmes targeting out-of-school adults and young people in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and similar contexts. Populist ideologies, increasingly driven by migration and other economic interests, prioritize the notion of ‘domestic interests first’ over authentic international cooperation. This situation poses severe financial consequences for the emancipatory aims of Adult Education. As a result, poorer countries often find it easier to prioritize labour market-oriented forms of education in the name of direct economic returns, employability, and human capital development. Furthermore, the use of aid or foreign investment provided through multilateral and bilateral agencies to ‘maintain control and hegemony over poorer countries’ is becoming more explicit.

The unequal power relations between rich and poor nations and the shifting aid priorities for education—especially for Adult Education—are not new. This context necessitates an exploration of how local actors navigate these challenges and can potentially sustain and widen their scope for action. The keynote lecture explores the intersection of rising geopolitics and corresponding aid shifts in the Adult Education struggles of the three Eastern African countries and specifically examines inherent practical wisdom and resilience of actors.

Dr. Robert Jjuuko is an educationist and lecturer at Gulu University; researching and promoting lifelong learning and meaningful youth transitions. He is Co-Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair on Lifelong Learning, Youth & Work; a partnership platform established by the University of Groningen, the Netherlands and Gulu University, Uganda. His adult education & lifelong learning lenses are grounded in his over 20 years’ experience as a community educator; promoter and co-founder of adult education-oriented civil society institutions at local, national and international levels. Dr Jjuuko’s theory and practice of youth transition is informed by his Participatory Action Research-oriented PhD thesis on agency-focused agricultural education-work transition of young people in Uganda.

15. May, 9:30 – 10:30 Lecture Hall

Policy Dialogue

- Anja Meierkord, OECD: Presentation on PIAAC findings
- Commentary by Anke Grotlüschen: PIAAC and Adult Education – why that matters
- Commentary by Anne Larson (DK): The non-shock of PIAAC in Denmark
- Dialogue with the audience (moderated by Anke Grotlüschen)

Paper Sessions and Symposia

13. May 2026: 15:15 - 17:15

Parallel Sessions 1

Session A / Room 05	Session B / Room 06	Session C / Room 07	Session D / Room 08
Paper Session	Symposium	Paper Session	Paper Session
Educational Policies	Experiential learning and non-formal knowledge: A worldwide perspective	Literacy	Citizenship Education
Chair: Bernd Käpplinger	Chair: Hervé Breton	Chair: Frank Fernandez	Chair: Philipp Assinger
Jorie Soltic Lifelong Learning under time pressure: The temporal turn as a lens on European and Flemish policy discourses	Hervé Breton Formalizing experiential knowledge: Procedures, criteria, and global policies	Soyoun Park, Joon Heo, Yeil Kwon, Ji Hye Lee Hidden faces of illiteracy in Korea: A mixed-methods study of emerging literacy groups and policy Implications	Annette Rasmussen, Karen E. Andreasen Widening women's scope of action: Citizenship education through home economics
Erika Mazzoli Between local practices and European agendas: How CPIA principals navigate Adult Education policy in Italy	Carmen Cavaco, Catarina Paulos Recognition and validation of experiential learning in Portugal: Challenges and tensions of a public Adult Education policy	Maren Elfert, Kjell Rubenson Tracing the OECD-Canada relationship in Adult Education and literacy and the history of IALS	Peter Ehrström Raise the voices of the voiceless – A deliberative learning ladder for advancing civic participation
	Dai Matsumoto Learning and practice in circulation: Applying learning outcomes in Japan's "Knowledge Circulation Society"	Gregor Dutz Exploring adult literacy with PIAAC: Practice engagement and policy implications	Pia Seidler Cort, Anne Larson Non-formal education for democracy

14. May 2026: 09:00 - 11:00
Parallel Sessions 2

Session E / Room 05	Session F / Room 06	Session G / Room 07	Session H / Room 08	Session I / Room 21
Paper Session	Paper Session	Paper Session	Paper Session	Paper Session
Gender	Citizenship Education	Literacy	Higher Education / Academia	Older Adults
Chair: Adejoke Clara Babalola	Chair: Palle Rasmussen	Chair: Jana Arbeiter	Chair: André Kukuk	Chair: Frances-Ann Norton
Aline Rocha Santana da Silva, Sérgio Eduardo de Pinho Velho Wanderley, Carmen de Jesus Dores Cavaco Trajectories of black women from youth and Adult Education in the world of work	Zeinab Yazdizadeh, Jyri Manninen Different definitions of citizenship and models of citizenship education – a systematic literature review	Jana Arbeiter Family cafés as pioneers: Relearning institutional trust, commitment, and self-efficacy in Adult Education	André Kukuk Far from what is needed? Political reform strategies versus participants' demands on (higher) continuing education formats	Frances-Ann Norton Challenging UK educational policy: Could creative critical thinking with older people combat loneliness?
Klaus Buddeberg, Johanna Husting Big Money – Small Money. About the relationship between gender and responsibility for important financial decisions	Eve Cobain, Rebecca Jackson Community education for social transformation in Ireland	Suh Yeon Hwang, Soonghee Han Corporate employment structures and the reproduction of adult literacy: A comparative analysis of South Korea and Italy	Xing Liu-Schuppener, Steffi Robak, Bin Bai Digital transformation of higher continuing education in China in the age of artificial intelligence	Claudia Kulmus Ageing in urban areas: age-friendly city policies and local Adult Education
Adejoke Clara Babalola, Tajudeen Ade Akinsooto Exploring the dimensions of informal learning from unpaid work among women in academics in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	Palle Rasmussen Julius Bomholt, social democracy and Danish Adult Education	Kristin Skowranek Digital participation in Europe: Comparing adults with low literacy to adults with higher literacy in 9 countries		Terhi Myller, Heli Makkonen Age-friendly society calls for Lifelong Learning – a practice-critical analysis from Finland

14. May 2026: 13:30 - 15:30
Parallel Sessions 3

Session J / Room 05	Session K / Room 06	Session L / Room 07	Session M / Room 08
Paper Session	Symposium	Paper Session	Paper Session
Educational Policies	International comparison of foundational skills: What do we learn from PIAAC?	Social Justice / Inclusion	Assessment / Evidence based policies
Chair: Andrew Opio	Chair: Anke Grotlüschen Discussant: Claudia Kulmus	Chair: Petya Ilieva-Trichkova	Chair: Jan Kalenda
Andrew Opio Uganda's Adult Education policy agenda 2023/24-2027/28: The coalition, actors' beliefs, motives and influence on practices	Saida Essert A nod and a glance towards adults with low skills in setting National Adult Literacy agendas	Salma Ismail Policy provision alone has proved insufficient to ensure social justice for Adult Education – some reflections from South Africa	Richard Desjardins, Jan Kalenda Data integration and the future measurement of adult learning systems: Towards more comprehensive comparative reporting
Martin Andráši, Jana Poláchova, Vašŕátková, Veronika Siegelová Communities of practice in policy enactment: Insights from the Czech local level	Nathan Breznau Literacy skills of immigrants: Further education, language and parenthood in PIAAC countries	Pepka Boyadjieva, Petya Ilieva-Trichkova A social justice perspective towards the Skills-First policies in Adult Learning and education	Ellen Boeren, Betul Baldan Babayigit, Sharon Clancy, Zyra Evangelista, John Holford Evidence-informed policymaking in Adult Learning and Education: Insights from interviews with policymakers and stakeholders across the UK and Ireland
Satu Heimo The Aims, Autonomy and Critical Thinking of Projectified Popular Education in Finland	Anke Grotlüschen PIAAC in times of right-wing populism	Kiki Maleika Qiu, Ali Osman Adult educators' teaching practices in correctional settings	Carmen Cavaco, Suzanete Oliveira Invisible Voices: Narratives of Youth in Institutional Care and Their Learning Processes

14. May 2026: 16:00 - 18:00
Parallel Sessions 4

Session N / Room 05	Session O / Room 06	Session P / Room 07	Session Q / Room 08
Paper Session	Symposium	Paper Session	Paper Session
Migration, International Action	European mobility and professional development of adult educators: Exploring the enactment of the ERASMUS+ programme across four European countries	Literacy	Adult Education under political pressure
Chair: Marcella Milana	Chair and Discussant: Philipp Assinger	Chair: Annamaria Cacchione	Chair: Suzanne Kyle
Peri Tutar Çınar, Marcella Milana, Francesca Lasi Negotiating inclusion: A case study of Italy's migrant Adult Education policies	Rosanna Barros Adult education system and professionalisation in four European countries - an overview	Adejoke Clara Babalola, Ismaila Bojang Functional literacy practices among artisans in Obafemi Awolowo University Market	Rachel Mayr Populist right-wing influences on migrant language provision: A literature review
Steffi Robak Transnational employee councils – qualification requirements in a complex field of action	Chiara Biasin ERASMUS+ mobility projects in the four European countries – a criteria-based analysis	Paula Elias Reading policy through adult learners' experiences: Adult literacy policy as a site of class struggle	Suzanne Kyle Community education in the shadow of the far-right
Alexandra Ioannidou, Katrin Kaufmann-Kuchta Navigating the wicked problem: Adult Learning and Education in German immigrant integration policy	Martin Kopecky Adult education as part of the European mobility governance and what we know about ERASMUS+ adult education projects in this context	Annamaria Cacchione Bridging the literacy Gap: Innovative approaches to second language learning for adult migrants	

15. May 2026: 11:00 - 13:00
Parallel Sessions 5

Session R / Room 05	Session S / Room 06	Session T / Room 07	Session U / Room 08
Paper Session	Paper Session	Paper Session	Paper Session
Educational Policies	VET	Social Justice / Inclusion	Migration / Erasmus+
Chair: Catarina Paulos	Chair: Panagiotis Kalogerakis	Chair: Denise Shannon	Chair: Kjell Rubenson
Catarina Paulos Initial and continuing education of adult educators in Portugal: The education impact of public policies on adult education	Magdalena Smak Centers of vocational excellence – policy tool facilitating reskilling and upskilling	Aline Rocha Santana da Silva From inclusion policy to emancipatory practice: The history and challenges of the Mulheres Mil Programme in Brazil	Kjell Rubenson, Alexandra Ioannidou, Andreas Martin, Gong-Li Xu Bounded agency in different regimes: ALE participation and skills proficiency of immigrants in Canada and Germany
Margherita Bussi Policy feedback effects on mass politics in Adult Education: theoretical contribution and research designs	Xavier Rambla How do ALE and VET policies construct learning in the EU?	Denise Shannon Critical conversations about policy: what they tell us about how common-sense policy discourses shape personal and institutional sense-making and the implications of this for the social justice work of Adult Education	Bruno Joaquim, Rosanna Barros Life and learning trajectories of adult Brazilian immigrants in Portugal: the case of the Qualify Program
Consesar Massawe, Jyri Manninen How have the supranational Lifelong Learning policy discourses impacted the Tanzanian Adult Education policies?	Panagiotis Kalogerakis, Christos Goulas The emergence of micro-credentials - hopes, hype and... credential inflation: A critical analysis	Michela Bastianelli Narrative coaching and generative welfare for the enhancement of inactive individuals' skills within public guidance services	Borut Mikulec, Paula Guimarães The Erasmus+ programme – impact on participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement in Adult Education in Portugal and Slovenia

Visit to the Green Bunker, St. Pauli

Just under 3 kilometres from the University of Hamburg campus, in the heart of the St. Pauli district, stands a high bunker (<https://www.bunker-stpauli.de/en/>) that was built during the Second World War. As one of the two “flak towers” in Hamburg, the history of the St. Pauli Bunker goes back to the time of National Socialism. Built in 1942 by forced laborers, the bunker was initially intended to be used mainly for air defense during the Second World War. The National Socialist regime also used the concrete fortress as a propaganda tool to demonstrate its own strength—and to prevent the population from becoming “war-weary.” Sources prove that during the bombing of Hamburg, up to 25,000 people sometimes found shelter in the bunker.

After the war, the St. Pauli Bunker—today a protected monument—found a new function in the quarter. By accommodating companies from the worlds of art and culture as well as music clubs and events, the wartime relic was to be transformed into a lively creative center. Between 2019 and 2024, the building was extended by five storeys, each around 20 metres high, and fitted with greenery visible from afar. As part of this, the upper section of the bunker was fitted with a 550-metre-long ‘mountain trail’ mounted on the exterior of the building, leading to a roof garden open to the public. This project is known as the “Green Bunker”

The visit offers information about the history of the bunker, a chance to stretch your legs after the first day of the conference, and a fantastic view over Hamburg. Entrance is free of charge.

Conference Dinner (Self paying)

The conference dinner will take place at the Vo Uu Restaurant (Asian Fusion Kitchen) which is located five minutes walking distance from the venue: <https://www.vo-uu.de/>.

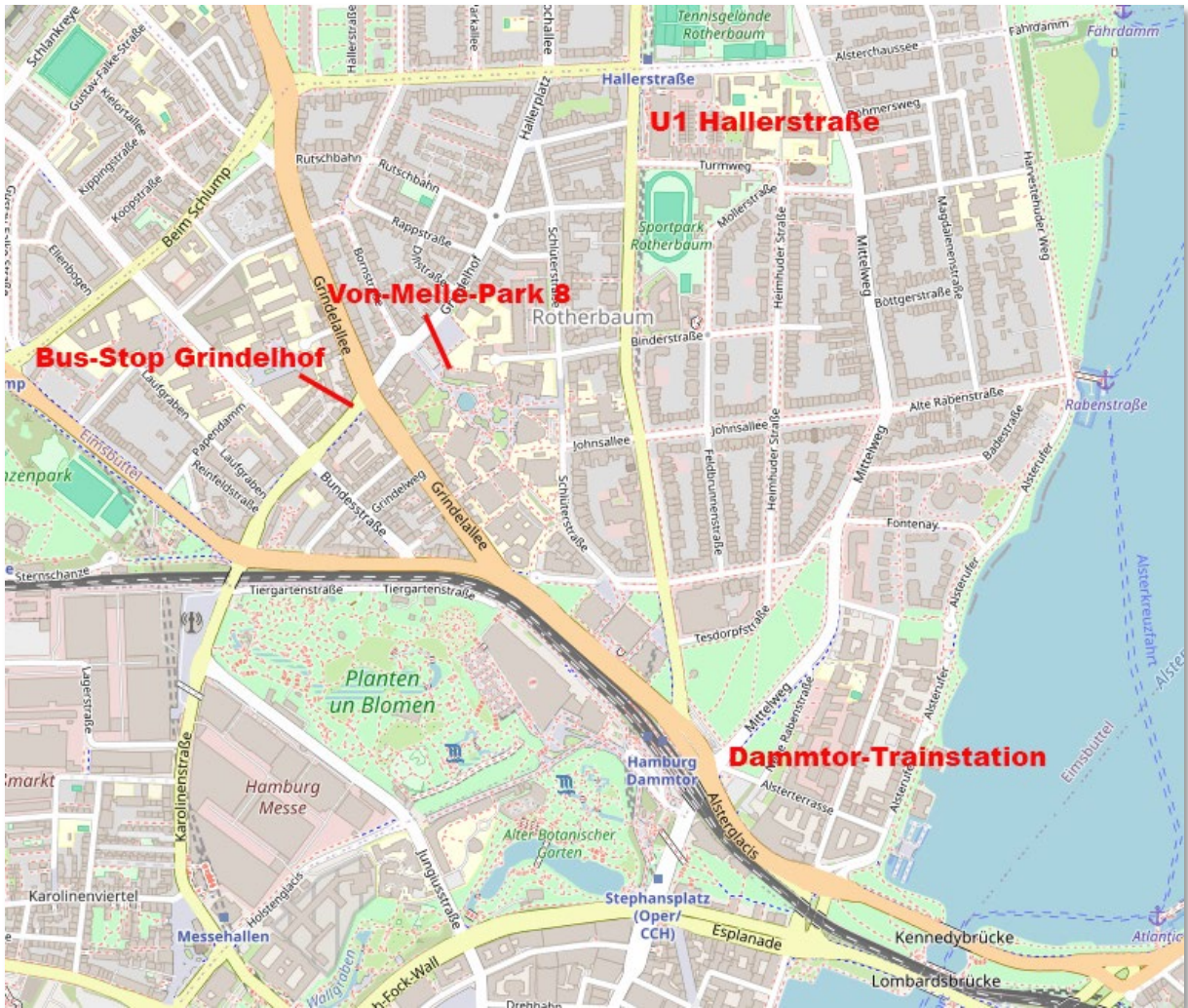
For our dinner a selected menu will be provided. The price of the set menu is 25 euros; drinks are not included.



Venue

University of Hamburg, Faculty of Education, Von-Melle-Park 8, 20146 Hamburg

The conference takes place in the main building of the Faculty of Education, Von-Melle-Park 8, located at the main campus of the University of Hamburg.



<https://www.openstreetmap.org>



Scan for Coordinates
in Google Maps

Public Transport

Public transport is provided by [Hamburger Verkehrsverbund \(HVV\)](#)

Tickets can be bought at ticket machines or via the [HVV-App](#).

Purchasing tickets with the app gives a small discount.

- Ticket Airport to venue: 4.10 Euro (3,81 Euro with the app)
- One-day-ticket: 8,20 Euro (7,63 Euro with the app)

Arriving by plane:

Use the S1 from Airport to Ohlsdorf, exit and go downstairs to change to the other platform, then use U1 to city center, exit U1 Hallerstraße and walk 8-10 minutes.

Arriving by train:

If your train does not go directly to Hamburg Dammtor, take the S5 towards Elbgaustraße or Pinneberg from Hamburg Central Station and get off at Dammtor. From there it is approximately a 10-minute walk to Von-Melle-Park 8.

Hotel Recommendations

Hotel			Distance to Venue
Hotel Fresena Moorweidenstraße 34 20146 Hamburg	144, -	Breakfast incl.	6-min walk
InterCityHotel St. Petersburger Str. 1 20355 Hamburg	122, -	Breakfast 22, -	10-min walk
Ibis Hamburg Alster Centrum Holzdamm 4-12 20099 Hamburg	120, -	Breakfast 20, -	15-min walk
Hotel Wagner im Dammtorpalais Moorweidenstraße 34 20146 Hamburg	100, -	Breakfast 17, -	6-min walk
Hotel am Rotherbaum Rothenbaumchaussee 107 20148 Hamburg	89, -	Breakfast 15, -	15-min walk
Hotel Alsterhof Esplanade 12 20354 Hamburg	88, -	Breakfast incl.	10-min walk
BASEMENT Rotherbaum Rappstraße 8 20146 Hamburg	69, -	No breakfast Shared bathroom	15-min walk
Hostel Centrum Hohenfelder Str. 20 22087 Hamburg	60, -	No breakfast Shared bathroom	30 min by public transport