

The International Ergonomics Association is sad to pass on news of the death of

Ilkka Kourinka
President of the IEA
from 1988 to 1991

Ilkka worked at the renowned Finnish institute of Occupational Health and was recognised as a leading researcher, with visionary insight into the HFE field. He is perhaps best known for the work that he did on developing the Nordic Questionnaire, one of the most used tools in physical ergonomics for quickly screening for musculoskeletal overload.

Under his Presidency, the IEA undertook several initiatives to build up a better relationship with the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization. This turned out to be successful: ILO agreed to support the development of a Checkpoints book for practical ergonomics interventions, primarily meant for industrially developing countries. This is still in use and other joint publications have followed.

Our collaboration with the WHO also continues and has been formalised into the IEA's recognition as a non-state actor. Collaboration with the WHO exists on a number of activities today, not least related to patient safety and the Covid response.

Ilkka Kourinka also encouraged the development of educational and professional certification standards, laying the basis of the IEA Core Competencies and certification endorsement criteria.

Some personal remembrances:

"Ilkka was a visionary who sought transformative changes. I recall during his time as President of IEA, he was Director of IRSST in Canada at the time, and invited the Executive Committee to meet at a winter resort not far from Montreal. It was among the most memorable meetings of the Executive that I recall and the venue was highly conducive to teamwork as we took time out of Association business to cross country ski together. At his urging I organized the first Future's Panel at the IEA Congress in Paris (1991), which was a highlight due to the excellent speakers, and a feature of the Congress that endured to this day. Ilkka was a very gentle person, unassuming, always open to ideas, and diplomatic in his interactions with persons and organizations. He was able to accomplish important projects through collegial persuasion. He also appreciated the importance of preserving and honoring historical milestones and undertook, as first IEA Historian, the very tedious task of compiling the first historical monograph, "The History of the International Ergonomics Association: The First Quarter of a Century", available on the IEA Website. Some of the early IEA leaders were unable to write their story so he decided to interview them personally to preserve their important legacy and contributions to the discipline. While in Canada, we visited each others homes, which left me with very fond memories of Ilkka – his impact will continue to persist for a long time." Ian Noy.

"I didn't know Ilkka as well as Ian but I fully endorse everything Ian has said about Ilkka. His commitment to the IEA in so many ways lives on with his researched history of the IEA and his enduring relationship with the executive members." David Caple

"A modest man, but nevertheless a sound member of so many boards. Not frequently speaking, his words usually expressed wisdom. And he was a good friend, as I said for tens of years." Ernst Koningsveld.

*«Ilkka was a very sympathetic and thoughtful colleague. I have worked with him in the IEA Council for many years. He was a man with few words; quiet, but effective and to the point. In my idea real Finnish! Ilkka was a modest and engaging personality, estimated by his colleagues in the Council and not only there! He commanded respect as problem solver and also as intermediair in conflicts. I'm grateful for his friendship.»
Pieter Rookmaaker*

"I too was impressed with his gentleness and quiet but strong presence. While his term was closer to Ian's, I did have a chance to work with him on the Ergonomics Checkpoints project. We worked in Geneva with the ILO to come up with the first version of this publication. He and Tuulikki were great collaborators. I recall one encounter when he thanked me for something I had done. Without remembering the content of his message, his warmth and sincerity made a strong impression. He was that kind of man." Andy Imada

We send our condolences to his family and those who knew and worked with him.