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## **Farewell for Ambros Uchtenhagen**

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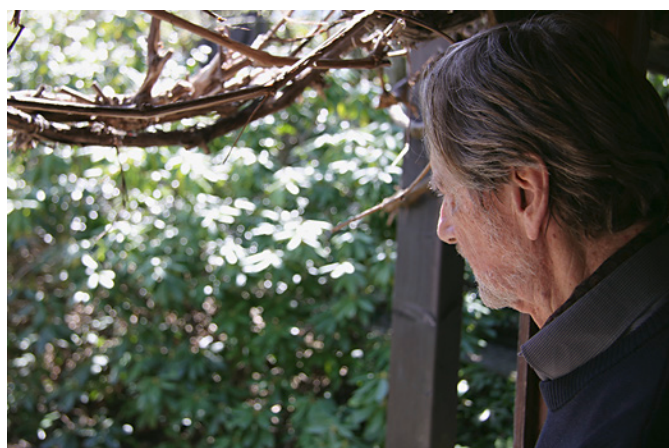
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## Farewell for Ambros Uchtenhagen



Ambros Uchtenhagen

Ambros Uchtenhagen passed away at age 94, still living in his house close to the Grossmünster, a self-determined life nearly until the very end. A personality who was part of critical developments in European Psychiatry, which he shaped with great success and impact beyond his hometown, and a founding Editor-in-Chief of *European Addiction Research*. Not just dedicated to his discipline but its role in society, making it a valuable tool for both the most vulnerable among us and the community we are sharing. He could not be limited to a “medical model” being shaped by philosophical thinking and psychodynamic training, a truly atypical psychiatrist in a dynamic time at the side of his clients.

### A Different Psychiatry

The limitations of psychiatric hospitals, in his case, the historic Burghoelzli led by Manfred Bleuler, motivated him to conceptualize a system focussed on the needs of its users beyond “symptoms.” Zurich at that time was a place for creative solutions and perspectives beyond the usual; he became the leader of Social Psychiatry expanding services into the community with great passion. A passion he pursued beyond his active service in health care.

### Drugs

The open drug scene, Platz Spitz in Zurich, and the failing of traditional approaches creating a visible battle field in the middle of the city at the peak of the HIV pandemic, became his biggest challenge from the 90th onward. A new drug strategy, the introduction and evaluation of heroin-assisted treatment as part of a European shift, has made the system of substance use care in Switzerland an international blueprint for reforms until now. Ambros became the central connection and reference, bringing together big parts of the academic and clinical community and working successfully with decision makers as well as people with lived experiences initiating change.

## The Person

It is impossible to attribute Ambros only to one role, one passion, or one project. To that degree, he was a “Renaissance man,” beyond the scope of publication lists and academic titles. He was curious and creative beyond his discipline and always open to learn. This is what most friends and colleagues admired and appreciated. The love of his life, Lilian Uchtenhagen, was his closest partner in their common journey, herself a successful politician and

pioneer for Swiss women in politics. Weekends and evenings must have been an exciting space with lots of discussions, never boring.

Ambros had a fulfilled life with a big impact on us and others; he is gone without too much suffering, and we will miss him. He will continue to be a reference for many, living on in our memories.

*Michael Krausz  
Michael P. Schaub  
Wim van den Brink*