

ETHICAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS RELATED TO THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF EMERITI PROFESSORS TO THE PUBLIC GOOD

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In December 2021 Jože Gričar has sent to larger group of colleagues, members of EAPE, the invitation to join a group of experts, intended to prepare in common a paper *Ethical and Legal Aspect from Professors Emeriti and Retired Researchers Contribution in Public Goodness. The group should present it at the conference of EAEP at Naples in April 2022.*

Fundamental premise of the theme elaborated was that the impacts of ageing by improving and strengthening intergenerational solidarity is one of the solutions to ensure that everyone can participate in doing some good for the community. Intergenerational learning, including mentoring or experience sharing, allows the young and old to establish mutual solidarity in joint efforts for better solutions. In parallel with policy response to the socio-economic impact in society welfare it is the need to discuss how emeriti professors should contribute to establish intergenerational cooperation. Different academic realities regarding the status of emeriti contribute to diverse possibilities to them to be involved in public activities outside university field. Formal and informal background enable practices that can be compared. The group will analyse different country realities (Austria, Canada, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, United States of America and few others) in a comparative study following:

- a) legal aspect of emeriti involvement in public goodness and intergenerational relations at the states' level;
- b) emeriti inclusion in the research, teaching and governance at the university level;
- c) emeriti personal conditions (motivation and capacities) to take part in the society and endorse responsibilities in its capacity building.

Basic findings are presented in the paper that will be published soon by the Editor in Greece.

In the light of our findings and in accordance with the mission set by the European Emeriti Association, we have concluded with some recommendations:

- It is appropriate for the EAPE to promote best practices from European universities regarding PEs. The first step would be for the EAPE to focus on minimal standards and approaches for all universities.
- The EAPE could promote such standards with either the European Commission or other EU bodies.
- The 2nd congress of the EAPE should be an appropriate occasion to prepare a statement on the contributions of Professors Emeriti and Retired Researchers to the Public Good.
- When it comes to the use of university IT, the position of retired professors who do not have emeritus status should be the same as that of emeritus professors.

- Universities should publish the conditions for the use of university IT by retired faculty on their websites.
- The retiree's use of the university IT should be under the same terms and conditions as those enjoyed by regular professors.
- Each university or school should appoint a representative of the IT Support Department to be the contact person for retired professors looking for advice or assistance.
- The [European Association of Professors Emeriti](#) is invited to issue a *Position Paper on Retired Professors Entitlement for Access to University IT*.

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Part A. General Observations on Legal Issues and Emeritus Status

Our general impression was that universities are not particularly enthusiastic about the continuing presence or activity of ERPs even when they have been university leaders. The legal aspect of their status is less and less defined. Other findings include:

- It can be partially confirmed that universities have nationally defined criteria as well as benefits for emeriti status. However, the process by which one is awarded the title may vary from university to university. At some universities, there is actually no distinction between retired and emeriti professors.
- We did not find evidence that laws or regulations exist in some countries to prohibit discrimination against seniors / retired professors and researchers. In Europe, the formal and social status of PEs varies widely, reflecting cultural and traditional attitudes towards older people in general. There has been a long period of initiatives and efforts in some countries to reach synergies with academic associations in order to promote recognition of PEs who are contributing to the public good.

Part B. Varieties of Emeriti Contributions and Intergenerational Cooperation

Given that we have done assessments from ERPs in 10 different countries, we can begin to draw a certain picture regarding the opportunities for ERPs. Surprising to us, for example, were the low levels of ERP participation in teaching and research: if only an estimated 15% and 20% of ERPs participate in these activities, these are very low numbers. While it is possible that large numbers of ERPs are simply ready to retire completely, we suspect that a constraining factor may be that there are hardly any defined rules for ERP involvement. Even across the universities in single countries, the rules for ERP participation can vary widely. In terms of teaching opportunities, ERPs in almost all countries are dependent on the goodwill of institute directors or deans. In addition, with respect to research, ERPs are generally allowed to lead funded projects for a transitional period at most, and they have no possibility of employing scientific staff. Less surprising for us was that apparently no country-specific conditions can be derived from the respondents' assessments. This may be because there are only very low-threshold national regulations on ERPs, if they exist at all.

Part C: Special Problem: Access to IT

We've found that policies on IT availability for ERPs vary widely between universities. On the one hand, there are universities that offer ERPs continuing and unchanged access to IT. To the best of our knowledge, this is true for all retirees who have been granted emeritus status. This is not universally true, however, for those retired professors who have not been awarded emeritus status. For example, there are universities that terminate an ERP's connection on the day of retirement. There are also several possible practices that allow a retired professor to still use university IT although in a partly less favourable way.

- From the published policies it is not clear how some universities justify the abolition of access to IT. On one hand, in no case do universities explicitly state that IT is appropriate for the EAPE to promote best practices from European universities regarding PEs. The first step would be for the EAPE to focus on minimal standards and approaches for all universities.
- The EAPE could promote such standards with either the European Commission or other EU bodies.

At Koper, 16/01/2023