What is the problem?
It seems that there are few well-established associations of retired professors in Europe, whether at the university or the national level.

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Grassroots, campus-based retirement clubs are noticeably less common, less active, and less integrated into the institutional fabric in Europe than they are in North America. This scarcity of formal structure stems from strict mandatory retirement ages and a traditional view that retirement means a complete exit from professional life.

When these associations are absent or weak, it creates a systemic gap that negatively impacts both the individuals and the institutions.

How the Scarcity is Detrimental

1. To Retired Professors

- *Loss of Professional Identity and Isolation*: Academics often tie their personal identity closely to their work. A sudden, forced departure without a supportive peer network can lead to intellectual isolation and a difficult emotional transition.
- *Disconnection from Vital Resources:* Without a formal association to advocate for them, retired faculty frequently lose access to basic university infrastructure, such as institutional email accounts, digital library subscriptions, and campus workspace.
- *Barriers to Ongoing Research:* Retired professors who wish to continue writing, publishing, or applying for independent research grants often find it difficult to secure institutional backing without an active emeriti group defending their rights.

2. To Universities

- *Drain of Institutional Knowledge*: When professors retire and completely sever ties, decades of specialized expertise, historical context, and institutional memory are lost instantly.
- *Sacrificed Mentorship Opportunities:* Senior scholars are highly valuable assets for mentoring early-career researchers, guiding PhD students through completion, and advising university leadership on complex academic issues. Without an association to coordinate these voluntary efforts, this potential goes completely untapped.

- *Loss of External Networks and Prestige:* Retired professors often maintain powerful international collaborations and evaluation roles. Disengaging them weakens the university's broader footprint, alumni relations, and public outreach capacity.

What Retired Professors Should Do
Senior academics can take several proactive steps to rebuild these connections and protect their academic rights:

- *Leverage Existing European Networks:* Do not start from scratch. Join and collaborate with broader regional platforms like the European Association of Professors Emeriti (EAPE) or participate in the cross-border digital initiatives organized by the Professors Emeriti Network.
- *Establish Local "Emeriti Colleges" or Centres:* Proactively lobby university rectors to establish local hubs. You can model these after existing successful European precedents, such as the Centre for Professors Emeriti and Retired Higher Education Teachers at the University of Maribor, which fosters structured, mutual cooperation between retirees and active staff.
- *Formally Negotiate Digital Access Retention***:** Use collective bargaining or departmental petitions to ensure that retiring faculty retain lifelong university email addresses and library database access. Frame this to administration as a mutually beneficial setup that allows retired faculty to continue publishing under the university's name.
- *Organize Cross-Disciplinary Active-Aging Seminars:* Form informal, internet-based working groups to share research, mentor junior staff on a voluntary basis, or collaborate on social entrepreneurship. Showing active, self-organized utility makes it much easier to convince universities to grant formal institutional recognition.

ChatGPT 22.10.2026

The source of innovation lies in the discovery of problems. Solving a problem starts by asking the right question.

European universities have thousands of retired professors. Many of them remain professionally and academically active. They continue to research, write, publish, participate in conferences, mentor younger colleagues, contribute to professional organizations, maintain international networks, and engage with their universities and society. Yet an important question receives surprisingly little attention: *Who represents professionally and academically active retired professors after retirement?*

In Europe, there appear to be few well-established associations of retired professors at either the university or national level. Before drawing conclusions, this observation should be examined systematically. Which European universities have associations of retired professors? Which countries have national organizations? What do these

associations do? And in which universities and countries are such organizations absent?

Why might this be a problem?

An individual retired professor can raise a question. An association can identify whether many colleagues share the same problem, collect evidence, formulate proposals, communicate with university leadership, and cooperate with similar organizations elsewhere.
Without such associations, retired professors can *become institutionally less visible precisely when they still have much to contribute.*

Questions concerning university email accounts, access to libraries and databases, institutional affiliation, research opportunities, participation in academic life, mentoring, use of university facilities, and recognition of continuing academic contributions may consequently be treated as individual matters rather than issues deserving university-wide discussion. The absence of organization may therefore disadvantage not only retired professors.

Universities may also lose opportunities.

Retired professors represent decades of accumulated knowledge, experience, professional relationships, international contacts, and institutional memory. They can mentor younger academics, support research and publications, participate in international projects, help develop alumni networks, contribute to university history and heritage, and strengthen links between universities and society.

In the age of artificial intelligence and digital collaboration, physical presence at a university is becoming less important for many forms of academic contribution. A retired professor in Ljubljana, Vienna, Padua, Prague, or Helsinki can collaborate with colleagues around the world within seconds.

The question therefore should not be only: *What do retired professors need from their universities?*
We should also ask: *What are universities and society losing when professionally active retired professors are not organized, connected, and encouraged to contribute?*

First, discover the problem

Before calling for new organizations, evidence is needed. A useful European initiative could begin with a simple mapping exercise:
Which universities and countries in Europe have associations or networks of retired professors—and which do not?
Then ask:

What problems do retired professors experience where no such association exists?
What benefits are created where retired professors are organized?
What can existing associations teach universities and retired professors elsewhere?

And finally:
Should professionally and academically active retired professors establish associations at their universities, connect them nationally, and build a European network for eCollaboration?

The purpose would not be to create organizations merely for the sake of having organizations. The purpose would be to make valuable people, knowledge, experience, problems, and opportunities *visible and connected.*

Perhaps the first step is therefore not to say: **"***We need an association."*
The first step is to ask: **"***Do we have a problem?"*