

**Professors
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Quasi nanos gigantum humeris incidentes

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Some years ago, I used this Latin sentence in my personal blog to draw attention to our debt to those who worked before us in our field, whatever it is: science, medicine, engineering, politics, carpentry, mining, fishing or agriculture. They paved the way to further knowledge and achievements, and we should not forget that. The sentence means that “we are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants”: this is a sentence frequently used in the scientific context, which takes one of the old topics of the medieval scholastic rhetoric attributed to one of the most prestigious scholastics (schoolteachers) from those times (13th Century), Bernard of Chartres.

The source is a text of John of Salisbury, one of the best-known disciples in the cathedral school of that city: Bernard of Chartres was referring to that, not for our visual acuity or our high stature, but because we gather on them and rise on their gigantic height (*Metalogicus*, IV). This sentence was retaken by Juan Luis Vives and arrived to the scientists of the 17th Century, meaning that their achievements were based on their predecessors' work. In another quote, attributed directly to Bernard of Chartres, it is explained that this sentence means to “discover the truth by building on previous discoveries so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by any virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because their giant size carries us”. Isaac Newton paraphrased it: “If I have further is by standing on the shoulders of giants”.

When Prof. Jože Gričar asked me for a written contribution to this meeting, I found out that this sentence summarises very well what I wanted to express: we owe a lot to those who came before us, and we also have to keep and enhance that knowledge, expertise, etc. with our work.

But we can still take the opportunity to profit from the knowledge already existing in many seniors around us: in our family, neighbourhood, professional and academic context, etc.

Many seniors still have a lot to share, and they are looking forward to it, while very often, our younger generations (and not so young) do not realise it or simply disdain it.

In our Association, we long constituted the *Beirat*, an advisory/scientific committee supporting the analysis of EU legislation and other provisions and documents affecting the core of our business: the interests of European border and cross-border regions. Our Beirat was first chaired by Viktor Frhr. von Malchus, who was one of our Association's founding fathers in 1971 and, when he passed away in 2008, the former Secretary General (ret.) Jens Gabbe took the witness. We invite to take part former members of our Association and former partners, such as EU high officers, consultants, academics, etc.

The experience so far has been advantageous. Sometimes we make an "urgent" analysis of any EU document to react quickly, and we miss to analyse it in detail, taking the time to take more profound lessons or recommendations and respond appropriately. There is a Spanish aphorism saying that "urgent issues are the main enemy of important ones".

We are fortunate, as we have an enormous pool of seniors who, in one way or another, were very useful for our organisation, and they can still be by keeping on analysing the issues of interest for our organisation on the ground, advising projects and other initiatives, lobbying, etc.

We are absolutely convinced of the benefits of active ageing and life-long learning, and we should not miss the chance to profit from all that knowledge surrounding us. We should keep on supporting science and healthy living in order to procure more years to life, but also more life to these years.