ISSN 2945-0381

The BULLETIN

OF THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS EMERITI

ISSUE 2026; 7(1): 01-45

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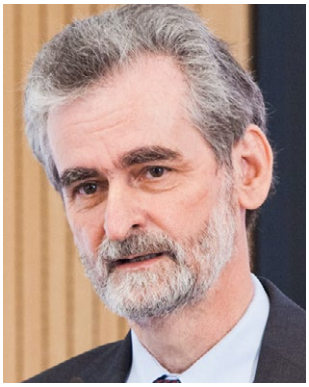

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The Bulletin

of the European Association of Professors Emeriti

Bull Eur Assoc Profs Emer
Quarterly Distribution (4 Issues per Year)

PUBLISHER

The European Association of Professors Emeriti
8, Christou Lada Street, 10561 Athens, Greece
VAT: 997074687

ISSN 2945-0381

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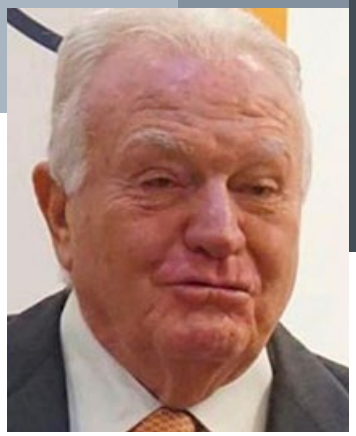

Giancarlo Bracale

The Address of the EAPE President

by **Giancarlo Bracale**,
Professor Emeritus University Federico II, Vascular Surgery,
President, EAPE
Email: gcbracale43@gmail.com

Naples, 24.03.2026

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This is my first letter as President of EAPE, having assumed the role immediately after the elections and the establishment of the Board of Directors.

I consider it a privilege and a great honor to have been appointed to the prestigious and certainly demanding role of President, which I hope to fulfill adequately with personal commitment and dedication, but above all thanks to the invaluable collaboration of all of you.

I joined with enthusiasm and interest when the news arrived that EAPE, the European Association of Professors Emeriti, had been established. I took part in the excellent first congress in Athens, very well organized by Dennis Cokkinos, which was followed by the equally well- organized congresses in Naples by Natale De Santo and in London by sir Les Ebdon.

I commend and applaud the work done over these years by Presidents Dennis, Natale, Les Ebdon, and George, who have made a significant contribution to the development and growth of the EAPE association, as have the various Boards of Directors, all valuable and interested in EAPE's activities.

A special mention for Georgia Drosatou, always attentive, punctual, and full of passion.

The problems that emerged during this long period are:

1. Increasing participation and making scientific and cultural meetings more numerous and widely interesting.
2. Securing funding to provide stability to the association for better economic and financial management;
3. Continuous review and comparison to define, determine and, if possible, make uniform the role of Emeriti in Europe;
4. Relations with other National or International Associations such as that of Joze Gricar for example.

While keeping the webinars proposed by the various sections, I propose the following solutions:

1. Choosing topics of broad interest with the participation not only of professionals but also of the general public, university students and high school students, by organizing conferences, seminars, debates, and presentations with the aid of movies and slides;
2. Organizing meetings together with other scientific societies.

The proposed topics, in order of preference, could be:

A. The sea in the broadest sense of the word: first point the damage caused by marine pollution and in particular the consequences on the human organism caused by micro and nanoplastics; Second point, climatic and meteorological variations determined by changes in the sea;

B. Health and Active Aging in a changing society;

C. Improving quality of life through urban planning adjustments;

D. New frontiers in oncology: prevention, sports activity, nutrition care, correction of risk factors, environmental care, psychological aspects, therapeutic innovations, and care models;

E. Lights and shadows of AI: Driving force of modern life, a possible danger;

F. Fighting youth crime;

G. Always reserving a space for the role of Emeriti.

The format will be hybrid: both in-person and remote. Meeting venues: the hall at the Circolo Canottieri Napoli and a dedicated lecture hall at the Federico II Polyclinic of Naples.

The best solution for simultaneous translation is currently under consideration in order to permit the participation of many people who are not professionals or experts in the field but are interested in the various problems proposed.

As for the problem of economic and financial stability, the following options may be considered:

1. Systematically collecting annual membership fees and defining the related consequences;
2. Increasing the number of members by motivating them with active participation in scientific sessions;
3. Contributions from companies, institutes, foundations, banks, European funds and research projects.

Linking the choice of scientific meetings with institutions that have a strong interest in the topic.

I greet all of you dear friends and colleagues with sympathy and cordiality wishing a fruitful work with everyone's collaboration.

All my best wishes,

Giancarlo Bracale
EAPE President

George Christodoulou

A Message from the Outgoing President

by **George Christodoulou**,
MD, PhD, FRCPsych., FICPM

Email: profgchristodoulou@gmail.com

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As I am stepping down from the EAPE Presidency I want to thank all of you, the Board, the Members, the Secretariat (Georgia), the Editors of the Bulletin and the Newsletter, for your cooperation and support. It was nice working in a warm, friendly environment without unnecessary tension. I think that we, Emeriti, have the luxury of being less stressed than our younger colleagues who are still officially active.

During my tenure I tried to create a personal link with you by writing a letter to you, the members of our Association, every single month.

I also tried to upgrade our website with the help of talented George Georgiades who also helped George Dan and Dennis Cokkinos with the Bulletin and the Newsletter respectively, two excellent EAPE Media.

At the beginning of my term, we carried out a survey on the basis of which we created an Action Plan.

Three Position Statements were produced during my Presidency. On Continuation of academic activities by Emeriti Professors, on Preservation of Peace and on Academic Freedom. I am sure that you recognise all three of them as much needed responses to vital issues in academic life and beyond.

The scientific backbone of our Association are the Sections. For this reason, I have tried to upgrade the existing sections, encouraged the creation of more sections and organized and secured the funding of webinars that took place every month and sometimes two times a month.

The Board met once every month in a friendly atmosphere. I don't think I have been a demanding President but if I have been one on some occasions, my apologies.

We are now working on the final details of the 4th EAPE Congress, an Anniversary one (10 years).

Site: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece.
Dates: 11-13 June 2026.

We look forward to welcoming you to Athens. An exciting scientific program is ready for you.

The overall theme of the Congress is:

"BEYOND KNOWLEDGE: WISDOM, VALUES AND ETHICS"

Please contact the organizing bureau in:

DMarandou@era.gr

for information concerning the Congress.

Warmest regards to all.

Until we meet in June,

George Christodoulou

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Position Statement of the EAPE

On Academic Freedom

The European Association of Professors Emeriti (EAPE) considers that it is our right but also our duty to defend Academic Freedom.

1. Drawing on our long academic experience, we, Professors Emeriti of Europe, firmly consider that we have the responsibility to defend this principle that has survived throughout ages and to support the rights of members of the academic community to freely express their opinions even if these opinions are not in line with the prevailing ideology.
2. We object to undue interference, restriction or intimidation of academics, being confident that researchers are fully aware that Academic Freedom carries with it responsibilities like respect for evidence, intellectual honesty and adherence to ethical values and practices. It is the responsibility of the relevant academic institutions only, to safeguard that these responsibilities are observed.
3. At a time when political, ideological and economic pressures threaten open enquiry, the obligation to preserve Academic Freedom becomes an absolute priority for the academic community and especially for us, Professors Emeriti of Europe, a continent with consistent tradition of free thinking and other civil liberties.
4. In line with the above considerations, the EAPE calls upon Governments, Universities, International Organizations and Civil Society to safeguard the Autonomy of academic institutions to select their research orientation and set their educational priorities.

Editor's Corner

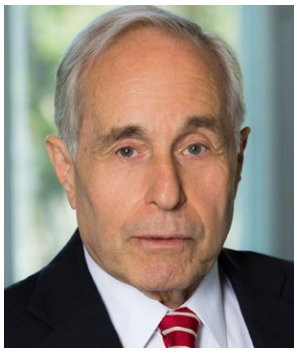
Fixed Retirement Age in Academia: Pros and Cons

G.-Andrei Dan, Editor in Chief, Professor Emeritus of Medicine, Romanian Academy of Scientists
Full Professor of Cardiology and Internal Medicine, University of Medicine "Carol Davila" Bucharest, Romania
President-Elect, EAPE
Email: andrei.dan@gadan.ro

> "In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years." ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Invited Viewpoint by...

Michael Kunze, Professor Emeritus,
Zentrum für Public Health Institut für Sozialmedizin der Medizinischen Universität, Vienna, Austria
Email: michael.kunze@meduniwien.ac.at



Michael Kunze

It was at the founding congress of EAPE in 2016 that I had the opportunity to give a lecture entitled "Increasing Life Expectancy and Public Health: The Need to Reconsider Demographic, Biological, Functional, and Retirement Age."

As a follow-up, I would like to elaborate further on the issue of retirement age with regard to university professors, with the aim of stimulating discussion: Is a fixed retirement age—still used in many countries and academic institutions—useful and productive? Do we lose valuable experience, perhaps even wisdom, when professors are required to retire at a predetermined age?

My own position at the Medical University of Vienna is a very privileged one and might serve as a blueprint for similar regulations elsewhere. I became emeritus in 2011 at the age of 69, yet I continue to work (mainly teaching) on a daily basis at the Center for Public Health. I have access to all services provided, including an office and the support needed to perform the duties allocated to me.

There are two further major advantages to mention. First, I no longer have administrative duties (I was head of an institute for 30 years). Second, I receive the last salary of a full professor for the rest of my life. By the way, this income is provided by the social insurance agency for government employees and therefore does not affect the university's budget.

In an ideal world, such an arrangement would be the goal to be achieved through political lobbying at both national and international levels. Of course, this will not be easy. However, if we collect more examples, we will at least have concrete points to raise. This is a discussion we could—and should—initiate within EAPE.

Life expectancy (at birth) is an important indicator of the health status of a population, and it is increasing more or less worldwide, with many social, economic, and epidemiological consequences. In Austria, life expectancy in 1960 was 72 years for females and 67 for males. By 2015 it had increased to 84 and 79 respectively, and projections for 2060 estimate 91 and 87 years.

It is therefore time to reconsider the definitions of age and aging. Demographic age is constant, but biological age does not necessarily correspond to demographic age. Moreover, functional age is another important parameter and is particularly relevant in our case.

What are we able, as professors, to contribute, and what do we want to contribute? EAPE is an association of individuals who demonstrate the need for change, following the political hypothesis outlined below.

There is no scientific evidence—medical, psychological, or social—that supports a fixed retirement age, as is still common worldwide, with some exceptions. One might even ask whether elements of age discrimination are involved.

We need a new, flexible approach, not only but especially in the academic world. This is even more relevant since scientific evidence shows that both life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy are directly related to the level of education (Mäki et al.).

May I suggest some discussion points that we could or should pursue within the EAPE community:

What are the pros and cons of prolonged active participation by professors emeriti/emeritae and retired colleagues?

Again, I may refer to my personal experience since 2011:

Teaching remains the number one activity, as there is more time to talk with and discuss issues with students. This is particularly valuable when planning and writing thesis papers and similar projects.

Mentoring not only students but also younger scientists.

Contributing to team building and conflict management within an institute.

Continuing to work on one's own scientific questions and research projects.

When it comes to the "third dimension" of universities—public engagement—the "gray hairs" can be especially helpful. If they are known to the public, their credibility can be valuable. Public communication during the recent pandemic provides a good example.

Among the possible disadvantages, there is the need for self-restraint and for accepting that new leadership is in place (for example, a new head of an institute with his or her own ideas and priorities). On the other hand, newly appointed professors might benefit from the advice of a senior colleague.

There is also a need for some mechanism of evaluation to determine how long such a "senior" position should last before it becomes a burden to the institution. However, this should be decided by the academic community involved rather than by imposing a fixed age limit.

N.G. De Santo et al. published a study on "The Role of Professors Emeriti and Retired Professors" in 2014:

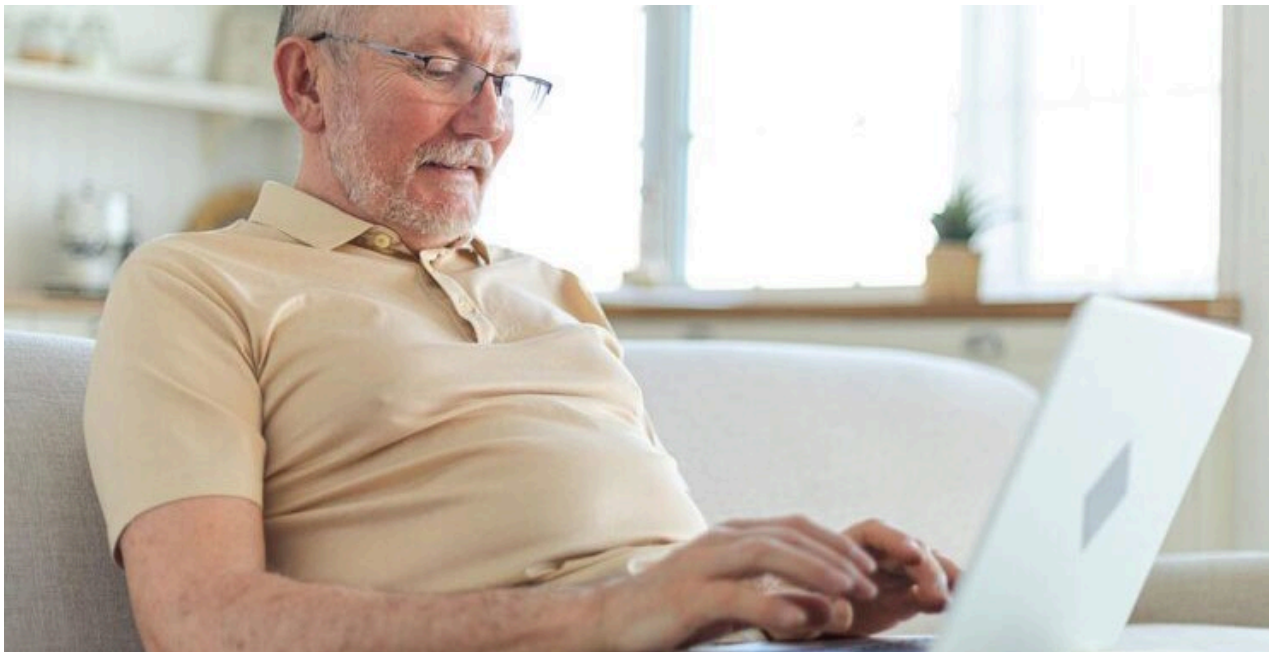
In Europe, university professors generally retire at fixed ages, independent of their wishes or abilities.

By contrast, in the United States, age alone cannot legally be used as a reason for imposing retirement.

In the "real," non-academic world—at least in Austria—many people look forward to retirement and even count the years and days until they reach this goal, a social phenomenon that is not particularly beneficial to society.

Many professors do not share this attitude. In fact, the Austrian Association of Professors opposed the political decision to require professors to retire like everyone else (although this opposition was unsuccessful). Fortunately, the emeritus status remained untouched for those who had become full professors before 1988.

EAPE could serve as a spearhead in the debate on retirement policy—so far largely dominated by opposition to raising retirement age limits (France, unfortunately, being a notable example). At the same time, such engagement would contribute to the image and visibility of EAPE as an international political actor.



G.-Andrei Dan

GEORGE-ANDREI DAN

Ask anyone who works in higher education whether universities should have a mandatory retirement age, and you will quickly discover just how personal this question can get. It touches on careers, identity, fairness, and the very purpose of a university. Should a 72-year-old clinical research specialist who is still publishing groundbreaking work be forced to clear out her office? Should a medical department be allowed to stagnate for two decades because a tenured professor refuses to leave? These are not abstract policy dilemmas — they are real situations that play out in universities around the world every year.

I. The Case for a Fixed Retirement Age

1. Keeping the Academic Pipeline Moving

One of the strongest arguments for mandatory retirement is simply that universities need to bring in new people — and they cannot do that if senior positions are blocked indefinitely. A tenured chair or a laboratory directorship is not just a job; it comes with resources, students, influence over curriculum, and the power to shape a discipline's direction. When those positions are held for forty or fifty years by the same individual, entire generations of talented younger scholars are effectively locked out.

Consider the situation in many European University departments during the mid-twentieth century, where dominant figures held chairs for decades and actively shaped hiring decisions in their own image. The result, in several well-documented cases, was intellectual monoculture — departments incapable of engaging seriously with new approaches because the people making decisions had a strong personal investment in the old ones. A predictable retirement schedule is one practical way of preventing this kind of stagnation.

2. Making Long-Term Planning Possible

From a management perspective, a fixed retirement age gives universities something they genuinely need: predictability. When institutions know that a position will open up in three years rather than at some unknown future date, they can plan searches, budget for salaries, and think strategically about the direction of a department. Without this, succession planning becomes almost impossible.

This matters more than it might appear. Many universities have pension arrangements and salary structures built around an expected career length. When faculty members work significantly beyond that expected endpoint, it can create real financial pressure — particularly for smaller institutions that cannot simply absorb the extra cost. A clear, universal retirement age removes that uncertainty.

3. Protecting Students and Junior Colleagues

This argument requires care, because it risks sliding into unfair generalisation — but it is still worth taking seriously. Cognitive abilities do change with age, and some of the skills that matter most in fast-moving research fields, such as learning new computational or AI methods, keeping up with rapidly evolving literature, or supervising students through cutting-edge methodological challenges, can become harder to maintain in later decades.

The real issue is not whether any given older scholar is less capable, but whether institutions have reliable ways of identifying and addressing declining performance before it affects students. In practice, performance management of senior tenured academics is notoriously difficult — politically fraught, legally complex, and often damaging to institutional relationships. A mandatory retirement age, for all its bluntness, at least spares individuals the humiliation of a capability review and spares institutions the pain of conducting one.

4. Fairness to Early-Career Researchers

The academic job market in most disciplines is brutal. In fields like literary studies, philosophy, history, or even medical teaching the number of PhD graduates seeking permanent positions vastly outnumbers the positions available — and has done for years. Many talented researchers spend their thirties and even forties on short-term contracts, postdoctoral fellowships, or adjunct teaching, waiting for a tenure-track opening that may never arrive. Against this backdrop, the sight of colleagues in their mid-seventies occupying permanent positions they show no intention of vacating can feel genuinely unjust.

The argument is not that older scholars have done anything wrong by staying. It is that the institutional resources attached to their posts — the salary, the office, the doctoral students, the grant eligibility — are finite and competed for. A fixed retirement age is one way of ensuring those resources rotate, at least occasionally, to people whose careers are still in their formative stages.

II. The Case Against a Fixed Retirement Age

1. Age Is Not the Same as Ability

The most basic objection to mandatory retirement is that it treats a date on a birth certificate as a reliable indicator of someone's capacity to do their job — and it simply is not. People age at very different rates, and the relationship between age and intellectual

performance is far more varied than any single cutoff can capture. Forcing someone out of a job they are still doing well, for no reason other than their age, is a form of discrimination — one that most democratic societies have, rightly, moved to restrict in other employment contexts.

In the United States, mandatory retirement for most university faculty was abolished in 1994 following amendments to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act. The move reflected a principled recognition that chronological age is a poor substitute for actual assessment of someone's work. If a sixty-eight-year-old surgeon, barrister, or architect can continue practicing so long as they meet professional standards, it is not obvious why a sixty-eight-year-old professor should be treated differently.

2. Some of the Best Work Comes Late

The empirical record is clear on at least one point: late-career scholarship can be outstanding. Immanuel Kant was fifty-seven when he published the Critique of Pure Reason and continued producing major philosophical works into his seventies. Peter Higgs, whose theoretical work underpinned the discovery of the Higgs boson, was in his eighties when the Nobel Prize confirmed what he had proposed decades earlier. Historian Tony Judt wrote his most widely read book, Ill Fares the Land, while suffering from late-stage motor neurone disease.

In the humanities, interpretive social sciences and clinical medicine where depth of understanding and the integration of a lifetime's reading and experience often matter more than technical agility, late-career scholars frequently produce their richest and most synthetic work. A mandatory retirement age that removes these individuals at an arbitrary point takes no account of where they actually are in their intellectual development. It optimises for administrative tidiness at the expense of scholarly value.

3. Research Does Not Stop at a Convenient Age

Academic research rarely fits neatly into institutional timetables. A historian working on a multi-volume study of the Ottoman Empire, a biologist leading a twenty-year longitudinal study of coral reef degradation, a linguist compiling a comprehensive dictionary of an endangered language, a medical researcher looking for new vaccines or cancer therapy — all of these projects involve timelines that may extend well beyond any fixed retirement age. Forcing the lead researcher out at sixty-five or seventy can seriously damage the work, and in some cases effectively destroy it.

The supervisory dimension is equally important. Doctoral students choose their supervisors carefully, often based on years of relationship-building and intellectual alignment. A mandatory retirement that cuts that relationship short — leaving a student without their primary supervisor in the final, most demanding stages of a PhD — is not a minor inconvenience. It can derail a career. Emeritus arrangements can help, but they rarely provide the institutional support that active employment does.

4. Losing What Cannot Easily Be Written Down

Long-serving faculty members carry knowledge about their institutions that no handbook, policy document, or induction programme can fully replace. They know why certain decisions were made, how particular relationships between departments work, which approaches have been tried and failed, and how to navigate the unwritten norms of a scholarly community. This kind of institutional memory is especially valuable during periods of change or crisis — precisely when universities most need people who understand how things actually work.

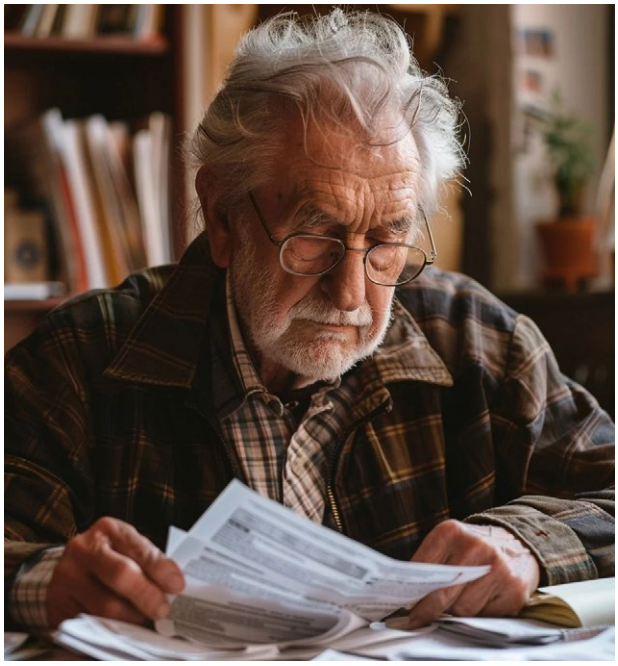
This is also true at the level of disciplinary craft. In research, skilled supervision involves transmitting laboratory practices, habits of careful observation, and research intuitions that are genuinely difficult to codify. The most experienced researchers are often the most effective at this kind of mentorship. Mandatory retirement removes them from that role at a moment determined by the calendar rather than by any assessment of where their contribution stands.

5. For Many Academics, Work Is Not Just a Job

This point is sometimes dismissed as subjective, but it deserves serious consideration. For a great many scholars, their work and their identity are deeply intertwined. A professor is not someone who happens to teach and research for a living; they are, in a meaningful sense, a scholar — and that identity does not switch off at sixty-five or seventy. Compulsory retirement can represent a profound disruption to a person's sense of purpose and place in the world, one that goes well beyond losing a salary.

Research on retirement consistently shows that involuntary retirement — being pushed out rather

than choosing to go — is associated with worse health outcomes and lower wellbeing than voluntary retirement. Institutions that force out engaged, productive scholars for reasons unrelated to their actual performance are not just making a policy error; they are causing real harm to real people. That matters, and it should be weighed honestly against the institutional benefits of a fixed cutoff.



III. Instead of conclusions: looking for solutions

The best academic communities are ones that manage the passage of generations with care. That is not something a birthday on a calendar can achieve. It takes deliberate thought, good institutional design, and a culture of honesty about what universities are actually for.

What is clear is that a simple age-based mandatory retirement — the same date for everyone, regardless of circumstances — is a blunt tool that struggles to do justice to any of these values very well. It replaces careful judgment with administrative convenience. Universities that are serious about managing this issue well need more nuanced approaches: phased transitions, structured conversations, flexible arrangements that allow continued contribution in appropriate forms.

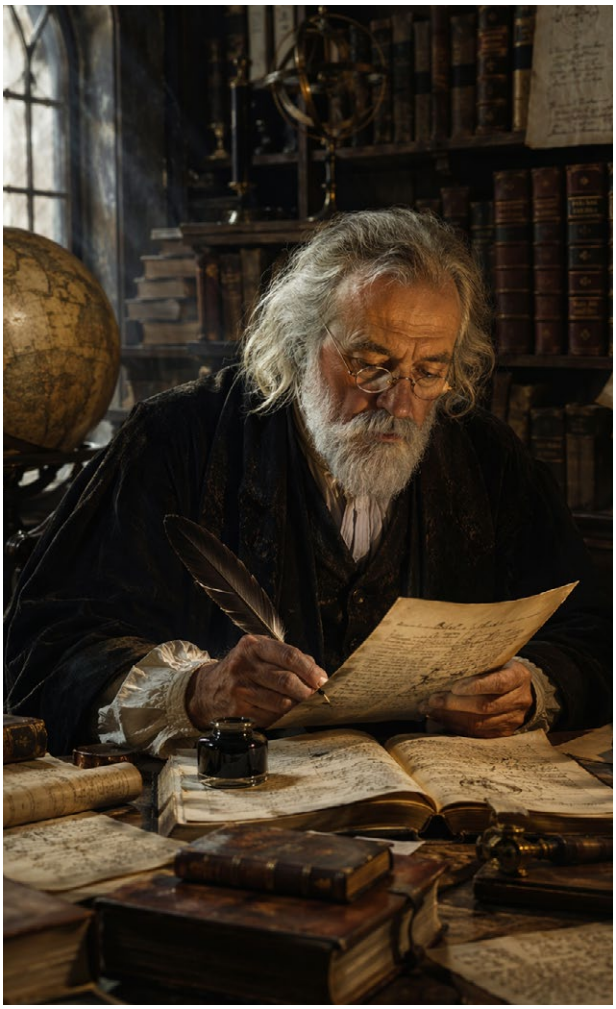
Phased retirement is perhaps the most widely adopted alternative. Rather than requiring a full stop at a fixed age, universities invite faculty members from a certain age — say, sixty-three or sixty-five — to transition gradually to reduced teaching and administrative loads, while retaining research access and mentoring roles. This frees up some institutional resources and creates space for younger colleagues while respecting the continued engagement of senior scholars. Several Scandinavian and German universities have developed versions of this model with generally positive results.

A second approach involves structured conversations at a defined age threshold — not a forced retirement, but a formal review of plans and options. This gives institutions a legitimate opportunity to discuss the future with faculty members, explore phased arrangements, and plan for succession, without simply imposing a decision from above. Done well, it treats scholars as adults capable of participating in decisions about their own careers.

A third, more ambitious possibility is to unbundle the components of an academic post. Teaching responsibilities, research resources, supervisory roles, and administrative duties do not all need to be held together by the same person until the same endpoint. A scholar who remains a productive researcher but who is no longer the best person to supervise doctoral students, or to carry a heavy teaching load, could in principle transition out of some roles while continuing in others. This requires genuine institutional flexibility and creativity — but it is more honest about the heterogeneity of ageing than a single mandatory retirement date can ever be.

A very old hasidic proverb says;

> “For the unlearned, old age is winter;
> for the learned,
> it is the season of the harvest.”



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EAPE SECTION: The Elderly in Our Society

WEBINAR HIGHLIGHTS

Online Event from Circolo Canottieri Napoli, on 30.10.2025

CHAIRS: Natale Gaspare De Santo & Giancarlo Bracale

1

Women in Scientific Research: from Marginality to Protagonism

Massimo Capaccioli, Emeritus Professor of Astrophysics University Federico II, Former Director Osservatorio Astronomico di Capodimonte – INAF, Naples, Italy
Email: MassimoCapaccioli@inaf.it

Introduction

I will deal about a topic that is historical, scientific, and deeply human: the presence and importance of women in scientific research, with particular attention to the fields I know best, namely mathematics, physics, and astronomy. The following considerations will concern exclusively the Western world, where science has, to date, experienced its most complete development.

This is not just a question of equal opportunities, but of understanding how, over the centuries, women's access to knowledge has changed the very face of science. Because the history of science is not only the narrative of the succession of ideas, discoveries, and equations, but also that of the people who produced them. And too many of these people have remained invisible for too long.

Lessons from the past

In the ancient world, science—or rather, natural philosophy—was almost exclusively the privilege of men. The ideas of Aristotle and St. Thomas, who considered women "incomplete," influenced scientific and philosophical thought for centuries, marginalizing female perspectives: *"Silence makes a woman perfect,"* says Sophocles in his *Ajax*. Yet, a few shining exceptions already speak to us of a broader humanity.

In the 6th century BC, Theano of Croton, a disciple and perhaps daughter or wife of Pythagoras, wrote about mathematical proportions and harmonies. Nine centuries later, in Alexandria, Hypatia, a mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher, ran the city's famous school, commenting on the texts of Euclid and Ptolemy. Her violent death in 415 AD symbolically marked not only the end of a life, but

the end of an era: one in which a woman could, albeit exceptionally, teach science publicly.

From then on, women were denied access to education for centuries. Scientific culture remained a male domain, a language and a code from which women were excluded by law, tradition, and custom. This veritable intellectual apartheid was unjust and short-sighted, not only denying fundamental rights, but also representing an enormous waste of talent and intelligence. For generations, the world of science deprived itself of half of its most brilliant minds, thereby slowing down discoveries and innovations that could have changed the course of history.

With the advent of the Renaissance and the subsequent modern era, science became institutionalised, with the establishment of academies, laboratories and universities. However, women remained on the sidelines. When humanists speak of 'man', they rarely mean humanity as a whole. In reality, the humanist subject is almost always male, educated, and from the social elite. The image of the humanist woman was shaped by

two opposing ideas. On the one hand, there was the Christian and medieval tradition which associated her with temptation, fragility and sin — Eve, the cause of the Fall. On the other hand, there was the courtly and idealised tradition which exalted women as muses, spiritual inspirations and symbols of virtue — Dante's Beatrice and Petrarch's Laura, for example.

In short, in most cases, women remained on the margins of the public sphere and knowledge. During the Renaissance, their role and representation changed profoundly compared to the Middle Ages. In the wake of the scientific revolution, extraordinary figures emerged. In 1650, Maria Cunitz, a German astronomer, published *Urania Propitia* in Olsnen, Poland, a simplification of Kepler's Rudolphine Tables. The work, in German and Latin, printed at her own expense and dedicated to Emperor Ferdinand III, is signed with her name, which was extremely rare for a woman at that time. In Bologna, in what was then the Papal States, Laura Bassi Veratti became the first woman in the world to obtain a university chair in physics in 1732, with one of the highest salaries at the Alma Mater Studiorum. An extraordinary figure, she brought Newtonian science to Italy and actively participated in the debates of the Academy of Sciences. In the 18th century, Émilie du Châtelet, in France, translated and annotated Newton's *Principia*; her commentary remains one of the best editions ever published.

But these are the exception rather than the rule. For the most part, women who loved science had to practise it in the shadows, often as assistants, wives or daughters of scientists. Caroline Herschel, for example, William's sister, discovered eight comets and compiled star catalogs that are fundamental to modern astronomy. Yet for decades, her name was almost erased from history, overshadowed by her brother's giant figure.

The 19th century marked a turning point with the slow conquest of education. With the birth of modern universities and the first movements for women's education, women began—slowly—to enter the scientific world.

Sofya Vasilievna Kovalevskaya

In the field of mathematics, Sofya Vasilievna Kovalevskaya, a Russian, stands out. In 1884, she obtained the first female chair of mathematics in Europe, at the University of Stockholm. Her work on analysis and differential equations remains fundamental to this day.

Kovalevskaya was forced to enter into a "fictitious marriage" in order to be able to study abroad. At that time, women needed the permission of their fathers or husbands to attend European universities and were not permitted to obtain a degree. It was only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that women finally gained regular and equal access to university education in Europe, which remained stubbornly conservative on this issue. A paradox that clearly illustrates how difficult the path to intellectual freedom still was for women who, among other things, were financially dependent on a father or husband.

During the same period, in England, Augusta Ada Byron, Countess of Lovelace, daughter of Lord Byron and pupil of Charles Babbage, wrote the first notes on an 'analytical engine' that history would later recognize as the first computer program (an algorithm for generating Bernoulli numbers). She is now considered the first programmer in history.

The 19th and 20th century

The 19th century also saw the birth of 'female' astronomy out of economic necessity of cheap labor. At the Harvard Observatory, under the direction of Edward Pickering, a group of women—the so-called Harvard Computers—catalogued hundreds of thousands of stars by analyzing photographic plates. Among them were Williamina Fleming, Annie Jump Cannon, and Henrietta Swan Leavitt. It was this latter who discovered the relationship between brightness and period of Cepheid variables, an empirical law that would allow Edwin Hubble to determine the distance of galaxies and open the wonderful chapter of modern cosmology. Think about it: one of the tools that allowed humanity to measure the universe was found by a woman who, officially, earned less than a secretarial employee.

Edward Charles Pickering, to the left, director of the Harvard College Observatory, with the women called Harvard Computers. (Image credit: Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics)

The 20th century represents the era of science as a mass institution, and in this context, women finally began to enter laboratories and universities in their own right. The symbol of this turning point is Marie Skłodowska Curie, twice Nobel Prize winner—for Physics in 1903 and for Chemistry 8 years later.

Marie Curie is not just a heroic figure: she represents the possibility for a woman to run a

laboratory, train students, and open up new fields of research. Yet her career was marked by hostility and suspicion, even after receiving the most prestigious awards. After the death of her husband Pierre, she began a relationship with Paul Langevin, a married but separated man, causing scandal in the moralistic France of the time due to her role as a widowed and independent woman. This was a clear demonstration of gender discrimination in a country that, while showing tolerance towards male libertinism, continued to judge autonomous women harshly. Her legacy, however, is extraordinary: Marie Curie trained generations of scientists and paved the way for nuclear physics.

Shortly afterwards, in the 1930s and 1940s, we find Lise Meitner, co-author of the discovery of nuclear fission, whose name was excluded from the Nobel Prize awarded to her colleague Otto Hahn. *"I can forgive Alfred Nobel for inventing dynamite, but only a demon in human form could have invented the Nobel Prize."* The author of these words was George Bernard Shaw, who refused the prize money in 1925.

Lise Meitner

Lise Meitner's case was not the only instance in which the Nobel Committee preferred a man to a woman, disregarding objective merit criteria. A particularly striking case was that of the young British researcher Jocelyn Bell Burnell: she discovered pulsars, but the prize was awarded to her supervisor, Antony Hewish. Equally controversial was the 1957 Nobel Prize in Physics, which was not awarded to Chien-Shiung Wu, the Chinese-American physicist who conducted the experiment confirming the violation of parity in beta decay, but to two of her theoretical colleagues.

Another exceptional woman was Emmy Noether, one of the most brilliant mathematical minds of all time, who formulated the famous theorem linking symmetries and conservation laws. Einstein called her *"the most important mathematical genius since women were allowed to attend university."* When, thanks to the personal commitment of David Hilbert, who held her in high regard, Emmy began teaching at Heidelberg University in 1915 (albeit officially as a privatdozent, i.e., without a salary or full title), the university did not have bathrooms for women, forcing her to use the men's facilities. A small but significant symbol of the barriers women faced even in academic institutions and an argument used by men to exclude them.

In astronomy, figures such as Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin emerged. In 1925 this feisty English girl proved that stars are composed mainly of hydrogen and helium, overturning the previous paradigm. Again, the male community initially rejected her thesis, which was later universally accepted.

After the war, the presence of women grew, but equality remained a distant prospect. Consider the Englishwoman Rosalind Franklin, whose X-ray image of DNA was used, without her consent, by Watson and Crick to construct the famous double helix model, which earned them a Nobel Prize in 1951. Rosalind was not initially recognized as a co-discoverer, but today she is celebrated as a symbol of dedication and scientific precision, inspiring generations of women in science. However, there is a formal justification for the omitted award: when it was assigned, she had already passed away, and according to the rules, the Nobel Prize is not awarded posthumously.

Or Vera Rubin, who in the 1970s proved the existence of dark matter by observing the rotation of galaxies: a revolutionary result, officially recognized only decades later. She too experienced vulgar opposition from men who did not want her on Mount Palomar, because even at that observatory, as at the University of Heidelberg, there were no toilets suitable for women.

The 21st century

In the last decades of the 20th century and in the 21st century, the situation changed more rapidly. Women are no longer 'exceptions': they are an integral part of the scientific community. We find them at the top of space agencies, in computing centers, in international particle physics collaborations, and in universities around the world.

In 2018, Canadian Donna Strickland won the Nobel Prize in Physics for her studies on ultrashort lasers, 55 years after Marie Curie and 55 years after the last Nobel Prize in physics was awarded to a woman.

In 2020, Andrea Ghez of the United States received the Nobel Prize for her discovery of the supermassive black hole at the center of the Milky Way. In 2023, Anne L'Huillier, a pioneer in quantum optics, shared the same award.

And in the field of mathematics, Maryam Mirzakhani, an Iranian, was the first woman to win the Fields Medal, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in mathematics, in 2014. Her untimely death made her legacy even more symbolic: mathematics as a universal language, beyond gender and cultural barriers.

But the question, at this point, is: why talk about it again? Because the history of science, as we know it,

is still largely an incomplete narrative. Many textbooks and school curricula continue to mention only a few female names, often as curiosities or exceptions. However, the presence of women in science is not an exception: it is a historical and cultural fact that has transformed the very way research is conducted. Women have brought new perspectives, new methods, and sometimes new priorities. Not because there is such a thing as "female science," but because every diversity of experience enriches the scientific community. Science does not thrive on isolated geniuses, but on networks of intelligence. And for these networks to be truly prolific, they must include all voices.

Today, women are still underrepresented in the so-called STEM disciplines—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—especially in top positions. Gender stereotypes, the difficulty of balancing career and private life, and the lack of visible role models remain concrete obstacles. Added to this is perhaps the reluctance of some men to compete with women, particularly when their male pride makes them unwilling to face the possibility of being surpassed.

But the landscape is changing. International projects, dedicated scholarships, and a growing focus on equity are slowly rebalancing the scales. Examples such as Valentina Tereshkova, who remained in orbit for three days in 1964, Fabiola Gianotti, director-general of CERN, and Samantha Cristoforetti, commander of the International Space Station, show that female scientific leadership is no longer an exception but an established reality. And in the classrooms of technical and scientific faculties, where women now often outnumber men.

Conclusion

I conclude with a reflection. As George Sarton, founder of modern science history, rightly pointed out at the beginning of the 20th century, science is perhaps the most collective enterprise that humanity has ever undertaken. Each generation builds on the achievements of those who came before it. And if we truly want to include all of humanity in our idea of progress, we must recognize and recount the contributions of women with the same dignity with which we recount those of men. This, then, is the true meaning of this story: it is not just about remembering those who came before, but about paving the way for those who will come after. Because science—real science—has no gender, only curiosity, intelligence, and a passion for truth. Because every time society has renounced the contribution of women, it was as if a genius had been lobotomized, depriving humanity of half of its intelligence, creativity, and innovation.

2 Gender Discrimination at Universities still Alive and Well in 2025

Nicholas Markatos, Professor Emeritus, National Technical University of Athens, former University Rector
Email: n.markatos@ntua.gr

The gender gap in universities has tilted in favor of women as a result of increased access and inclusion of women in higher education. This does not mean, however, that gender equality has been achieved in universities, as will be described below.

A gender balance has been achieved in enrolment and in undergraduate and some graduate degree programs. However in many doctoral programs and in jobs following the PhD (especially in research posts and those that have more power, resources, rewards, and influence), men predominate while women PhDs and academics remain in more subordinate positions.

There are still pressing issues on university campuses despite their being largely invisible and in many cases silenced, or rationalized.

Consistent with statistical discrimination, women scientists and engineers are poorly represented at the entry level in research-oriented institutions and are scarcer in tenured positions within highly prestigious departments and institutions with very selective admissions.

In the context of the study by Milkman and her colleagues [1], existing social theories of gender would suggest that even well-intentioned professors who might not otherwise be seen as racist or gender-biased, and who do not act in overly discriminatory ways, have internalized beliefs that women are perhaps not as well prepared for graduate school as their male counterparts, or that they may not make reliable or adequate research assistants. In fact, this phenomenon is documented in the book *Presumed Incompetent*, a compilation of research and essays from women and people of color who work in academia.

Two relevant examples[2]

The young doctor masked up and took her place around the operating table with the other male physicians at a major hospital in the Northeast. The lead surgeon scanned all four of his team members and said, "Good morning, Gentlemen." The young woman's eyes arched. She said, "Good morning, Dr. Taylor," hoping to get appropriate recognition. The lead surgeon ignored her and went on with the operation. When she brought it up with the department chair, he told her she was being too sensitive and overreacting to the situation. Her male counterparts didn't seem to understand or care that she might have felt dismissed, invisible and insignificant. To some, this might seem like a harmless event, but it's symptomatic of an attitude that often persists under the radar in many different workplaces, even in 2025.

A study published in February 2021 concluded that female academic internal medicine hospitalists routinely encounter gender-biased discrimination and sexual harassment.

In a second example, the tenure and promotion committee sat around the Dean of Education's conference table, evaluating dossiers of applicants for tenure and promotion. As they scrutinized a female faculty member's credentials, one of the male full professors commented, "She's an old maid. Wonder why she's never been married?" No one spoke up, and the highly-qualified faculty member was never notified of the discrimination that denied her tenure and promotion. She was fired from her position, despite the fact that the prominent university clearly states it doesn't discriminate on the basis of gender. Shocking, perhaps, but true.

Other studies show that women are interviewed more critically than their male counterparts, and are interrupted more often.

There are also studies that report on all-male conference panels, on the overlooking and exclusion of women at conferences, and on sexual harassment and advances women often face during academic conferences.

In promotion and leadership, gender inequity has long been recognized as a serious problem. The recent case of the Nobel Prize winner Donna Strickland, an Associate Professor at the University of Waterloo, drew attention to the issue of promotion, as she had been an Associate Professor for about twenty years while conducting her research.

Women spend more time on teaching and service, and carry heavy teaching loads, creating a disadvantage for research time, while men have more access to research facilities and resources.

Although huge strides have been made in the last few decades, women are still experiencing discrimination based on their gender in Universities.

Awareness can lead to correcting action particularly by the academics who are typically thought to be more liberal and progressive than the general population.

Any University has the obligation to eliminate gender discrimination. Every University should have a code of conduct, and that code of conduct is based on morality.

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3

Elderly, Young and Fragile People in Cities: Needs and Desires for Cities of Coexistence

Patrizia Bottaro, Vice-President of "Civilizzare l'Urbano - ETS", Naples, Italy
Email: bottaro@pcaint.eu

Massimo Pica Ciamarra, Director of "Le Carré Bleu, feuille internationale d'architecture"
Email: picaciamarra@pcaint.eu

> "The city as a place of civil friendship" STEFANO ZAMAGNI

The idea of the city is constantly evolving: for Aristotle, the ideal city had to be able to be embraced with a glance from the top of a hill. Then, for many centuries, cities had a boundary that distinguished them from the countryside. In cities, home and workplace often coincided: everything was close by, everything was integrated. The explosion in size generated by the industrial revolution - and later by the evolution of means of transport - began to distinguish and theorise the separation of functional areas in cities. At the same time, typological research was enhanced for each building and each function.

Scientific research led to an increase in average life expectancy, and from the second half of the last century, population growth began to skyrocket in unprecedented ways. During the same period, there was talk of the "urbanised continuum" and hopes for the "city effect". Then, in 1968, with the youth protests, the right to the city was strongly asserted. During those same years, Henri Lefebvre claimed the "right to the city" as a right to freedom, sociality and living (Lefebvre, 1968 (1).

Today, talking about cities may seem inappropriate, and it is certainly inaccurate. We know very well that "city" means relationships between parts / design of empty space / coexistence: in other words, it means integration and a system of spaces for gathering and socialising. It is also clear that "urban" is anything but that (its true etymological root comes from "urbum" = plough, that which traces a furrow, and therefore separates): it connotes a territory cluttered with buildings, in other words, it expresses physical and social disintegration.

In contemporary times, both physical and numerical dimensions are elusive and indefinable (minimal or enormous); the expansion of territory is continuous. The distinction between those who reside permanently in one place and those who tend to be predominantly nomadic is also becoming

increasingly blurred. “Citizens” - those who have the same customs and share the same values, who belong to the same community - tend to become inhabitants, users, consumers. Functional logic becomes prevalent: however, by shifting the focus from the mere functionality of the urban environment to the well-being and liveability of public spaces, the way we conceive cities can be revolutionised (Gehl, 1971 (2). Cities can once again become places of encounter, creativity and inclusion, emphasising the importance of the human scale and promoting “slow city” models, where social interactions can develop in the space of sociality, on a human scale (Gehl, 2010 (3): public space can generate virtuous behaviour.

The successful slogan of the “five-minute city” (Maas, 2003 (4) dates back to the early 2000s and is based on at least half a century of research, projects and some experience: its roots lie in Rotterdam's Lijbaan, in post-war reconstruction. But if we want to stay closer to home, it is also worth remembering the Piano Quadro della Attrezzature (Master Plan for Facilities) project of the Municipality of Naples in the mid-1970s.

In the first two decades of this century, the five-minute city became a model for a few sporadic initiatives, but immediately after Covid it spread with extraordinary success. The logic of the five-minute city aims to reorganise the habitat not into separate parts but into interrelated networks in which every inhabitant is guaranteed access - leaving open alternatives and different choices - not only to primary services but above all to “places of social condensation”, points of identity and reference. In fact, the city of a few minutes aims to realise a true “right to the city” for everyone, coexisting, never separated for any economic, social or religious reason.

In our cities of the past, citizens bound by the same culture and religion needed churches and cathedrals. When there were also significant, clearly identified communities in cities, mosques or other places of worship were built. For some decades now, this issue has tended to be addressed by creating unified spaces that can be used at different times or in different contexts for different religions.

The prolongation of average life expectancy and the need to move away from one's place of origin, which, among other things, has led to the breakdown of families and, consequently, the loss of intergenerational solidarity, have created a need for facilities dedicated to the care of the elderly. Similarly, in the past, homes for workers in large industrial complexes were built, as were homes for university students. These separations are typical of functionalist logic, of providing individual answers to individual questions: therefore, there is a lack of a systemic and integrated vision. In the case of elderly people, who are considered more fragile, there are objectively verifiable conditions of existence that prevent them from living independently or playing a fully active role in society, forcing them into isolation. in these cases, it is even more essential that, for the sake of their quality of life, not only is assistance guaranteed, but also opportunities for involvement are created, including through new intergenerational and, in a broader sense, intercultural exchanges.

A city of coexistence is a welcoming city, where young people, the elderly, the frail and people from different cultures can interact positively to the point of considering each other essential. The theme, therefore, is to intertwine these diversities in terms of coexistence rather than opposition: young/old, rich/poor, present/future, whatever the diversity may be. Because today's young people will be tomorrow's elderly.

How, then, do we think cities should transform themselves to accommodate the needs, abilities and behaviours aimed at the well-being and coexistence of all individuals? How can we respond to the goal of bringing together and connecting what is separated in space and time?

There are many studies on these issues: among them, the theory of the capabilities approach stands out as an interesting cultural reference point. It derives from the research of Amartya Sen (Sen, 1985 (5), 1999 (6) and developed by Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum, Sen, 1993 (7) as “capability ethics”. *The capability approach* is a perspective through which urban public space, understood as a resource available to citizens and all individuals, represents not an end but a means to pursue well-being. Better still, it is a tool through which the “real opportunities of each individual” to “use the city to increase their capabilities” are assessed. Therefore, we start from the physical “impediments” - but not only - that “limit its autonomous and free use by all”.

As architects, we deal with cities and the quality of living environments. At the heart of our interest are public spaces as resources towards which we can channel every design tool to make them truly available to all individuals and to promote the growth of well-being and the reduction of inequalities.

This broad reasoning helps to remind us that, although the focus here is on the theme of “the

elderly and young people", "the frail and those from different cultures", inequalities in the use of space are a function of a series of other internal factors such as gender, ethnicity, health and ability, or external factors (family, cultural, social and institutional conditions).

But what do we mean when we talk about cities here? As already mentioned, cities, especially in our contexts, have ancient roots: the spaces and buildings that constitute them have a lifespan that is not even comparable to that of their individual inhabitants. Cities have evolved, expressing the civilisations and cultures that have followed one another over the centuries, and in transforming themselves, they have almost never taken a transgenerational view into account. The city is "*civitas*" before it is "*urbs*".

Since the second half of the last century, cities have been involved in progressive acceleration and unprecedented upheavals in their objectives. These changes are not only cultural, relational and technological:

- unprecedented demographic phenomena continue to accentuate, making Italy dimensionally irrelevant (today it is home to almost 0.8% of the world's population).
- thanks to the constant increase in average life expectancy, Italy is among the world leaders, just behind the absolute leader in terms of life expectancy. Today, the elderly prevail and birth rates are at an all-time low. At the same time, migration is and will continue to increase.

The city is holding out, but it needs to be transformed to respond to changing demands that are still provisional and subject to change. The transport revolution and the dominance of private transport have encouraged fragmentation and rendered the standards - a significant achievement in the 1960s - now inappropriate and obsolete.

The city is for everyone: its layout must also help to reduce inequalities. These inequalities stem from a failure to recognise the plurality of individual needs and characteristics and the way in which they use common spaces to improve their quality of life. We are talking about children, women, the elderly, foreigners, the frail and the disabled.

The spatial component of individual quality of life depends on the presence of places, services and activities, their distribution in space and the network they generate or are generated by. However, these criteria are not sufficient to define the quality of "living environments": there is a contradiction between the quantity of resources available and the disparity in their use for the enhancement of the well-being of individuals and groups of inhabitants. Here are some starting points:

- Considering the interaction between cities and individuals (a "people-centred" approach) means moving beyond the traditional quantitative logic of standards in favour of an assessment of individuals' actual possibilities for "increasing their well-being".
- Analysing the physical and organisational conditions of the city that hinder autonomous and free use, mortifying the right to the city, which nevertheless remains to the advantage of the dominant groups.
- Encourage dialogue between the various parties and involve those with specific needs in a broad interaction between a plurality of individuals.
- Remove or reduce obstacles and create a favourable urban environment in which individuals' abilities can be promoted and their choice of valid alternatives maximised.

When we talk about the "elderly" population, i.e. those over the age of 75, we can think specifically about how urban space is used, mainly in terms of connectivity and places for socialising (social condensers): for example, consider the possibility of travelling on foot or by means of transport that allows (with a minimum walking distance) access to an urban centre where other social and collective spaces (schools, squares, etc.) are located.

In this case, we are talking about the five-minute city or the city of minutes that are needed... In recent years, this has been a recurring goal, but few cities are actually taking steps to implement it. In concrete terms, it means reorganising what already exists with a view to recognising or introducing networks of easily accessible "social condensation places", perhaps supported by small-scale ecological mobility, but in any case linked by large-scale collective mobility systems in order to avoid restricted and closed-off areas.

When we talk about "young people", the issue becomes more complex, as the assessment of the possibilities for using common resources and the analysis of the obstacles to the free and autonomous use of urban space require some clarification.

First and foremost is the issue of proximity, which primarily affects children, whose ability to use urban space can be partly compared to that of the elderly or people with motor disabilities.

For example, among the urban policies involving mobility, those that reverse the traditional car/pedestrian hierarchy in favour of pedestrians and cycle mobility (the *woonerf* model) are of interest. By working on mobility hubs, they encourage the creation of protected routes where people can move freely between stops, schools and sports activities, creating large safe islands open to all.

Globally, the average age today is just over 30. However, there are many differences: in Africa it is around 20, in Europe 44, in Italy 48, and just under 49 in Japan, the oldest country. Older people (over 65) account for about 10% of the world's population, less than 4% in Africa, over 20% in Europe, and 3 or 4 points more in Italy. On the other hand, young people account for a quarter of the world's population, almost a third in Africa, just over a sixth in Europe, and almost an eighth in Italy. People with disabilities account for about 15% of the world's population and 20% in Africa, the highest percentage. When elderly people with difficulties are also taken into account, the percentages in Europe and Italy are almost the same.

The percentage of elderly people is expected to increase significantly in the coming decades, especially in developing countries, due to increased life expectancy and declining birth rates. At the same time, other forecasts indicate sharp demographic declines across Europe by 2100, which will be particularly intense in Italy, where the population is expected to be around 35 million, with a high percentage of elderly people and the resulting economic challenges.

The removal of architectural barriers is now a mandatory standard, although it is still not widely respected. Some examples of micro-interventions aimed at ensuring safe passage for all through the use of alternative signage that allows people to recognise the route and obstacles (loges, acoustic signals, etc.) or the creation of rest areas along protected routes, with seats where people can rest and children can play, especially in areas close to homes.

On the other hand, people with disabilities, including those who are in this situation only for a period of time or those who share the same problems for other reasons, also reach significant percentages in Western societies: therefore, the whole cannot be limited to allowing architectural barriers to be circumvented (dedicated routes and spaces), but must aim to organise itself so that they are effectively eliminated.

In 2020, Catania launched the "Multisensory Bio-Accessibility Charter", which aims to renew the paradigms of accessibility and liveability of confined living environments and the homes of vulnerable families. This "Charter" adopts seven general principles (equity in use / flexibility of use / simple and intuitive use / perceptible information / tolerance for error / low physical effort / space and size for the approach to use) and is based on multi-sensory perception through six indicators: visual / acoustic / olfactory / tactile / hydrometric / kinesthetic.

Living environments that are attentive to social inclusion and support for vulnerable people require multidimensional approaches aimed at responding to the needs of both the elderly and people with disabilities and those in conditions of socio-economic and cultural vulnerability. It is therefore also essential to integrate cultural diversity. The traditions and housing models of countries of origin - whether economically less developed contexts or similar or even more advanced ones - influence housing expectations and needs.

An inclusive design approach is based on the principles of universal design and accessibility, which aim to ensure usable and safe spaces for all. In recent decades, various countries have focused on reducing vehicle traffic and encouraging pedestrian and cycle mobility, including by promoting community activities and valuing different cultural identities, i.e. creating inclusive environments where diversity is recognised and valued.

The adoption of assistive technologies and smart solutions now makes it possible to create a living environment that is dynamic and responsive to the needs of different users. Technological tools that enable real-time monitoring and adaptation of spaces are essential for promoting well-being and social inclusion and achieving effective housing solutions for a diverse audience.

Everything should therefore encourage exchange and participation at every level, promoting virtuous actions through the involvement of young people (children and adolescents) and the elderly in micro-transformation, the creation of spaces and the shared management of neighbourhood services. This would allow easy access to "urban gardens", perhaps linked to school buildings whose facilities (library,

gym and sports areas, canteen and refreshment areas, auditorium and music areas, workshops, etc.) - designed to fit in with the guidelines introduced ten years ago in Italy - could be managed separately and be open to the public.

These possible actions, which have been successfully trialled in some cities, provide examples - though not exhaustive - that, at the neighbourhood level and in (alternative) mobility networks, facilitate certain city functions for users considered to be most disadvantaged (young people and the elderly). This is because the quality of public space affects the behaviour, social life, spirituality, safety, economy and well-being of those who live there.

A community that is aware of all this should allocate a greater share of its resources to raising the level of transformation of living environments and initiating wide-ranging policies that give rise to long-term urban projects based on the micro-actions identified above. Action on urban space must promote the quality of urban life for all individuals, without any discrimination, so that the city is not a place of inequality but, with respect for the dignity of the individual, promotes well-being and becomes a place where everyone can learn and develop their "urban capacity" in interaction with other individuals.

Finally, we must consider the irreversible process of ageing of our population: the latest ISTAT data show the progressive depopulation taking place in our country and predict that by 2050, people aged 65 and over could represent 34.5% of the total population. Furthermore, also by 2050, the ratio of individuals of working age (15-64 years) to those not of working age (0-14 and 65 years) will change from approximately three to two in 2022 to approximately one to one in 2050, with differences between the north and south.

It is therefore urgent to promote processes of openness and acceptance of the many young migrants who arrive in our country after almost always painful journeys, removing them from clandestinity and integrating them into a process of building a free and open society capable of addressing the pressing problems of the future, first and foremost climate change and the catastrophic consequences that will make the excluded of the earth even poorer.

There are many "migrants" who come from these contexts, but also people who settle outside their country of origin (for work reasons, a desire to live in a different climate, or other reasons) who have a different culture or different habits. Cities must welcome diversity, embrace its positive aspects and enrich themselves by promoting processes of inclusion and cultural regeneration.

The project of change, of physical transformation of living environments, is crucial today and requires an attitude of listening, dialogue and open-mindedness, capable of opposing any separation – physical or cultural barriers – in order to create bonds, build relationships and hope for the future.

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4 The City of Coexistence of Patrizia Bottaro and Massimo Pica Ciamarra is the City of Modernity where Streets Sing as in Paul Valery

a comment by...

Natale Gaspare De Santo, Professor Emeritus University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, Naples, Italy

Email: natalegaspare.desanto@unicampania.it

Patrizia Bottaro and Massimo Pica Ciamarra have illustrated at the EAPE Webinar of the Section "The Elderly in Our Society", an original study on the elderly, the young, and the fragile in the city: *Needs and dreams for cities of coexistence* (1).

Their related paper begins with the sentence: "The city is the place of civil friendship." The subsequent sentence is: "The city is no longer that of Aristotle, for whom the ideal city could be encompassed with a view from the top of a hill."

The city they foresee is that of modernity, the city of "five minutes", the slow city, the city of capabilities.

The city shall be turned in the place where the needs of all generations can be realized in harmony, where the individual capabilities can develop, and at the same time realize the need of beauty, tolerance, coexistence. And much more.

The city as the place where the fragile, the aged, those with different cultural backgrounds can start and render stable the interpersonal exchanges since it is basically intercultural. The city that is capable to include everyone even in the century of mobility.

Thus, the goal is a city of coexistence where optimal life is possible independently from economic state, age, cultural and religious backgrounds. It seems that this city can realize the 1921 message of Paul Valéry, in *Eupalinos ou l'architecte* (2).

We meet there three characters, Socrates the philosopher, Eupalinos the architect of the aqueduct bringing water to Samos, and Phaedrus.

Phaedrus represents the typical artist and the man of the world, the one who takes pleasure in earthly things, in their nuances and in the details of material creation, in contrast to the philosophical vision of Socrates.

Eupalinos asks Phaedrus a fundamental question:

"Tell me, have you ever noticed, walking in cities among the buildings that populate them, how some are mute, others speak, and still others, the rarest, sing? This aspect concerns the talent of their builder and also the favor of the Muses".

According to Eupalinos, singing buildings were harmonious since therein architecture meets and melts with music.

«The purpose of architects is to redistribute, endowed with intelligible forms and almost musical perspectives into the space where mortal move» says Valéry. «To those who have been taught to listen a façade can sing».

Architecture is written in Galilean mathematical character, as music is written. Music is the form of art that is present in all civilizations, that is one of the four disciplines with literature, mathematics and genetics that according to Steiner shall be taught in the future (3,4).

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Bull Eur Assoc Prof Emer 2026; 7(1): 01-45

EAPE SECTION: On Ethics

WEBINAR HIGHLIGHTS

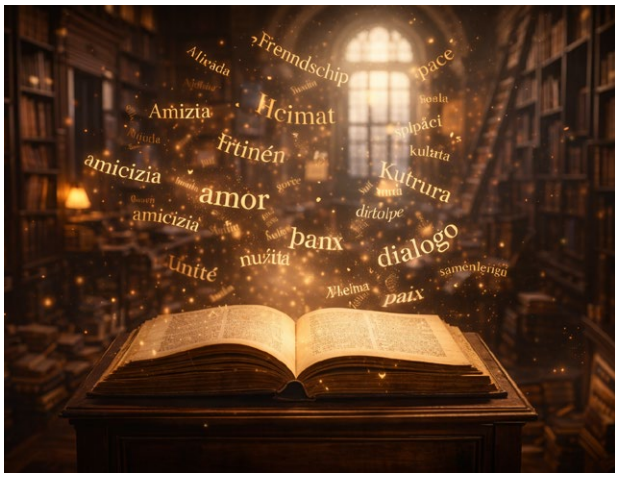
Language Hegemony of Lingua Franca in Research and Higher Education: Ethical Issues - 05.03.2026

1

Language Hegemony of English as a Lingua Franca: Ethical Issues

Lucija Čok, Science and Research center, Laboratory for linguistic and social innovation, Koper – Capodistria, Slovenia

Email: Lucija.cok@zrs-kp.si



European areas of linguistic and cultural contact are more the rule than the exception. Linguistic and cultural heritage has enabled Europe to become a mosaic of languages and intertwined cultures, and we must do everything possible to ensure that it remains so. The EU's language policy aims to ensure that the 23 official languages and 60 regional or minority languages are protected and given equal status in the individual Member States. However, where cultural, linguistic, ethnic and political identities and practices clash and overlap, the multilingual and heteroglossic reality leads to hybridity, which requires specific approaches and alliances. Globalisation, apart from economic, political and governmental issues, reinforces the sharing and exchange of knowledge and innovation and requires a pragmatic approach. For communication and cooperation among different communication codes, the common use of a lingua franca is a practical solution

A quick look at the impact of linguae francae through time demonstrates that various languages have served as linguae francae in different historical periods, some for millennia, others for several centuries. Examples include ancient Greek in Europe and the Mediterranean, Portuguese in Africa and parts of Asia and the Pacific, and Spanish in the Americas. Religious languages such as Latin in Europe and Arabic in the Islamic world are still in use. French, as a lingua franca, played a special role as the language of diplomacy. English spread globally through the British Empire from the 19th to the 21st centuries, and later, the worldwide influence of US English has led to its current status.

Key patterns in history show that linguae francae rise with political or economic power and may decline when such power shifts. What is happening now, and what could happen in the future to linguae francae?

Communication between people is closely linked to the linguistic value of each language present and, consequently, to attitudes towards the community where that language is spoken. The promotion of linguistic diversity at the European level should be based on the principle that there is an obligation to learn and master an active EU language other than one's own, and that a sustainable language policy is both necessary and forthcoming. It is essential to promote a language policy within a broader international educational context to preserve the multilingual heritage of European ethnic groups, develop individual multilingualism, and foster multilingualism in society. The status of languages used in border areas refers to the special status of a language due to its historical, cultural, linguistic, and/or personal proximity to its neighbour in a border region. Reflection on the role and impact of neighbouring languages – namely, all European languages – on their coexistence and sustainable development is crucial. The need for a new civilisational model of coexistence in diversity becomes particularly evident here. This

involves not only regulating inter-state relations and removing functional barriers but also creating and enforcing principles of coexistence that respect the specificities of all ethnic communities inhabiting contact areas. (Čok, Pertot, 2010, 1) Therefore, EU member states should promote the learning of the language of the immediately neighbouring country, in addition to achieving a certifiable standard in English (CEFR, 2001, 2).

The widespread use of English as a lingua franca in public life, together with its prioritisation in education, contributes to its predominant role in business, research, communication, international services, software, and digital media.

In a global context, English as a lingua franca has been most comprehensively described in terms of its purpose and status by Robert Philipson (1992, 2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2009, 3). In his detailed account, it may be:

- a lingua economica (in business and advertising, the language of corporate economy),
- a lingua emotiva (the imaginary of Hollywood, popular music, consumerism, and hedonism),
- a lingua academica (research publications, international conferences, and as a medium for learning content in higher education),
- a lingua bellica (the global presence of English is due to the massive economic, cultural, and military influence of the USA, bases in hundreds of countries worldwide),
- a digital language (social networks and tools, notification services, digital communication, etc.).

The question of whether English is a cuckoo – a lingua cucula – in the European university nest of languages is significant. The Bologna reform has led to numerous student exchanges under the Erasmus model, introducing the parallel use of English at universities. Many higher education institutions aim to offer English alongside the national language as a language of instruction. What parallel mastery of two languages means in practice for individuals or higher education institutions is left to the autonomy of the universities. However, this often results in the national language being abandoned, with lectures delivered in English for all students, both visiting and resident.

English, as the language used in key areas such as lectures, scientific publications, conferences, and academia, confirms its dominance. The displacement of national languages can particularly threaten less widespread, minority, and regional languages. Linguistic inequality becomes an ethical issue when it leads to a decline in human autonomy in social interactions, in individuals' rights to use their native language, and in the rights of linguistic communities to develop their language in all areas of use.

From a general and global perspective, particularly that of globalisation, two positions are evident, like the two sides of a coin. On one side, the positive aspect: sharing and dissemination of knowledge and innovation; on the other, the negative aspect: the loss, especially among younger generations, of national traditions and historical heritage, and a forced market. We can compare the meaning of "globalisation" with the role of a lingua franca: the same coin, with its two faces. (Campanella, 2026, 4)

To conclude, it is essential to promote a language policy within a broader international educational context, to preserve the multilingual heritage of European ethnic groups, develop individual multilingualism, and foster multilingualism in society. Investing in the preservation of linguistic diversity by learning different languages, supporting and protecting endangered languages, is essential to maintain live communication, resist the dominance of global languages, and prevent artificial intelligence from dominating humans. A sustainable policy of coexistence and peace requires protecting and developing linguistic diversity and preserving the uniqueness of diversity in Europe in the face of globalisation.

It is important to remember that languages have always been a topic of discussion and a central theme in literature and science.

"Language distinguishes humans from animals; language also distinguishes nations from one another. We only know where a person is from after they have spoken. Custom and necessity lead each person to learn the language of their country, but what makes this language the language of their country and not that of another?" (Rousseau, 1990, 25, 5)

Today's multilingual and heteroglossic reality requires special approaches and alliances, as cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and political identities and practices clash and overlap. Linguistic pragmatism – the use of only one language for successful cooperation – denies everything we have committed to as a democratic society. The displacement of national languages can particularly threaten less widespread, minority, and regional languages. Linguistic inequality in communication becomes an

ethical problem when it reduces human autonomy in social interactions, individuals' rights to use their mother tongue, and language communities' rights to develop their language in all areas of use. Preserving the vitality of languages and the cultural diversity of ethnic communities when using a lingua franca for general communication requires developing sustainable language policies as the only solution.

An excellent example of linguistic and cultural vitality and resilience was this year's opening of the Winter Olympic Games. Italian creators incorporated elements of European civilisation into the opening ceremony, drawing on the cultural history of the Roman world. Carefully selected contributions from literature, music, dance, fashion, and expressive gestures conveyed their view of sport with great communicative power. The programme would have been even more fitting if the Olympic Games anthem, sung in English, had included at least one verse in Greek, the language of the games' origin.

Without the kitsch typical of shows often seen at such events, this occasion served as a reminder to preserve the values of civilisation, which can also be maintained in sport through the gathering of young people towards a common goal.

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2 What are the Problems around a Lingua Franca?

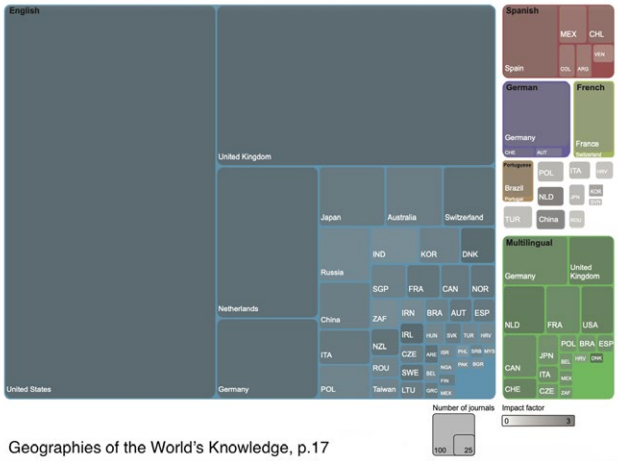
Michael Biggs, Emeritus Professor of Aesthetics, University of Hertfordshire, UK

Email: m.a.biggs@herts.ac.uk

A study in 2011 by the Oxford Internet Institute identified that Chinese is by far the most widely spoken first-language, whereas Chinese-language academic publications were too few to include as a unique category. English was the third most spoken first-language but far and away the most published academic language. In comparison, Spanish was spoken equally widely as English as a first language but was very much less represented in academic publishing (1). That Anglophone dominance has continued to be reinforced by the policies of publication databases. For example, Scopus contains 93% English-language articles even though the inclusion policy accepts 40 languages. As a result, a disproportionate volume of high-impact articles occurs in English language publications. Reinforcing the bias, Scopus requires:

- English-language titles and abstracts for all research articles.
- an English-language journal homepage.
- and references to be in Roman script (2).

Languages that are frequently inter-translated are called high-resource languages. A systematic review in 2023, of the use of translating technologies, found that three-quarters of the studies include a high-resource language. Moreover, in nearly two-thirds of the studies, English was the target language of the translation, where non-Anglophone scholars seem to be using translation tools as writing aids to produce



Geographies of the World's Knowledge, p.17

texts for publication in English. The study concluded that translation tools are not necessarily helping to displace English as the key language of scholarly communication, nor are they creating a genuinely

multilingual scholarly communication ecosystem. Instead, the responsibility for translation in scholarly publishing continues to rest on the shoulders of non-Anglophone scholars, while the English-speaking scholars remain in a privileged position (3).

Some of this is shown alternatively in this infographic from Geographies of the World's Knowledge, showing the proportion of English-language academic publications compared to Spanish-language, French, etc. The large, coloured rectangles are the language groups, with sub-sections showing the country of origin. Also note here that the lightness or darkness of the country-rectangles indicates their impact-factor. Within the English-language sector there is not only high production but also high impact. This influences what we see next.

Since 2011 there has been a 5-fold increase in academic publication from China. This is mostly monolingual, in either English or Chinese. Over this period, China has risen to become the world's largest producer of scientific knowledge. According to Digital Science's "Dimensions" database, last year there were almost 830,000 papers that featured researchers based in China, representing around 15% of the world's 5.4 million articles. According to the journal *Nature*, China overtook the United States in 2022, for the number of contributions to natural-sciences articles. The majority of this research was disseminated in journals published by companies based in Western countries, rather than China's own domestic publishers. The biggest 20 international publishers by output, published 83% of all research articles involving authors based in China from 2012 to 2021 (4).

The Chinese government has stimulated this growth through investment, boosting academic publishing in a mixture of Chinese and English languages. The majority of this has been in English-language publishing because the Chinese government seeks high impact for its research on the global stage. The Chinese-language publishing infrastructure is weak, and since Chinese is not widely spoken as a second language, the readership for Chinese-language academic publishing is not international in its reach and is therefore limited in its impact. This shows that, aside from the fact that English is now a widely used second language, THE MAIN INTERNATIONAL DRIVER FOR PUBLICATION IN ENGLISH IS IMPACT FACTOR. So how are we to interpret this data, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of the current position?

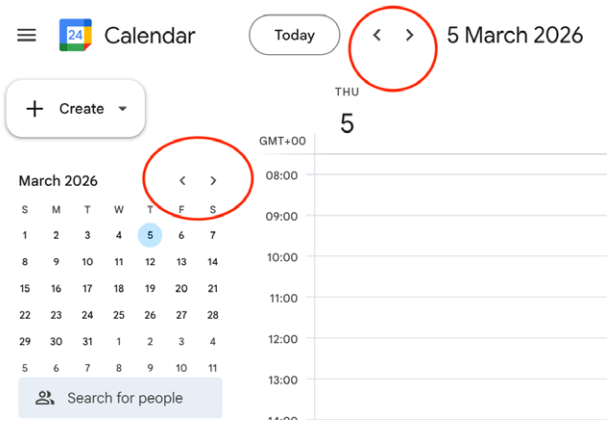
If Chinese researchers establish themselves as high-impact, and therefore setting the research benchmarks in various fields, the role of English as an academic language may be challenged. This could happen relatively quickly, so there may be a new demand for Machine Translation INTO Chinese from English, to maintain impact in a new world of Chinese-language publishing. Furthermore, internet domain names (URLs) in non-Roman scripts were only facilitated by ICANN in 2009, long after the establishment of the internet as a basic academic resource. This delay enabled Roman script to be established as the dominant medium, to the advantage of western countries. The marginalisation of non-Roman scripts also had the effect of restricting access by some users. For example, keyboards may not have Roman characters. This advantage of ACCESS is coming to an end. Today, one can copy-paste the Chinese characters 创造力 (yuo-chang-zhao-li "creativity") into Google and get Chinese-language results on a UK-oriented browser, and then simply use Google Translate to read them in English. Therefore, technical solutions could easily facilitate a transition towards global dominance by the Chinese-language instead.

Unfortunately, the increasing visibility of non-Euro-centric research has been accompanied by an increase in the retraction rate from those countries. Medicine, Engineering, and Materials Science are particularly affected, with high rates of retractions for papers involving collaborators from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Russia, and elsewhere. These fields have high human impact, involving life-or-death problems, and therefore there are ethical implications for any "publish-or-perish" policies such as those demanded by the Chinese government.

Clearly, both the language and the writing system have consequences on visibility, access and the potential for impact. There are technical, historical and cultural dimensions to these issues. Language is more than just a set of technical terms, it is a culture of communication, and a surprising amount of this communication is based on a language-specific set of metaphors. Metaphors rarely translate effectively because the underlying assumptions about time and space vary, especially when translating between cultures with different scripts and writing systems. Interdisciplinary research teams of cognitive scientists and sociolinguists have identified that everyday objects tend to be arranged in space according to a mental timeline, which varies in direction across cultures.

For example, a study found that Arabic speakers, who write from right to left, tended to associate spatial distribution towards the left as indicating the future, and conversely distribution to the right

as associated with the past (5). This is the opposite spatial metaphor for past and future that English speakers demonstrate and is part of a wider socio-linguistic context of metaphors and abstract constructs that we inherit from our native language, such as high and low notes in music, etc. These spatial metaphors for time are ubiquitous, for example, Google calendar buttons should, ideally, correspond to the user's sense of past and future to optimise the user experience and to avoid confusion.



Another study revealed that English speakers had faster reaction times when the key they had to press to indicate that an event happened earlier than another event was located on the left, compared to when the key was located on the right; and conversely, Hebrew speakers displayed the reverse patterns (6).

These linguistic influences have real-world consequences, for example, in the design of nuclear safety equipment and fighter aircraft, where the layout of controls that must be undertaken quickly and, in a sequence, may have life and death consequences. On the other hand, there are clear benefits of international standardisation for interoperability. The argument here is not about implementation, but about ideation and knowledge creation. Therefore, given the fundamental role that metaphor plays in our understanding of abstract concepts, we should be concerned about any collapse of linguistic diversity because of the consequential collapse of metaphoric diversity. If we only understand new and challenging concepts in terms of one set of metaphors, isn't that going to LIMIT not just our research communication but also our knowledge advancement?

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3 Is Language Hegemony an Ethical Issue?

Michael Biggs, Emeritus Professor of Aesthetics, University of Hertfordshire, UK

Email: m.a.biggs@herts.ac.uk

I intend to frame the *de facto* dominance of English, as having not only practical, but also economic and ethical consequences in terms of threats to innovation, and the negative impact of an emphasis on the written word that excludes alternatives such as images, embodiment, diagramming, etc. as potential sources of the next generation of understandings and worldviews.

So, is the dominance of English in academia, an ETHICAL question? Well, one indicator of ethical questions is the presence of the word "ought". We say that non-English-language speakers "ought" not to be disadvantaged, etc. For this ethical imperative, indicated by the word "ought", to have legitimacy, we would need to establish that this is indeed a requirement. Such requirements are often tested by a negation: that is to say, why "ought" we not disadvantage a specific language user-group? One can imagine the defence: that in a world where we all have our native languages, someone will always be advantaged or disadvantaged according to the dominant language in any particular context. The only

way to avoid this would be to ensure that scholarly communication is only undertaken in a language that is nobody's native language, for example Esperanto or, as was the case in the Enlightenment, in Latin.

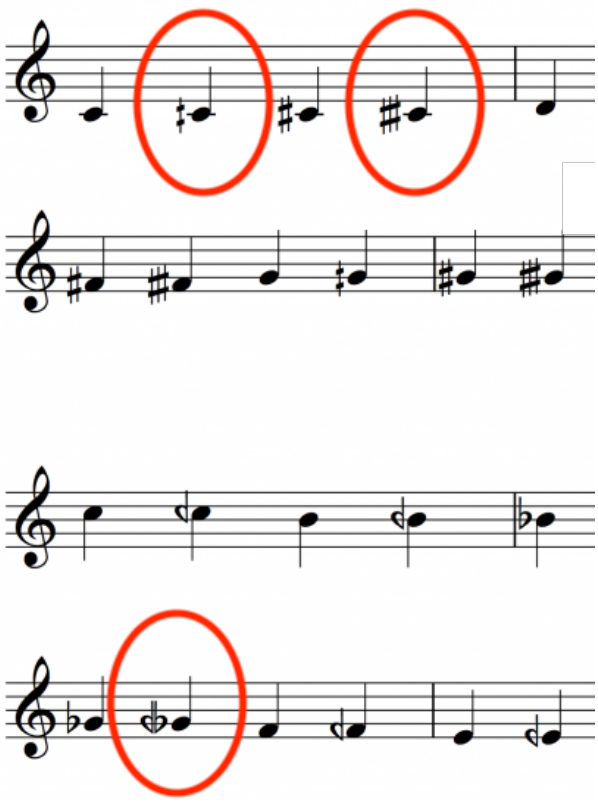
But even if we decide there is a moral imperative, a legitimate "ought", such imperatives always have more force if there is also an interest in delivering them. Academics from the free-market school of thinking might argue that we operate in a capitalistic situation in which the dominant language has already been used to produce the dominant body of scholarly work, and therefore the pressure is on speakers of other languages to write in English. They might point out that there are technical solutions to this situation, such as the use of Google translate. Although AI translation is not currently as good as a well-trained human translator, or someone with good idiomatic English as a second language, it is easy to see that it won't be long before AI translators are as good as most people's non-native use of English. When that happens, our annoying free-market thinkers may argue, it will be possible for researchers to write in any language and make their works available to the scholarly community, at least within the 200 languages promised by Mark Zuckerberg (1).

Nevertheless, the ease with which native English-language speakers can access English-language publications will give them an advantage. Perhaps we can compare this to other advantages, gained by researchers at prestigious, often English-language speaking universities such as Oxford, Harvard, Stanford, etc. On this basis, it will never be a level playing field for all researchers. Especially in the current global political context, it seems likely that ethical arguments are going to be regarded as optional at best, and at worst, an encumbrance to freedom of trade, freedom of speech, and other free-market ideologies. It is a battle to establish that it "ought" to be different, when the facts on the ground are being used as pragmatic evidence for how it happens to be, and the economics and politics on the ground are being used as evidence of how that isn't going to change. Therefore, to establish an ethical case for change in the face of opposition from a globally non-ethical politics, we must consider why it ought to be different, and not just that it ought to be different.

One approach to this comes from sociolinguistics. Languages have different capacities to communicate content, that is, some languages are better at expressing certain relationships than others. It is clear, even within the European group of languages that, for example, German facilitates creative compound formation that is difficult to translate into English. Going further afield, more "exotic" languages like Hopi or Kuuk Thaayorre may bring with them the ability to discuss fundamental concepts such as time, place and direction in ways that are different from that facilitated by English. Here, I have in mind the arguments around linguistic relativity, and whether radically different languages facilitate or even cause, or are consequences of, different conceptual structures (2). This idea of linguistic limitation doesn't end at spoken language, but applies to all forms of expression, writing and notation.

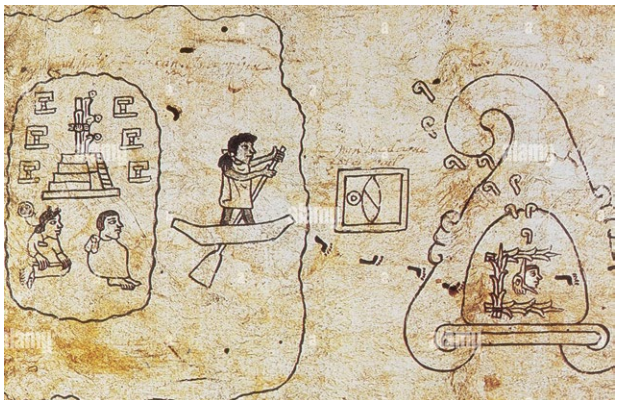
Whilst writing is often regarded as the notation of language, language is itself the notation of thoughts and ideas, so we must also develop annotations for music and other socio-cultural phenomena. We could even expand our scope and consider image-based communication under our umbrella-concept of language and notation. However, any form of language and notation is incomplete, because it arises in a limited social context in which there is a need to express culturally situated content.

For example, Western musical notation has evolved in parallel with the development of a system of harmony around specific notes and their intervals, that can be annotated in stave notation. In this system there are no permitted tones between one semitone and another. But twentieth century composers such as Messiaen wanted to use quartertones, and so new notation had to be added so that the idea of a quartertone could be communicated. Graphic scores take this evolution of a conceptual language paired with its notation even further and break away from the temporal linearity of the score and of prescribed, legitimate "notes" in a system.



Not all spoken languages have a written form. Even in those that do, writing only captures part of what is happening, so conversation analysts have needed to develop additional notation for intonation, body-language, etc. Nahuatl is an indigenous

language from pre-Columbian Mexico that does not have a written script. It uses pictorial images and abstract signs simultaneously to document history, and origin stories across time and space. The resulting artefacts annotate concepts of time, place and movement in ways that are radically different from European cartography or linguistic description.



My point is, that thought, language and writing or notation, are interlinked, and the logical form of the notation (as Wittgenstein might say) determines the boundaries of what can be thought and said (3). So one response to my question why it "ought" to be different - why "ought" we be bothered by monolingualism - is the pragmatic observation that different languages have different communicative capacities and the more strange the linguistic or notational structure is, so the more there is an opportunity for novel conceptualisations such as quartertones in music or spatio-temporal mapping in Nahuatl. This pragmatic observation has economic consequences when framed in terms of creativity, innovation and competitive advantage.

So, we can be specific about WHY "ought" we do something about monolingualism. I suggest we already have at least 4 practical and 3 ethical reference points:

Practically, linguistic pluralism is a fact of life owing to the diversity of natural languages and geographic distribution. However well-educated a certain elite are, there will always be a need for translation. Machine translation already takes most of the burden away, but it needs to be trained on good examples provided by genuinely bilingual and bi-cultural people. As a result, that culturally nuanced, human expertise, may always be needed as a check on machine translation in fields such as international diplomacy, literature, poetry, etc. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that our best thinkers are necessarily also our best linguists, so there is a risk of strong, novel concepts being lost in weak, mechanistic translation. Finally, those Anglophones who do not currently experience the practical problem of linguistic hegemony, may feel less comfortable if the tide turns towards Chinese or Spanish.

Ethically, it clearly advantages some and disadvantages others if, in addition to discipline-specific knowledge, one must add an apparently unrelated skill in second-language fluency. This is a matter of EQUITY. Somewhere between the practical and the ethical, there is every reason to believe that content may be lost if one limits expression to only one language or notation. The dominance of one linguistically encoded set of concepts has consequences for the marginalisation of content requiring a different encoding. This is a matter of DIVERSITY. Ethically, since language is associated with culture, nationality and identity, it is clearly contrary to the interests of the many, to raise one language group above the others. This is a matter of INCLUSION.

I would like to mention three initiatives to show that action is already being taken, even if the facts on the ground seem overwhelming.

Firstly, the "Helsinki Initiative in Multilingualism in Scholarly Communication", has a commitment to, among other activities, "promote language diversity in research assessment, evaluation, and funding systems" (4). Individuals and organisations such as EAPE, can sign up to support this initiative. Helsinki advances 3 main recommendations to be adopted:

1. To support the dissemination of research results for the full benefit of society.
   - by ensuring researchers are merited for disseminating research results beyond academia and for interacting with heritage, culture, and society.
   - and by ensuring there is equal access to researched knowledge, provided in a variety of languages.
2. To protect national infrastructures for publishing locally relevant research.
   - by ensuring not-for-profit journals and book publishers have both sufficient resources, and the support needed, to maintain high standards of quality control and research integrity.
   - and by ensuring national journals and book publishers are safeguarded in their transition to open access.
3. To promote language diversity in research assessment, evaluation, and funding systems.
   - by ensuring that in the process of expert-based evaluation, high quality research is valued regardless of the publishing language or publication channel.
   - and by ensuring that when metrics-based systems are utilized, journal and book publications in all languages are adequately taken into account.

Secondly, UNESCO is bringing information together in a single open resource. The project is called "Developing Institutional Open Access

Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication" (DIAMAS). Within DIAMAS, it is developing an Extensible Quality Standard for Institutional Publishing (EQSIP); and multilingualism is a key element addressed in its equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) component (5).

UNESCO has a series of recommendations, for example:

- For authors: to practice citation diversity (e.g., citing research published in other languages) and consider including a citation diversity statement with your own articles, including any linguistic limits on literature searches (e.g., searches that have been conducted only in English).
- For peer reviewers: to identify to the editors the languages in which you are able to provide peer review feedback.
- For editors: to provide or recommend guidelines to help authors to prepare manuscripts in a reader- and (machine) translation-friendly way. Well-crafted input can lead to better quality translation output from automatic translation tools.
- For librarians: to add multilingual metadata to items to facilitate multilingual searches in library catalogues.
- For journal publishers: to translate abstracts, summaries, and tables of contents into multiple languages.

Thirdly, particularly with reference to the bias that English-language dominance may bring to research evaluation, the global "Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment" (CoARA) project is a coalition of over 700 research organisations, funders, assessment authorities, professional societies, and their associations, who have agreed on a common direction and guiding principles to implement reform in the assessment of research, researchers, and research organisations (6). It has set out a shared direction for changes in research assessment practices intended to maximize the quality and impact of research. To this end, CoARA has established a "Working Group on Multilingualism and Language Biases in Research Assessment", which has the dual objectives of raising awareness about the importance of multilingualism in scholarly publishing, and providing guidelines for recognizing, rewarding and incentivising research published in all languages.

I will conclude with a reminder that these attributes of "equity, diversity, and inclusion", should be the main reference points in any ethical arguments about the problems of monolingualism in academia, because they focus the argument away from intangible notions of what OUGHT to be different, and towards more tangible notions of WHY, and the benefits that will come from any actions.

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4

Is Latin a Dead Language? Or the Genetic Code of Modern Languages?

G.-Andrei Dan, Editor in Chief, Professor Emeritus of Medicine, Romanian Academy of Scientists
Full Professor of Cardiology and Internal Medicine, University of Medicine "Carol Davila" Bucharest, Romania
President-Elect, EAPE

Email: andrei.dan@gadan.ro

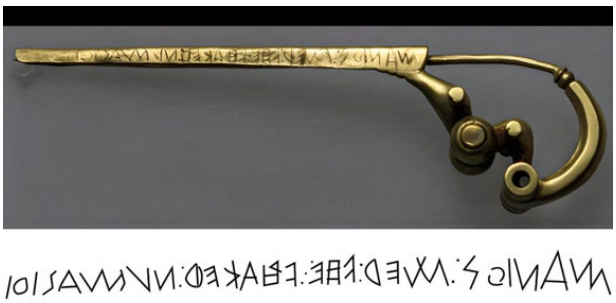
Nulla lingua musicam linguae Latinae habet; haec autem musica immortalis est atque omnibus linguis humanis pertinet.

No language has the music of the Latin language, and this music is immortal and belongs to all human languages.

Latin is frequently labeled a "dead language," a designation that suggests obsolescence, irrelevance, and cultural finality. Such a characterization, however, rests on a narrow and ultimately misleading definition of linguistic vitality. While Latin has not been transmitted as a native spoken language for many centuries, it has never ceased to function as a living system of meaning, intellectual transmission, and cultural continuity. Rather than dying, Latin transformed—becoming one of the most enduring linguistic forces in human history. A unique transformation from a vulgar language to "lingua franca" and finally to the roots and substance of many modern languages

The gestation of the Latin language was neither short nor simple. Latin emerged around the seventh century BCE in the small region of Latium, inhabited by a small Roman population (the name deriving from Romulus, the legendary founder of this population), situated south of the more technologically advanced Etruscan civilization. In its earliest phase, Latin (Roman) shared grammatical structures and lexical elements with other Italic dialects such as Oscan and Umbrian. Although the Etruscan language itself was not Indo-European (and the lost Etruscan language remains largely unknown), Roman interaction with Etruscan culture introduced important technological and cultural terms (previously unknown to the ancient Roman people) into early Latin vocabulary. The Latin alphabet likewise developed from Etruscan writing (later than the writing of many other cultures). The Praeneste Fibula, dating to approximately 600 BCE, provides one of the earliest surviving attestations of written Latin. On this brooch (picture, top-right column) one can read from right to left "Manius me [fecit] Numerios" – Manius made it for Numerius.

Ancient Italic Peninsula



Praeneste Fibula

By the third century BCE, Rome's political consolidation of the Italian peninsula elevated the Roman language from a regional idiom to a standardized language of administration and culture. It was now the language of the entire region of Latium. In fact, nobody called it the Roman language anymore but Latin, the language of Latium.

Significantly, this linguistic expansion and persistence was not driven by military power alone. As the linguist David Crystal has observed, while military dominance may impose a language, sustained linguistic influence depends on economic, administrative, and cultural integration. Roman law, governance, commerce, and infrastructure ensured Latin's long-term stability and prestige. During this turbulent process Rome's expansion spelled the death of many languages (e.g., Celtic languages). Interestingly, being more interested in war and the economy, the Romans manifested a relatively late interest in writing. One of the first published books was "De Agri Cultura" (about agriculture), written by Publius Porcius Cato—the Elder—in 149 BCE.

Roman intellectual life initially developed in close dialogue with Greek culture. Romans adapted Greek culture for their audience at a time when the theater was highly appreciated by the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Latin and Greek are cognate languages, both descending from a common, now-lost proto-language. Roman scholars also adapted the Greek philosophical and aesthetic concept of "enchrithentes" (~ mastery of oneself) to Latin expression, coining the term "classicus" to denote linguistic and literary excellence. This differentiated the common people's Latin (Latina vulgaris) from the high intellectual language. The codification of Latin grammar and style emerged around the first century BCE with Marcus Terentius Varro's "De Lingua Latina Libri XXV" in twenty-five volumes, marking the emergence of Classical Latin as a precise and disciplined medium for scholarship.

There is no general agreement regarding the term "dead language." The Linguistic Society of America states that "Many languages are no longer being learned by new generations of children or by new adult speakers; these languages will become extinct when their last speaker dies. In fact, dozens of languages today have only one native speaker still living, and that person's death will mean the extinction of the language: it will no longer be spoken,

or known, by anyone." However, a clear distinction should be made between extinct languages (truly dead) and languages for which there are no longer native speakers but which continue to be used in special circumstances or contexts and evolve differently from daily spoken languages.

The misconception of Latin as a "dead language" derives from a strictly biological model of language transmission, according to which a language dies when it loses native speakers. By this definition, Latin would have ceased to live by the seventh century CE. Yet this framework fails to account for Latin's exceptional historical trajectory. Unlike genuinely extinct languages such as Laua (1987) or Tepecano (1980), which disappeared with the death of their last native speakers, Latin never disappeared from intellectual or institutional life. Throughout the medieval, Renaissance, and early modern periods, Latin functioned as the universal language of theology, philosophy, law, science, and diplomacy. Major thinkers—including Erasmus, Thomas More, Isaac Newton, Carl Linnaeus, Reginald Foster, Aloysius Egger, and Rowling—produced seminal works in Latin. For centuries, it was arguably the most influential intellectual language in the world.

Latin's continued vitality is most clearly visible in its descendants. Today, the Romance languages (languages directly derived from Latin) like Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Romanian, Catalan, and others—are spoken by approximately 880 million native speakers worldwide. Spanish was the language with the most native speakers in 2025 and the fourth language with the most speakers (https://www.ethnologue.com/insights/most-spoken-language). Romance languages are further divided into groups and clusters, depending on the mixing of Latin roots with local influences; however, Latin remains the cornerstone. Romanian, in particular, preserves several archaic Latin features, illustrating the depth of Latin's diachronic continuity.

Even English, though structurally Germanic, derives an estimated 50–80 percent of its vocabulary from Latin, especially in legal, scientific, medical, and academic registers. The English learner should be aware of the dual roots of this vocabulary. For example, the word "father," of Germanic origin, has parallel vocabulary with terms derived from the Latin "pater" (patriarchal, paternalistic, patrimony, expatriate...). The term "valedictorian," mostly used in Anglo-Saxon countries, derives from vale and dicere (saying farewell). The term "avowal," which entered English vocabulary in the second part of the eighteenth century, has roots in the Latin "advocare" (to call, summon, or invite). Needless to add that some expressions used in science, art, or justice preserve the original or slightly modified Latin form (i.e., habeas corpus, pro bono, synopsis, axiom, exponent, alumni, radical, and many others). A comparison between Latin and English as "Lingua Franca" (a term coined for a hybrid language used from the 11th to the 18th century in the Mediterranean area using a mix of Italian, Spanish, French, Greek, and Turkish languages):

Latin	English
Second Language	Hundreads of Milions of native speakers
Politically neutral (politically symmetrical and neutral)	Linked to geopolitical power (politically asymmetric)
Stable Grammar	Rapidly evolving
Scholarly Elitist	Globally accesible

In the twenty-first century, Latin remains an indispensable cultural and intellectual resource. It continues to provide stable and unambiguous terminology in medicine, law, theology, and the sciences. Pedagogically, the study of Latin sharpens grammatical awareness and logical reasoning, facilitating the acquisition of other languages and complex conceptual systems. In theological contexts, Latin functions as a sacred and liturgical language, sustained not by native speech communities but by institutional continuity and tradition. If Latin is the vessel of doctrinal transmission across centuries, then its continued liturgical and magisterial use makes it part of a living organism—the Church as Mystical Body. Philosophically, Latin preserves the structure of a living language: it is a structured system of meaning, a vehicle of rational thought, and a bearer of metaphysical distinctions. Its relative grammatical stability ensures conceptual precision and doctrinal consistency.

Latin is therefore not a vernacular organism but a formal instrument of continuity. Its vitality is not biological but structural, intellectual, and cultural. Like genetic code, Latin transmits foundational patterns across generations, shaping modern languages and modes of thought. To describe Latin as dead is to misunderstand both its function and its legacy.

Ovidius Publius Naso (the Roman poet exiled to Pontus Euxinus, in what is today Romania) wrote, "Felix qui audacter defendit quod amat" (happy is the one who boldly defends what he loves). Therefore we are proud and happy to defend the legitimacy of the Latin language.

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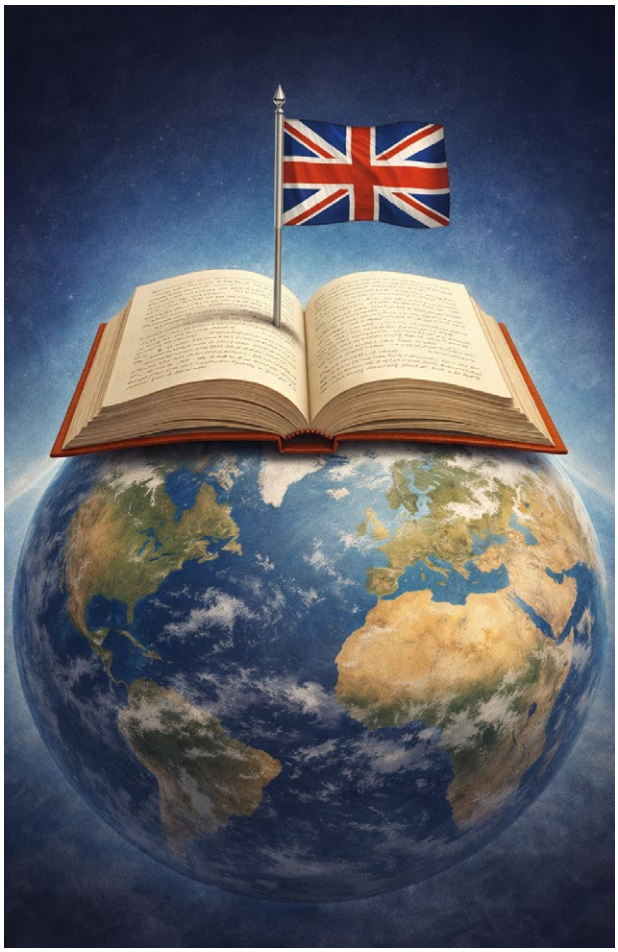
5

English as a Universal Scientific Language: Historical Dynamics, Ethical Challenges, and Future Scenarios

G.-Andrei Dan, Editor in Chief, Professor Emeritus of Medicine, Romanian Academy of Scientists
Full Professor of Cardiology and Internal Medicine, University of Medicine "Carol Davila" Bucharest, Romania
President-Elect, EAPE

Email: andrei.dan@gadan.ro



English has become the dominant language of global scientific communication. This status, however, is not the result of any intrinsic linguistic superiority, but rather the outcome of a complex historical, political, economic, and institutional trajectory (Crystal, 2003). The present essay examines how English emerged as the primary scientific lingua franca, explores the ethical and epistemic consequences of this dominance for non-native English speakers, and considers whether recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) may offer viable alternatives to a single global scientific language.

Throughout history, scientific communities have relied on different linguae francae. Latin functioned as the principal language of medieval scholarship, enabling communication across Europe. This was followed by the dominance of French in diplomacy and science during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and by the prominence of German in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific research, particularly in fields such as chemistry, physics, and philosophy. The transition to English reflects broader geopolitical and economic shifts, including British imperial expansion and the rise of the United States as a global scientific and economic power.

The aftermath of the Second World War further accelerated the dominance of English. Scientific centers in Germany and Central Europe declined, and many leading scientists migrated to English-speaking countries, especially to the United States. The rapid expansion of American scientific leadership was supported by substantial research funding, leading universities, and sustained technological innovation.

Over time, a self-reinforcing cycle emerged: major journals increasingly required publication in English, international conferences adopted English as their working language, and global bibliographic databases prioritized English-language outputs. English thus became indispensable for visibility, citation, and academic advancement.

Importantly, the dominance of English does not imply that it is structurally superior for scientific expression. Its predominance is historical, political, economic, and institutional. From the perspective of non-native speakers, English often presents considerable challenges, including irregular spelling and pronunciation, stylistic conventions rooted in Anglo-American rhetorical norms, and increased linguistic ambiguity. There are also inherent risks associated with a global language, as emphasized by David Crystal:

Linguistic power:

- Those who speak a global language as their mother tongue are automatically in a position of advantage compared with those who must learn it as an official or foreign language.

Linguistic complacency:

- A reduced motivation among native speakers to learn additional languages.

Linguistic death:

- The extinction of minority languages due to the dominance of a global language.

Of the more than 130 million publications indexed in "Dimensions DB," approximately 82% are published in English, compared with 4% in German, 2% in French, and 1% in Spanish. Although the number of non-English publications has increased in the past decade, the dominance of English remains overwhelming. The use of English as a global research language raises several ethical concerns for non-native speakers:

Structural inequality:

- Higher publication costs (e.g., editing and proofreading).
- Slower writing processes.
- Higher rejection rates for linguistic rather than scientific reasons.
- Increased cognitive load during conferences

Epistemic inequality (important local research may remain invisible):

- Not translated into English.
- Classified as "regional" rather than "international".
    - English = global knowledge.
    - Other languages = local knowledge.

Cognitive and cultural costs (researchers must adapt in ways that homogenize global scientific discourse):

- Simplification of arguments.
- Avoidance of culturally specific conceptual frameworks.
- Adaptation of thought patterns to Anglo-American rhetorical norms.

The ethical implications of linguistic dominance are profound. While approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide speak English, for the majority it is a second language. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi warned that imposing a foreign language could function as a form of intellectual subjugation, questioning whether the need to translate from one's own language was not itself a sign of "slavery" (Gandhi, 1904).

A recent comprehensive review by Amano highlights the extent to which linguistic barriers systematically limit participation and visibility within the global scientific community:

Domain	Non-native Vs Native English
READING	Need 91% more time to read a paper
WRITING	Need 51% more time to read a paper
PAPER REJECTION	2.6 times higher rate of rejection because of the language
PAPER REVISIONS	12.5 higher frequency of language related revisions
PRESENTATIONS	94% more time to prepare and practice a presentation
ACTIVE CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION	30% decide to not attend 50% decide against oral presentation

At the collective level, the marginalization of non-English-language research leads to significant knowledge gaps. A large-scale study screening over 400,000 peer-reviewed papers in multiple languages demonstrated that non-English-language studies can expand the geographical and taxonomic coverage of scientific evidence by 12% to 25%, particularly in biodiverse and underrepresented regions. The neglect of such research therefore constitutes a systemic loss of scientifically relevant information. A striking example is the case of papers by Chinese researchers that raised urgent concerns about new aggressive subtypes of influenza viruses, which only received attention in an English-language journal after a delay of 14 years.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence have reopened the question of whether a single scientific lingua franca is truly necessary. Traditionally, English has provided mutual intelligibility, coordination efficiency, and terminological standardization. Modern AI systems increasingly offer real-time speech translation, high-quality academic text translation, and context-sensitive semantic interpretation, potentially allowing researchers to

write, submit, and read scientific work in their native languages without sacrificing accessibility.

Several future scenarios can be envisaged. In the most conservative scenario, English remains dominant, but AI tools assist researchers by improving clarity and facilitating access to non-English literature. A more transformative scenario involves multilingual publishing systems with automated, synchronized translations, thereby weakening the centrality of any single language. The most radical possibility is the emergence of a shared semantic infrastructure, in which machine-interpretable knowledge structures ensure conceptual alignment across cultures, rendering a human lingua franca largely unnecessary.

Each of these scenarios faces significant challenges, including the need for stable scientific terminology, conceptual precision, institutional trust, and systemic reforms in publishing and evaluation practices. Nevertheless, they invite a fundamental reconsideration of what science truly requires: a shared language for efficiency, or shared meaning for understanding. If AI can reliably provide shared meaning, the long-standing assumption that science must operate through a single dominant language may no longer hold.

In conclusion, the dominance of English in science is best understood as a historical and institutional contingency rather than a linguistic necessity. While it has enabled unprecedented global coordination, it has also produced ethical, cognitive, and epistemic costs that disproportionately burden non-native speakers and impoverish global knowledge. Advances in artificial intelligence offer plausible pathways toward a more linguistically inclusive scientific ecosystem, the realization of which will depend on collective choices about equity, efficiency, and the future of global knowledge production.

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News

EAPE Announces
2026 Board of Directors Election Results

The European Association of Professors Emeriti has successfully concluded its elections for the new Board of Directors, marking a new chapter for the organization. The process was conducted electronically on March 4, 2026, utilizing the "ZEUS" system in accordance with the Association's Bylaws.

The following official minutes provide the comprehensive record of the election, including the selection of Auditors and substitute members who will support the Association's mission in the coming term.

Minutes of the Supervising Committee

Today, Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 12:00 pm (Athens time), the three-member Supervising Committee, elected by the General Assembly, convened at the office of the European Association of Professors Emeriti, located at 6 Christou Lada St., Athens.

The Committee is composed of: **Dennis V. Cokkinos, Maria Ochsenkuehn-Petropoulou,** and **Miltiadis Karagiannis**. Also in attendance was Ms. Panagiota Chr. Spiropoulou, Legal Counsel of the European Association of Professors Emeriti.

Following the formation of the Committee, it was noted that the election for the Board of Directors was conducted electronically (via the 'ZEUS' system) on March 4, 2026, as provided for in Article 30, paragraph 4 of the Bylaws, for the nomination of the Board members."

After the elections, it was found that:

- Total Registered Members: 212
- 82 members had the right to vote
- Total Voters: 61 members
- Valid Ballots: 61
- Invalid Ballots: 0

The Supervising Committee declared the elected members of the Board of Directors in order of their election as follows:

President: Giancarlo Bracale
(not voted on - automatically elected from the previous elections where he was President Elect)

President Elect	56 Ballots
George Andrei Dan	49 votes
Blank vote	7

General Secretary	56 Ballots
Stavros Koubias	50 votes
Blank vote	6

Treasurer	60 Ballots
Paolo Ciambelli	56 votes
Blank vote	4

Regular Board Members*	58 Ballots
Michael Botbol	39 votes
Andreas kapardis	34 votes
Nicolas Markatos	44 votes
Gerhard Zlabinger*	32 votes
Blank vote	4
Substitute Board Members	**57 Ballots**
Halima Resic	53 votes
Blank vote	4

*According to the Bylaws, the Board of Directors consists of three regular members. The candidate who receives the lowest number of votes will be designated as the substitute member.

Auditors	58 Ballots
Lucija Cok	46 votes
Dimitrios Dougenis	44 votes
Nicolas Markatos	44 votes
Gerhard Zlabinger*	32 votes
Blank vote	4
Substitute Auditors	**59 Ballots**
Giuseppe Mancia	48 votes
Liv Mjelde	42 votes
Blank vote	3

The Office Secretary of E.A.P.E.: Georgia Drosatou

news

World Day of Older Persons
Messina, 2025

Protecting the Needs of the Elderly through Intergenerational Harmony

Guido Bellinghieri*, President Italian Branch of EAPE, His excellency Bishop Cesare Di Pietro, Antonio Ruggieri, Emeritus Professor of Constitution Law at the University of Messina, Marianna Gensabella, President of the Sicilian Bioethic Committee, Giuseppe Gembillo, President of the *Edgar Morin* Messina Center on Complexity, Rita La Paglia, Pediatrician of the Territory, President of Catholic Physicians and Vincenzo Savica, Secretary of the EAPE Section *The Elderly in Our Society.*

*Email: gbellinghieri@hotmail.com

His Excellency, Bishop Cesare Di Pietro
"Reflections on the World Day of Older Persons".

The meeting opened by emphasizing that the Scriptures describe the elder as a figure of wisdom and spiritual guidance, bearers of experience and memory. Elders represent a spiritual guide, passing down values and traditions to younger generations; a charism of wisdom that can be recognized within the community; and a historical memory, capable of transmitting the faith and history of the community through stories and examples. The bishop says that history does not end in the present and that it is important to educate young people about the potential of older generations. He recalled the words of Pope Francis, who spoke of a "revolution of gratitude" capable of building relationships between young and old to create a better future and counter the "throwaway culture" that isolates the elderly.

Antonio Ruggeri, Emeritus Professor of Constitutional law, a scientist with international reputation, discussed a study on "The Elderly in the Italian Constitution". He highlighted the special protection afforded by the Constitution to the elderly, who are generally vulnerable in many respects. It focuses on the legislation concerning them — in particular, Legislative Decree No. 29 of 2024, adopted in implementation of the delegation referred to in Law No. 33 of 2023 — with particular attention to the field of health.

It should be noted that the legislation itself requires the implementation of a broad and structured regulatory process to ensure optimal application in practice. In order to demonstrate respect for the Constitution and its fundamental values, *policy for (and by) the elderly* must take shape through multiple and incisive regulatory measures that express the value of intergenerational solidarity. The law appears solid, concrete, centered on the goals, provides rto the country advanced legislation, but its application needs refinement. When the rules for application will be finalized then robust resources will be needed.

Marianna Gensabella, a scientist well known to the readers of the *EAPE Bulletin*, discussed "Bioethics and the Elderly in the Opinions of the National Bioethic Committee".After highlighting the human and social relevance of the topic within national and international bioethical debates, she focused on two opinions of the National Bioethics Committee: "*Bioethics and the Rights of the Elderly*" (January 20, 2006) and "*The Living Conditions of Women in Older and Older Ages: Bioethical Aspects in Social and Health Care*" (July 16, 2010).

She showed how and at what extent , in the "care" of older people, the medical perspective intersect with philosophical, psychological, and sociological dimensions, also taking into account gender differences.

Giuseppe Gembillo, esteemed contributor to the *EAPE Bulletin*, provided "A Philosophical Reflection on Old Age". He emphasized that before all, to understand why this period of life has become much more sustainable than in previous millennia, it is necessary to reconstruct the historical process that led to the creation of the *welfare state* and, in particular, to the institution by various states of *old-age pensions* and universal public health services

Thanks also to remarkable advances in scientific medicine, this condition gave rise to the idea—developed by the European Association of Emeritus Professors—that every older person who is willing and able can decisively contribute to contemporary society by sharing experience, the fruit of a long and industrious life, with younger generations. They can do so, for example, by reminding everyone of the collective history from which we come and emphasizing that today's results are the fruit—consciously or not—of the commitment made by many to contribute to its development and direction.

This implies a radical aversion to any call to "start from scratch," which would favor a *presentism* dominated by the values of prevailing power—whose primary concern is that no one can make comparisons. This attitude is possible only if we cultivate the habit of "going beyond" what is officially communicated, in search of deeper motivations and possible alternatives. Following. The conclusions can be drawn. Old age is a process that, in order to respect its progressive development, would be better defined as "aging": 1. It bears witness to a history that should not be reduced merely to a final stage or a static phase in time; and 2. The "historical memory" represented by old age embodies the synchronic and diachronic variety of innumerable interrelationships — the fruit of pluralism rather than of a single, linear path.

Rita La Paglia highlighted Children's Needs. She underlined that the denial of basic needs during

childhood constitutes poverty — a condition with devastating effects on physical, cognitive, and social development, undermining fundamental rights such as health, education, and cultural participation. The main factors leading to childhood poverty include: Family social status, Parental Unemployment; and Low Levels of Parental Education.

According to data released by ISTAT on the living conditions of children under 16 — from the 2024 Annual Survey on Income and Living Conditions — 26.7% of children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This figure rises sharply to 43.6% for children living in the South and on the Islands. Various forms of poverty can be identified: (i). Educational poverty; (ii). School dropout; (iii). Cultural poverty outside school; (iv). Food and energy poverty; (v). Healthcare poverty; (vi). Hot cities and few green spaces; and (vii)Hereditary poverty.

Poverty in childhood has devastating consequences for mental and physical health, increasing vulnerability to chronic disease and infection, as well as psychological and behavioral disorders. Every child should have the opportunity to grow and develop optimally, receive the best possible care when ill, and be educated to reach their full intellectual and cognitive potential. Yet poverty, in its various forms, hinders the realization of these rights. In the near future, a structural plan is needed to connect schools, welfare systems, businesses, and civil society — one in which education truly becomes a driver of inclusion and progress.

Vincenzo Savica discussed the relation "Elderly People and Drugs". Italy is the European nation with the highest proportion of elderly people, representing a quarter of its population. A 65-year-old man has a life expectancy of 18 years, and a woman of the same age, 21 years. Seventy-five percent of those aged 65 have two or more health conditions, a percentage that rises to 100% among those over 80. Elderly individuals often require treatment with multiple medications, and in Southern Italy, the related costs are higher than in Central and Northern regions. Drug expenditures increase with polytherapy, especially among people aged 60 to 80. It is essential to consider that drug dosages in the elderly differ from those prescribed to younger adults. This is due to pharmacokinetic changes that occur with aging, such as: (i). increased fat mass and decreased total body water; (ii). reduced hepatic blood flow and liver mass; (iii). decreased gastrointestinal absorption; (iv). low albumin levels; (v). reduced renal blood flow; (vi). drug–drug interactions in polytherapy.Other factors requiring careful adjustment of therapy in the elderly include self-prescription, deprescribing, compliance issues, treatment fragmentation, cascading prescriptions, and the growing tendency to consult "Dr. Google." Thus, it must always be remembered that doing more does not necessarily mean doing better. When prescribing for elderly patients, physicians must ponder several questions: (1). Is the drug appropriate? (2.) Are the dose and duration of therapy correct? (3). Is there a real indication? (4) Could it interact with other drugs? (5). Is there duplication? (6). Artificial intelligence may assist in optimizing drug therapy for the elderly — but only if used by experts in the field.

news

World Day of Older Persons, 2025
Naples, Italian Institute for Philosophical Studies
EAPE debate on the need of Intergenerational Harmony

Natale G. De Santo*, Arturo Martorelli, Paolo Ciambelli, Piero Antonio Toma, Lino Blandizzi, Francesco Rossi, Raffaele Cananzi, Antonio Maione, Margherita Borriello, Liana Nunziata, Aldo Bova, Alessandra Perna.

*Email: natalegaspare.desanto@unicampania.it

Palazzo Serra di Cassano, Naples

Palazzo Serra di Cassano in Naples hosted an original debate which has been well-attended and well received by the local media, on why and how achieving intergenerational harmony at a time life expectancy has been increased from one quarter to a third, generating unforeseen needs of specific economical support that shall not be paid by the new generations.

It was a meeting across generations adopting the method of the late Avvocato Gerardo Marotta the Founder and President of the Institute. The debate was nurtured by high school students and their professors, university students taking part into an elective didactic activity on “Old age is not a disease”. The list of speakers included EAPE fellows and eminent experts of the needs and rights of the elderly. The singer songwriter Lino Blandizzi sang, accompanying himself on the guitar, an ode written in honour of Gerardo Marotta by the journalist and writer Piero Antonio Toma.

Achieving Intergenerational Harmony

According to Jean Hervé Lorenzi and his economist colleagues at Aix en Provence “there are different expectations between different generations. This could trigger social conflicts and, perhaps, society as a whole would be unable to withstand the conflict, to the point of collapse. Therefore, it is necessary to overcome generational interests and allow older people to enjoy satisfactory living conditions, even if in an ageing society the economic burden of older people represents a significant problem.

In order to continue to grow, it is necessary to place the well-being of the elderly at the centre of social systems, together with the expectations of young people. On the other hand, a society that today guarantees well-being only to the productive categories would be seen as unfair and unreliable.

If more than a quarter, soon almost a third, of one's life is lived after the age of 60, it is essential to develop activities, prevention and learning for this new period of life. This is something that has never happened before. The architecture of our society is structurally complex because it is based on four generations of people living together” (1).

Inequalities in the Allocation of Potential Methods for Delaying Old Age

As pointed out by Venki Makrishnasn Nobel Prize Winner for Chemistry in 2009 "Discoveries in medicine have always had the potential to increase inequality. Historically, the wealthy in the most advanced countries have been the first to benefit. Later, other people in these countries can benefit if health systems and insurance companies deem these treatments necessary. Only then will the treatments be extended to the rest of the world, where only those who can afford them will be able to benefit. We are already seeing this happening in terms of health and economic conditions in different parts of the world. Thus, any progress in research on ageing is likely to increase inequalities. But unlike many other inequalities, that of quality and length of life will not be self-sufficient but will produce a further increase in inequalities (2).

The vital function of the elderly

For the Philosopher Roger Dadoun (1910-2022) aging persons at present time have the possibility to assemble a movement of affirmation and recognition, capable to support their needs.

“Man has experienced time as a means of accumulating and preserving knowledge and as a condition for its systematic transmission. And time, in concrete terms, is age. Advancing in years means increasing one's knowledge and becoming its guardian. The elderly, the true repositories of collective knowledge, assume a vital function for the group. Thanks to their experience, the elderly are called upon to watch over the continuity, cohesion, balance and self-regulatio of the group. To grow old is to watch over”.

"By creating a mythical movement of affirmation and recognition of old age, the agonising and

paradoxical advanced age, which in this third millennium possesses the strength of numbers and political potential, would be able to confront a society dominated by the fantasies of impetuous youth and the easy enthusiasm of mature and "beautiful" men in their prime. By growing and asserting itself as seniors, old age could bring utopia into history, bringing with it the awareness of memory, prudence, detachment and perhaps wisdom. All qualities that would offer humanity the possibility of a future, of a new era painted with the colours of the present" (3).

Health Inequalities Shorten Life Expectancy up to 33 Years

The May 6, 2025 WHO Report on Social Determinants of Healthy Equity Social points out that lack of quality housing, education and job opportunities can affect people's health outcomes more than genetic influences or access to health care by causing a dramatic reduction in healthy life expectancy in both high and low income countries. People in the country with the lowest life expectancy will live, on average, 33 years less than those born in the country with the highest life expectancy. In short, social determinants of equity may influence people's health outcomes more than genetic influences or access to health care (4).

Italian Legislation on "Non-Self-Sufficiency" of the Elderly

Recent Italian legislation focuses "Non-self-sufficiency" of the elderly. This issue of has become particularly significant socially and politically. It directly affects approximately 3 million Italians. However, the number of persons involved is higher due to the necessary commitment of family members, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare and support personnel. The magnitude of the problems raised by non-self-sufficiency and the number of those affected and involved make the issue of extremely high social interest, with undeniable and significant social and health implications.

In 2023, Parliament approved Delegated Law No. 33 on the non-self-sufficiency of the elderly, which has as its primary objective the creation of a unified and integrated system for the care of non-self-sufficient elderly people, focusing on promoting independence and preventing frailty. The law's approval sparked considerable enthusiasm among professionals and among the elderly themselves. It seemed to finally mark the beginning of a new historical phase, a new concept of care for the non-self-sufficient elderly population in Italy. This enthusiasm, however, was followed by disappointment following the enactment of Legislative Decree No. 29 of 15 March 2024.

The Decree, in fact, by its implementing nature, entrusts this task to 17 other decrees, none of which have been issued to date. The home care reform appears to have disappeared; no improvements are planned for the current year. Residential care is still insufficient. The attendance allowance is insufficient for most people and, in any case, poorly regulated. The truth is that the State and the relevant public bodies do not have sufficient financial resources to implement the planned reforms. Therefore, the hope for long-term care is the implementation of a serious fiscal policy that, by combating tax evasion and avoidance, will be capable of securing the necessary resources for the reforms under consideration. The second hope is that the additional 17 implementing decrees will be issued promptly and that they will be drafted by the relevant ministries with social awareness, achieving the objectives of the enabling law.

Helping the Elderly Find Joy and Happiness

It takes personal experience to be sincere when you say you have a memory.

I remember being with people who suffered the most from solitude. The fear of being alone or remaining alone is increasingly characteristic of our time, especially among people who have reached advanced age (5). In our time, the word "solitude" has a negative connotation, but there is also a positive solitude, which evokes bliss. Either blessed solitude or alone beatitude.

Writer Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) stated: "We are solitude." Every person in their essence is alone and cannot help but be alone because they are unique. This is why we live on relationships. Our time, though characterized by greater interconnections than ever before, is experiencing a state of depression due to loneliness. According to the WHO, depression will be the most widespread illness in the world by 2030. On January 17, 2018, the British Government established the "Ministry of Loneliness".

In 2020, Noreena Hertz English academic economist of the Center for Decision Making, published a book entitled "The Lonely Century" (6). The scholar cites an experiment conducted on mice that showed that increasing isolation increases aggression, and it is known that as aggression increases, the range of reaction decreases, both chronologically and spatially (7). Applied to the elderly, the more they isolate themselves, the more frustrated they become, the more aggressive they become, and the more they target themselves, punishing themselves with depression. Helping the elderly overcome the anxiety of loneliness is possible through affectionate communication.

This requires the possibility of recovering the other side of the coin, the positive meaning of the term "solitude," which etymologically derives from the archaic Latin "sollus," meaning whole, needing nothing else, and thus the concept of fullness, completeness. A time in which the essential is prioritized and solitude can be defined, with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as the furnace of transformation when we are restored to ourselves in joy and happiness.

Aging Is Not A Disease

The students participated into an Elective Didactic Activity providing 1 credit entitled "Aging is Not a Disease" pointing to the fact that, although NIH funded the program for "Progeria" aging has not been declared a disease notwithstanding the lobbying of the pharmaceutical industry (2).

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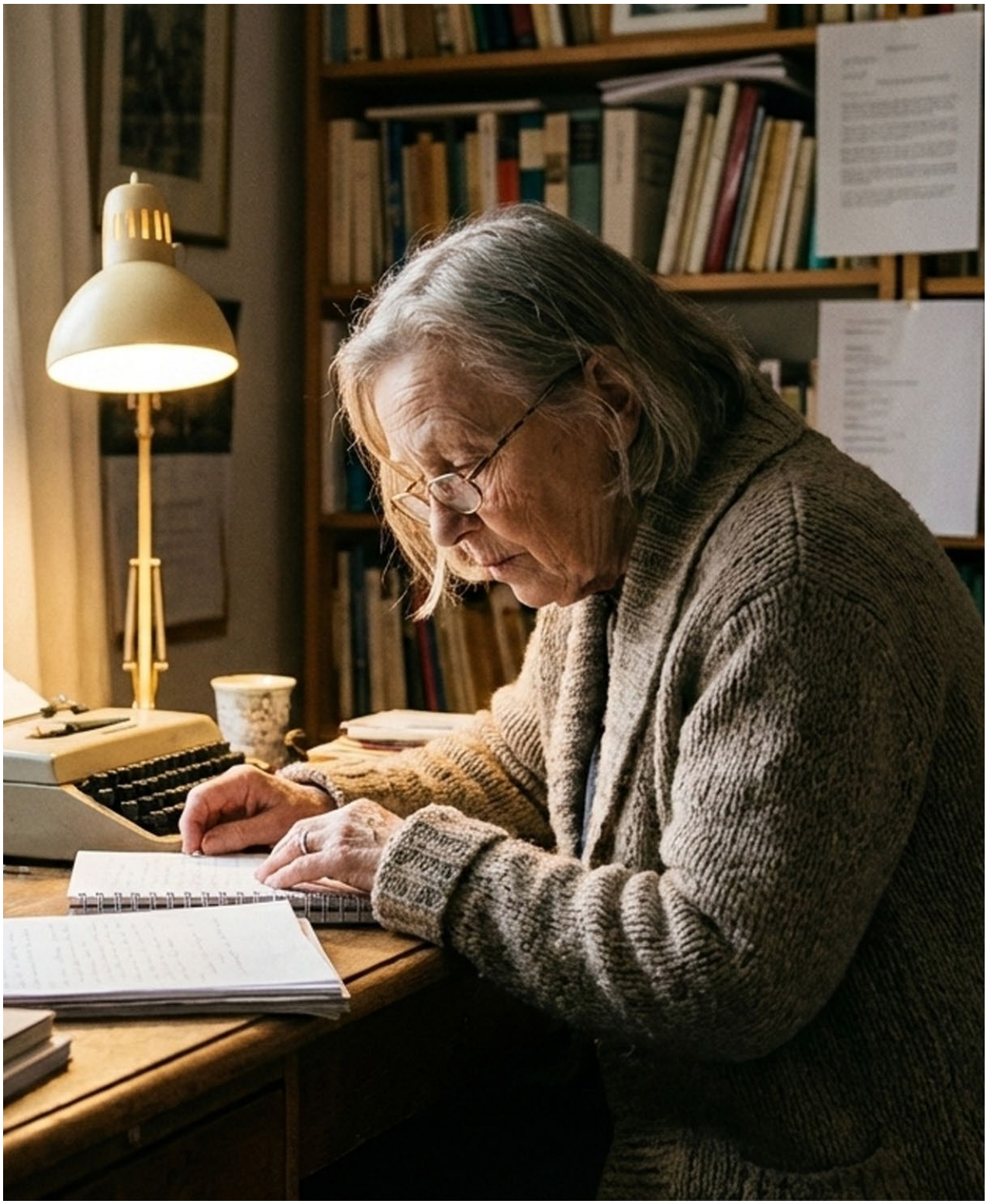


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Invitation

The **EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS EMERITI** has great pleasure in inviting you to it's fourth European Congress, following the ones in Athens, Napoli and London.

Our Congress will be an Anniversary one as it coincides with the completion of 10 years of productive existence of our Association and we hope that it will continue thriving in the years to come.

The Congress will take place at the historical building of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens under the auspices of the Dean of the University of Athens, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Tourism, from 11 to 13 June 2026. The Opening will be on the 11th June at the Aula of the University of Athens and, in addition to the (inevitable) talks, there will be a musical performance by the students of the Department of musical studies of the Philosophical School of our University.

There will be an interesting social program and I hope that together we will be able to shape an exciting scientific program. The registration fee (to cover attendance to all scientific sessions, light lunch and most social activities) is 50 Euros.

So, please let us know whether you would like to participate

At this stage submissions of papers for consideration by the relevant committee refer only to electronic poster presentations. An abstract written according to the specifications (below) should reach us by March 31. The booklet of abstracts will be distributed to the participants during the Congress. Papers can be submitted for poster presentations by all (not only Emeriti Professors).

We look forward to your participation in an exciting Congress. Welcome to all!

With warmest regards

George Christodoulou MD, PhD, FICPM, FRCPsych

President

European Association of Professors Emeriti

REGISTRATION TO THE CONGRESS

Delegates	**50 €**

Registration fees includes:
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To Register follow the respective on line link on the website of EAPE
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Information for Authors

The Congress is open to every scientist who is interested in just attending it or in presenting an electronic poster.

Abstracts for electronic posters only should be submitted by **March 31st** at the below link mentioned on the website of EAPE on the basis of the below sample
The first author will be the contact author unless otherwise specified.
The contact author must register before the 1st April to ensure that the abstract will be included in the program and will be scheduled for presentation (up to two abstracts per person)

Abstract Guidelines
Abstracts must be no longer than 300 words.
Abstracts need to be in English.
Abstracts must be original and unpublished.
Ensure that your abstract is grammatically correct and free of other errors.
Avoid abbreviations in the title of the abstract.
Abstracts should NOT contain pictures, tables, or figures.
Accepted abstracts will appear exactly as submitted.

THE SYNDROME OF CAPGRAS
Anagnou, GN
Athens University, Department of Psychiatry, Eginition Hospital, Athens, Greece.
Email: @

Key words: Delusions, Misidentifications, Epilepsy, Deja vu.

(Text) (Text) (Text) (Text) (Text) (Text) (Text) (Text) (Text)

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GENERAL INFORMATION

IMPORTANT DATES

Abstract for electronic posters submission deadline: **March 31st, 2026**
Congress Dates: **11- 13 June 2026**

VENUE

The **4TH Congress of the European Emeriti Professors** will take place at the Amphitheatre "I. Drakopoulos" at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.
(Address: 30 Panepistimiou Ave., Athens 167 69)

LANGUAGE

The official language of the Congress is **English.**

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For any information with regards to Abstracts Submission, Scientific Program, Registration to the Congress, accommodation or any further information you might need, you may contact:

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This resulted in some colleagues receiving an issue containing the wrong material which was not approved by the Editorial Board of the EAPE Bulletin.

For all the above reasons, we consider it necessary to inform all our colleagues, in whose possession each issue of the Bulletin comes, either by direct distribution or by redistribution, of the way in which each issue is completed and reaches its official distribution. And on this occasion, to inform you of some restrictions that exist during this process.

The procedure is the following:

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STEP 2: The Chief Editor together with the Deputy Editors make the first editing of the material and send it to the team responsible for the creation of the Bulletin.

STEP 3: When the first DRAFT is created, it is sent back to the Editorial Board to receive its approval or comments and corrections that need to be implemented.

STEP 4: After Step 3 is completed and potential corrections instructed by the Editorial Board have been implemented, this DRAFT, is sent to all authors so they can check their respective contributions and send back their approval or comments and corrections that need to be implemented.

STEP 5: After everything is checked and corrected if needed, then the Issue is ready for its official distribution.

Prior to its official distribution and during the above mentioned process, the redistribution of the DRAFT between colleagues, members or not, IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

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Thank you all for your understanding and cooperation.

THE CHIEF EDITOR
G.-Andrei Dan

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

The *Bull Eur Assoc Profs Emer* is the bimonthly cultural Journal of the European Association of Professors Emeriti (www.Europemeriti.org) that supports the vocation of Professors Emeriti for teaching and Research. It is structured in two main section *Original manuscripts* that undergo peer review and the *section on News* that covers the life of the association and is under the care of the Editorial board.

The Bulletin adopts the Vancouver style. Authors are invited to visit the website of the Association and read the last issue. Manuscripts shall be in good English in Word, font 12, with good illustrations and shall be emailed to the editor in Chief, Gheorghe-Andrei Dan.

• Email: andrei.dan@gadan.ro

Original manuscripts (Word file) around 900-1100 words shall include affiliation(s), email and phone numbers of the authors, as well as 5 keywords from the manuscript. Preferably titles should not exceed the length of 50 characters (spaces included). A portrait of the 1st author is required. 1 Figure and 1 Table (emailed on separate sheets) and a maximum of 6 references and a minimum of 3 are allowed. References must be numbered and ordered sequentially as they appear in the text. When cited in the text, reference numbers are to be in round brackets.

Manuscripts related to news about emeriti and their associations shall be limited to a maximum of 500 words, and up to 3 references; no portrait of the author is required, but 1 Figure or 1 Table can be added.

All manuscripts undergo editing.

At the end of the article number references consecutively in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text. For articles with more than 6 authors, list the first 3 authors before using "et al."; For articles with 6 authors, or fewer, list all authors.

JOURNALS

1. *Journal article published electronically ahead of print:* Authors may add to a reference, the DOI ("digital object identifier") number unique to the publication for articles in press. It should be included immediately after the citation in the References.

Bergholdt HKM, Nordestgaard BG, Ellervik C. Milk intake is not associated with low risk of diabetes or overweight-obesity: a Mendelian randomization study in 97,811 Danish individuals. Am J Clin Nutr 2015 Jul 8 (Epub ahead of print; DOI: *doi:10.3945/ajcn.114.105049*).

2. *Standard journal article*. List all authors when 6 or fewer; when 6 or more, list only the first 3 and add "et al." Abbreviate journal titles according to *Index Medicus* style, which is used in MEDLINE citations.

De Santo NG, Altucci P, Heidland A et al. The role of emeriti and retired professors in medicine. Q J Med 2014;107: 407-410

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ISSN 2945-0381