



Research Article

The Role of Professors Emeriti in Norway

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Abstract

The following paper describes the situation regarding professor's emeriti in one of the universities in Norway, namely UiT The Arctic University of Norway. The application procedure for a professor emeritus/emera position is described. The type of activity professor emeriti are expected to take part in is listed. The situation for professor's emeriti in Norway in general is evaluated and discussed on the background of regulation of retirement age and state employment in Norway.

Key Words: professor emeriti; Norway; retirement

The regulations for being appointed as professor emeritus/emera are specified by the University and University College Act. The application of the regulation is differing to some minor degree between the Norwegian Universities. The different institutions have been given the possibility to define the details. Emeritus/emera is not a protected title such as the professor title, and in principle it can be used for anyone after retirement.

In Norway there exist five so-called «old universities» being localized in Oslo (the capital), Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø. In addition, Norway has several University Colleges. Some of them have in recent years obtained university status (so-called «new Universities»).

In the following, the situation at UiT the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø is described. Tromsø is an administration center in the north and a university town of approximately 80.000 inhabitants. The university is now a modern, broad high-tech university with 17000 students (11% foreign) and 4000 employees. It is located at 69° north. The northern part of Norway is sparsely populated compared to the south-east area where the capital Oslo is situated. The university was formally established in 1968 and received its first students in 1972; and one main task at that time was to educate medical doctors and academics for the north. Through the years the Faculty of Health Sciences has always been the largest, and it has been developed to educate a wide variety of health professions. Twenty per cent of academic staff at the university are from abroad. There are 550 full professors UiT. The number of professor emeriti is 130. At the largest department of

the university, the Department of Medical Biology, there are 20 full professors and 12 emeriti, this ratio is quite large compared to the rest of the university. One reason could be that some of these emeriti professors were instrumental in establishing research and education in medicine/biomedicine in the north of Norway and have a strong personal affiliation to the institution.

In a paper by de Santo et al. on the role of professor's emeriti in medicine the wide variation of the conditions for emeriti emerged from their study of 99 universities in 20 countries [1]. They included questionnaires' related to permission to lecture, research and scientific publication.

In Norway the regulations and conditions for professor emeriti are of limited variation.

One reason being the very strong regulation of working conditions and especially the centralized regulations of personnel in the public sector and in education. University professors in Norway are employed by the state. The standard, official retirement age in Norway is 67, but in public sector as well as several other sectors early retirement at age 62 is possible. Loss of employment rights takes place at age 70 for state employed personnel; this will be postponed to age 72. One of the reasons, but not the only reason, for this change is the fact that several professors at the university remain academically active, maintain research activity, give lectures and are engaged by the government to contribute to Norwegian Official Reports (NOUs) after the age of 70.

University professors who are due to retire can apply for the emeritus/emera status. It is an honorary position (i.e. without

remuneration). A continuing affiliation with the University as professor emeritus/emerita will then be regulated in a written bilateral agreement at retirement which includes obligations as well as what the emeritus/emerita professor is entitled to.

The universities have now formalized the affiliation, and application to the head of department every or every second year is required for prolongation after the initial application.

- The application should indicate type of planned activity,

for example:

- Continuation and finalizing research projects
- Mentoring new and younger employees
- Finalizing supervision of master and PhD students
- Participation in networking
- Contribute to local seminars
- Being available for participation in academic committees
- Academic publishing

- The professor emeriti should be connected to a department. Affiliation with a research group is often, but not always required. It could be the department and research group where you were employed as full professor but not always. This is up to the department of faculty head to decide.

- Giving ordinary lectures to students. In this case for a nominal remuneration.

Being emeriti professor at UiT means access to some of UiT's infrastructure. Maintaining official email address, some virtual workspace and internet connection at the university are very valuable. Access to relevant databases, to standard IT tools, to advanced computer programs and to libraries is often part of an emeriti agreement. Some departments provide work PC and some lab technical support. Also, some departments might allocate lab space or an office desk, whether this will be in their own or a shared office will depend on available space. Emeriti professors cannot be principal investigators on a grant application with the university as address but can be named as a project coworker. This description coincides with what is the case at most of the other universities in Norway. As an exception the new university

called Oslo Metropolitan University has established a dedicated department called The Centre for Senior Citizen Staff. According to their English text internet page the center "is an interdisciplinary shared office for pensioners and emeriti who are still academically active. The center is a competence pool for the university and gives retired staff an opportunity to continue their academic pursuits and enjoy the company of colleagues" (<https://ansatt.oslomet.no/en/fagsenter-senior>). Another question is if you need to be a full professor when you retire to have access to emeriti facilities at your previous workplace in a Norwegian university. This is not the case. Emeriti positions with access to some of the infrastructure can be given to academic staff in general. As the sector widens with the inclusion of the colleges in the university structure there is more variability in the type of academic positions. Interestingly, also staff previously mainly occupied with lecturing find the affiliation with the institution after retirement valuable.

The department heads and faculty boards are given the power to decide regarding who will be given emeriti status and what type of access that are given. This means that conditions vary from person to person, and this can from time to time appear unjust at an individual level. To get emeritus/emeriti status is not a right by law in Norway. If you are, for instance, not regarded academically active or not accepted among colleagues for any other reason, the department head might turn down your application. Many emeriti professors have collected and stored data or biological samples as part of many years in research. The fate of literature, data and biological samples after emeriti professors could be better regulated and given more support at most universities. Archived materials might represent valuable information for other generations of researchers.

The movement to an age-friendly university is connected to promotion of life-long learning, intergenerational learning and to supporting an age-friendly society which combats ageism [2,3]. The age-friendly universities welcome students of all ages and have a curriculum that suits all ages. It seems not to require the presence of professor emeriti although that would have been of interest in Norway.

The senior policy of state institutions in Norway is another perspective. As state employed you have an extra week of paid holiday from the year you turn 60. From the year you turn 62, you have 8 extra days off with full salary (senior days). The aim is to delay retirement and maintain the seniors employed. If this has affected university professors as a group is not known, there is a lack of evaluation specifying this group, and also university professors tend to delay retirement age anyway compared with other groups in Norway. The senior policy results in a gradual reduction in the workload, and especially for a university professor it increases flexibility in daily life. It is possible that it leads to a more gradual reduction in presence in the lecture hall and a more gradual transition to an active emeritus/emerita status.

Conclusion: University affiliated emeriti professors are retired, but significant and active academic contributors at the Norwegian Universities. The possibility of affiliation with the previous

workplace is mentioned in the Norwegian University and University College Act. The emeritus/emerita position is without salary. The head of department and the faculty board are deciding who will be affiliated as emeriti professor and the conditions provided for fulfilling the position.

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