



Ageing

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Ageing, Community and Belonging: University and the Transversality of Knowledge in the Promotion of Human Dignity

Demographic ageing constitutes one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century, requiring theoretical and practical responses that go beyond fragmented approaches. Contemporary literature consistently demonstrates that community participation and social integration among older adults are associated with positive indicators of well-being, including greater life satisfaction and reduced depressive symptoms. These relationships are mediated by a sense of community and social engagement (Au *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, community environments perceived as more age-friendly are linked to higher quality of life and subjective well-being among older adults (Hsu, 2017). This evidence positions the community not merely as a context for ageing, but as a key determinant of well-being and human dignity throughout life.

Engagement in community activities and the perception of supportive, age-friendly communities promote not only social inclusion but also psychological and social well-being and are associated with higher subjective well-being among older adults, including life satisfaction and quality of life (Hsu, 2017). These relationships highlight the ethical role of the structured and welcoming community environments, reinforcing them as pillars of dignity throughout life.

Treating ageing as a transversal element within the educational project enables universities to respond to demographic and social challenges while enriching their own epistemological frameworks. The ageing process unfolds across complex and diverse dimensions and contexts, requiring multilevel approaches. Nevertheless, the interconnection

between different stakeholders still demands considerable improvement in order to foster a truly integrated and responsive community.

Too often, academic knowledge remains confined within universities and does not fully translate into response to concrete needs emerging from practice, particularly in the field of ageing, where continuous updating is essential. Conversely, the experiential knowledge and daily learning that occurs within social and care organizations is not easily incorporated into academic knowledge production.

The *Transform4Europe* Alliance represents an academic gateway through which these disconnections can be addressed, enabling a more dynamic articulation between knowledge production, professional realities and societal challenges. Within this framework, this vision aligns with approaches emphasizing the construction of age-friendly ecosystems that facilitate community participation through accessible environments, social support networks, and opportunities for meaningful engagement in communal life (Sixsmith *et al.*, 2023).

In this context, we propose a seminar dedicated to the theme of longevity aimed at undergraduate, master's and doctoral students. Considering the age profile and academic background of the participants, the approach will focus less on ageing itself and more on a preventive and forward-looking perspective, emphasising the preparation of younger generations for the growing reality of longer lives. The aim is to raise participants' awareness of the importance of beginning, from an early stage, to build life trajectories that foster well-being, health, meaning and quality of life throughout the entire life course. Inspired by a motivating title such as **"Longevity: How to Live a Long Life?"**, the session seeks to open a dialogue with the concerns and expectations of students and staff. The session will combine short presentations with participatory and light, engaging activities in order to encourage audience involvement and to support an active reflection on life choices, lifestyles and personal projects within a society increasingly shaped by longevity.

Recognizing the university as an integral part of these networks implies conceiving knowledge as a public good co-produced in partnership with the communities in which it is embedded, rather than produced in isolation

within academic walls. Such co-production reinforces the ethical role of academia as a promoter of human dignity and meaningful social participation. This approach also contributes to Integral Human Development in ageing contexts and contributes to mainstream the theme of ageing within organizations (d'Araújo & Nunes, 2025). Intergenerational, culturally active, and socially cohesive communities have been shown to foster conditions conducive to positive ageing, characterized not only by longevity but by quality of life and meaningful participation (World Health Organization, 2020). Reflecting on ageing through the lens of "Community. Communities." thus represents a significant step in this direction, proposing a model of the university as research and learning community committed to human dignity and promoting the construction of broader communities, an imperative in the field of ageing.

References

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