

## **AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY: THE CASE OF THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF VIÇOSA**

### **UNIVERSIDADES AMIGAS DA PESSOA IDOSA: O CASO DA UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE VIÇOSA**

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## ABSTRACT

This article sought to understand the evidence that qualifies the Federal University of Viçosa for inclusion in the Age-Friendly University Global Network. To this end, a qualitative study was conducted based on the theoretical lens of the role of universities in the face of aging and the Global Network initiative. Descriptive and documentary research were used as methodological strategies. To process the results, interpretations and inferences were made based on inductive analysis, which resulted in coding by the semantic aspect of the documents analyzed. In the results, when comparing the actions developed by the university with the 10 Principles of AFUGN, it was found that most of them are widely met in its teaching, research and extension projects. In conclusion, the commitment assumed by UFV with actions that lead to relevant social impacts was noted. However, although the institution develops actions that qualify it as an Age-Friendly University, its membership process is slow, which allows us to infer that there is a maturation process within the institution before submitting a membership proposal to the global initiative.

**Keywords:** Aging. Age-Friendly University. AFUGN.

## RESUMO

O artigo buscou compreender quais são as evidências que qualificam a Universidade Federal de Viçosa para a inserção na Rede Global de Universidades Amigas da Pessoa Idosa. Para tanto, elaborou-se um estudo de abordagem qualitativa fundada na lente teórica sobre o papel das universidades frente ao envelhecimento e a iniciativa Rede Global. Como estratégias metodológicas utilizou-se a pesquisa descritiva e a documental. Para o tratamento dos resultados foram realizadas interpretações e inferências baseadas na análise indutiva que resultou em codificação pelo aspecto semântico dos documentos analisados. Nos resultados, ao comparar as ações desenvolvidas pela universidade com os 10 Princípios da AFUGN, verificou-se que a maioria deles são amplamente atendidos em seus projetos de ensino, pesquisa e extensão. Como conclusão, notou-se o compromisso assumido pela UFV com ações que levem a impactos sociais relevantes. No entanto, embora a instituição desenvolva ações que a qualifiquem como uma Universidade Amiga da Pessoa Idosa, seu processo de adesão ocorre lentamente, o que permite inferir que há um processo de amadurecimento no âmbito da instituição antes da submissão de uma proposta de adesão à iniciativa global.

**Palavras-Chave:** Envelhecimento. Universidades Amigas da Pessoa Idosa. AFUGN.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The change in demographic structure is one of the most significant trends of the 21st century and impacts all social dynamics. According to a study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), by the year 2050 it is expected that there will be two people over 65 for every child or adolescent in our society. This progressive increase in the elderly population is justified by several factors, ranging from the decline in birth and death rates, the growing process of urbanization, improvements in sanitation, and scientific advances (Lima and Silva, 2014; Camarano, Kanso and Fernandes, 2014).

Brazil, like other countries, has been undergoing changes in its demographic structure since the mid-20th century. According to data released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in the 2022 Census, the average life expectancy of Brazilians was 75.5 years, representing an increase of more than 40 years in life expectancy, when compared to those born 100 years ago, which was approximately 35 years (Kalache, 2005). The aging index, considering the population aged 60 or over, went from 44.8 in 2010 to 80 in 2022, which means that, for every 100 children aged 0 to 14, there are 80 elderly people. In Rio Grande do Sul and Rio de Janeiro, the number of elderly people aged 60 or over has already surpassed that of children aged 0 to 14 (IBGE, 2022).

This prognosis represents a historic event, reflecting an evolution of humanity regarding the issue of longevity and one of the greatest achievements in human history, since, for the first time, most individuals can have a life expectancy of over 60 years of age (World Health Organization, 2005). However, this fact imposes challenges of all kinds (social, economic, political) for public managers and for society as a whole, drawing the attention of researchers from various areas of knowledge.

As pointed out by Camarano, Kanso and Mello (2004), population aging is accompanied by the aging not only of the individual, but of other population segments, such as the Economically Active Population (EAP). This process changes the lives of the elderly, family structures and society and must be considered in a country's social and economic planning, since it signals demands for public policy makers. According to Fonseca (2016), topics such as social security, health, well-being, housing, transportation, mobility, among others, need to be revisited in order to ensure active aging.

Acting in response to the phenomenon of global population aging, in 2012, in order to identify the contributions that could be made by higher education institutions in caring for

older people, Dublin City University (DCU), located in Ireland, developed the 10 Principles of an Age-Friendly University, which would later become a Global Network supported by the WHO, highlighting the unique role that educational institutions could play in responding to the demands associated with aging in society around the world.

The Age-Friendly University Global Network (AFUGN) is an initiative that collaborates to respond to the call by the WHO and the United Nations (UN) regarding the Decade of Healthy Aging Plan (2021-2030), launched in December 2020. This plan, although there is recognition of the achievement of longevity, there are also challenges imposed by the phenomenon of aging. Furthermore, in its guidelines, it highlights the need for collaborative actions between government, civil society, international organizations, professionals, the media, the private sector, and educational institutions to provide significant improvements in the quality of life of the elderly population, consequently encompassing their families and the community to which they belong (Pan American Health Organization, 2020). Thus, the plan assigns universities an important role to be played in the development towards a more just and inclusive society for all ages.

Considering the potential of the Global Network to encourage the development of transformative actions from universities and, taking into account the history of research, extension, teaching and innovation initiatives of the *Universidade Federal de Viçosa* (UFV) in relation to the theme of aging, the objective of this study was to understand what evidence qualifies UFV for inclusion in the Age-Friendly University Global Network.

In addition to the importance of the issue of population aging and the challenges linked to this new demographic structure, as justification for carrying out the study, it must be considered that universities are locus of knowledge production, a suitable place for the formation of support networks, for the promotion of local and national policies and for working with global agendas (Martins *et al.*, 2023).

Furthermore, it is important to deepen knowledge about initiatives such as the Age-Friendly University Global Network in order to collaborate with the dissemination of information and raise awareness for collaborative work, as an alternative to face the challenges inherent to the phenomenon of the accelerated population aging process.

Considering that in Brazil only the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas* (PUC Campinas) is part of the AFUGN initiative, it was considered pertinent to analyze the entire preparation process of the UFV, based on the reports generated and minutes of meetings, as a way of encouraging other educational institutions to join and assume the

mission of collaborating with governments and society in valuing old age and in promoting policies and actions that qualify the lives of these people and of society as a whole.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE FACE OF POPULATION AGING

The right to education is universal and constitutional, guaranteed by the Brazilian *Constituição Federal* of 1988. When it comes specifically to the elderly, both Law No. 8,842, which provides for the *Política Nacional da Pessoa Idosa* (PNPI) and the *Estatuto da Pessoa Idosa*, address this right.

The *Estatuto da Pessoa Idosa* in its article IV, chapter 10, deals with the education of this public, saying that it is necessary:

- a) Adapt curricula, methodologies and teaching materials to educational programs aimed at the elderly;
- b) Include content focused on the aging process in the minimum curricula at different levels of formal education, in order to eliminate prejudices and produce knowledge on the subject;
- c) Include Gerontology and Geriatrics as curricular subjects in higher education courses;
- d) Develop educational programs, especially in the media, in order to inform the population about the aging process;
- e) Develop programs that adopt distance learning methods, adapted to the conditions of the elderly;
- f) Support the creation of an open university for senior citizens, as a means of universalizing access to different forms of knowledge (BRAZIL, 1994).

It is worth noting that the aforementioned law recommends proposing improvements to study conditions at universities so that older people can learn more easily, creating specific programs and adapting methodologies and teaching materials, in addition to educating the population to better understand the aging process. According to Lins (2020), with the exception of support for the creation of an *Universidade Aberta para a Terceira Idade* (UNATI), the other guidelines cited by the PNPI had not yet been implemented.

The *Estatuto da Pessoa Idosa*, another important legal framework, also addresses the right to education. Article 20 states that “the elderly have the right to education,

culture, sports, leisure, entertainment, shows, products and services that respect their particular age" (Brazil, 2010). It is worth noting that, in addition to reinforcing the right of elderly people to education, the statute warns that it is necessary to ensure that this education respects the peculiarities that come with advancing age. The Statute also attributes the responsibility of the government to creating opportunities for elderly people to access education, adapting curricula, methodologies and teaching materials to the educational programs intended for them (Brazil, 2010).

Although the right to education is legally guaranteed to the elderly, in reality the provision for this public falls short of what is desired, even considering the different forms of access (Rezende and Ramos, 2023). According to Assis, Dias & Nеча (2016), a lot of investment will still be needed to make up for the lack accumulated over the years in relation to the elderly's access to forms of knowledge.

As a means of universalizing access to education and safeguarding the rights of the elderly, both the Statute and the *Política Nacional da Pessoa Idosa* propose the creation of the *Universidade Aberta para a Terceira Idade* (UNATI). The Open Universities emerge as one of the ways in which universities can act in the education of the elderly, without necessarily offering higher education courses (Rezende and Ramos, 2023).

UNATIs are adult education models and, regardless of their name, must remain linked to a higher education institution. These are *locus* provision of services, research and creation of innovative alternatives, transmission of knowledge, improvement of human resources and qualified training, boosting the generation of knowledge about human aging, demonstrating great success worldwide (Gomes, Loures and Alencar, 2005). The objectives of UNATIs are to provide continuing education programs of a university and multidisciplinary nature (Cachioni, 2018), in addition to reviewing stereotypes and prejudices associated with old age, promoting self-esteem and the recovery of citizenship, encouraging autonomy, independence, self-expression and social reintegration in search of a successful old age.

## 2.2 THE AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY GLOBAL NETWORK AND ITS PRINCIPLES

The Age-Friendly University Global Network is an association of higher education institutions that seeks to promote an active and healthy aging through innovative educational programs. The initiative Age-Friendly University Global Network (AFUGN)

reflects the work of an international, interdisciplinary team of educators and an external advisory board comprised of adult education organizations, advocacy groups, recreation and leisure associations, researchers, and policymakers who together identified 10 Principles that educational institutions could adopt to evaluate and develop age-friendly programs and policies.

The 10 Principles (Table 1) include a series of practices designed to enable older individuals to feel valued, heard, welcomed and included on university campuses. And, for a given educational institution to be recognized and certified, the Global Network has established a series of requirements and analyses of the work developed that must be guided by the 10 Principles of an Age-Friendly University.

**Table 1** 10 Principles of an Age-Friendly University

10 PRINCIPLES OF AN AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY
1) Encourage the participation of older people in all relevant university activities, including educational and research programs.
2) Promote personal and professional development in the second half of life and support those who wish to pursue a second career.
3) Recognize the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who left school early to those wishing to obtain masters or doctoral qualifications).
4) Promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of knowledge among students of all ages.
5) Expand access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of participation routes.
6) Ensure that the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society and promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the diverse interests and needs of older adults.
7) Increase students' understanding of the dividends of longevity and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.
8) Improve seniors' access to the university's various health and wellness programs and its artistic and cultural activities.
9) Actively engage with the university's retirement community.
10) Ensure regular dialogue with organizations that represent the interests of the elderly population.

Source: Created by the author based on the *Age-Friendly University Global Network*.

According to AFUGN, an Age-Friendly University is recognized not only for enabling this population to enter the institution, but, above all, for providing an academic environment with a culture in which older people feel supported, included and integrated into the community, in addition to assuming a commitment to making its educational programs and policies more accessible and friendly to the elderly public.

It is also important to note that becoming an Age-Friendly University requires strategic approaches and an understanding of the university climate in order to bring

about change. For Clark and Leedahl (2019), becoming and being an Age-Friendly University requires the development of a strategic plan to obtain the support of the entire academic community, in addition to embarking on an ongoing process to promote the principles in this community.

In addition to the 10 Principles that an Age-Friendly University must adopt, the Age-Friendly University Global Network suggests an endorsement process to be followed for a university to join the Global Network. According to the institution, the membership process is not intended to be onerous, but rather to lead to a reflective evaluation of the university's offerings and potential.

Since its formation in 2012, the Age-Friendly University Global Network has had a worldwide impact on different higher education institutions, and currently has 111 accredited university institutions, located in 14 countries, distributed across the regions defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as Asian, Oceanic, European, North American and South American.

For Findsen (2017), each institution that becomes a certified member of the Global Network acts to contribute to an international movement committed not only to expanding access to higher education, but also to improving the lives of older people in the community. According to the author, in order to achieve these objectives, it is necessary for institutions to recognize the historical, political, financial and resource-related contexts, in addition to the distinct needs of regional populations when planning their approaches.

### 3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

In order to achieve the results of this research, which seeks to understand what evidence qualifies UFV for inclusion in the Age-Friendly University Global Network, it was decided to use the qualitative approach. For Flick (2009), qualitative research is focused on discovering new things and developing empirically based theories, and can use different theoretical approaches and methods that discuss the research practice itself (Van Maanen, 1979).

As methodological strategies, descriptive and documentary research were used. According to Gil (2007), descriptive research has the main objective of describing the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon. Documentary research consists of the examination of materials that have not yet received analytical treatment or that can

be reexamined with a view to a new or complementary interpretation, and it was for this purpose that this instrument was used.

For data collection, the documentary research technique was used, with priority given to the use of reports and minutes of meetings of the committee that was created for the inclusion of UFV in the Age-Friendly University Global Network. In addition, news from UFV's official website and information made available in the institution's teaching, research and extension initiatives registration systems were used.

To process the results, interpretations and inferences were made based on inductive analysis, which resulted in coding based on the semantic aspect of the documents analyzed.

The choice of the Universidade Federal de Viçosa took into account the fact that it is in line with national and international agendas, especially those of the UN and the WHO, which refer to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Plan of Action for the Decade of Healthy Aging. These themes are worked on at UFV in an inseparable way between teaching, research, extension and innovation, which can be seen in the multiple actions registered in UFV's systems.

Through the Instituto de Políticas Públicas e Desenvolvimento Sustentável (IPPDS), which brings together more than 18 research groups, including Gegop/CNPq - Espaços Deliberativos e Governança Pública, partnerships have been established with municipal, state and federal governments, including foreign institutions, in order to share knowledge, instruments and methodologies generated in various areas and to be of service to collaborate in the development and construction of sustainable, fairer and more inclusive societies. Furthermore, as a result of the relationships established, which enable the exchange of experiences, UFV continues to accumulate awards and certificates of technical competence to work on the subject, with national and international recognition, mainly for demonstrating an organization of collaborative and networked work to deal with the subject.

Given this commitment to studies and research related to aging, it seemed logical for the Universidade Federal de Viçosa to become involved in the Age-Friendly University Global Network following the launch of the AFUGN initiative in 2012.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To better understand what qualifies UFV for inclusion in the Age-Friendly University Global Network, this section was subdivided into categories that correspond to the 10 AFUGN Principles.

***Principle 1 - Encourage the participation of older adults in all core university activities, including educational and research programs***

Regarding education, it was found that, according to the UFV school registry, there are still few enrolled students who are 60 years old or older, whether in undergraduate or graduate courses. In 2024, of the 11,675 active enrollments in undergraduate courses, only 15 were of people aged 60 or older, representing a percentage of 0.12%. In graduate courses, this percentage increases to 1.22%. When analyzing the percentage of elderly people enrolled in undergraduate or graduate courses on the three campuses (Viçosa, Florestal and Rio Paranaíba), it was found that this was only 0.41%. According to Fernandes (2020), when entering higher education, elderly people who were not encouraged to study as children or young people will have difficulty adapting; therefore, in these cases, the university needs to pay attention to this particularity.

Aware of the need to make the university more inclusive and of the educational demands of older people, UFV launched the first entrance exam notice exclusively for those over 60, with places on all its undergraduate courses aimed at this audience.

Another form of entry that has been observed at UFV concerns extension actions, especially in the case of courses aimed at strengthening municipal councils and funds for the elderly, offered between 2020 and 2022. In these courses, the number of people aged 60 or over represented more than 40% of those enrolled.

Although elderly people are the target audience for outreach activities, it was found that their participation in organizing committees is still low. The same is true for research activities. This was a concern recorded in meeting minutes, but it was not possible to identify actions to overcome this challenge. According to Assis, Dias and Necha (2016), the involvement of elderly people as protagonists in the aging process, occupying existing spaces and creating new ones, despite being present in legal provisions, is still far from being effective.

It is important to note the role of the *Universidade Aberta à Pessoa Idosa*

(UNAPI) in the formal and informal training of those over 60 at UFV. According to the report analyzed, UNAPI, through qualified listening to the elderly, has made training actions available and demonstrated that it involves the elderly in proposing and offering such actions, which has brought them closer to current and relevant topics, such as: financial education, digital inclusion, literacy etc.

In general, it was found that UFV needs to strengthen its inclusion of elderly people as beneficiaries and as protagonists in the training processes. Although there are few initiatives aimed at including older people in research programs as collaborators or protagonists of the actions, it is noted that the contingent of UFV researchers who are 60 years old or older is increasing significantly, and requests for the permanence bonus are increasingly common, as can be seen in the records of the UFV *Pró-Reitoria de Gestão de Pessoas* (PGP) pro-rectory of human resources management.

Regarding Principle 1 of AFUGN, it is believed that UFV's actions will be strengthened with the opening of the entrance exam to 60+ and through the more effective action of UNAPI.

***Principle 2 - Promote personal and professional development in the second half of life and support those who wish to pursue a second career***

Regarding the second AFUGN Principle, according to surveys of UFV actions, it was found that there were many initiatives that enabled the promotion of the personal and professional development of older people or preparation for this phase of life. Through the *Universidade Aberta à Pessoa Idosa*, for example, UFV offers opportunities to think about retirement. The theoretical/practical short course on financial education entitled “*Eu e a minha aposentadoria*” is one of the many courses offered by UNAPI. In addition to this, the short course “*Conectando-se com novas tecnologias*” stands out, which provides support for insertion in increasingly digital markets and governments, as can be seen in Brazil on its official websites that embrace technology to guarantee and provide access to social services. English language workshops are also examples of actions aimed at preparing older people, considering the need for language proficiency for new careers in the digital world.

It can be said, therefore, that in relation to Principle 2, UFV responds satisfactorily to what is being requested, requiring only the maintenance or expansion of actions.

***Principle 3 - Recognize the range of educational needs of older adults (from early school leavers to those wishing to pursue Masters or PhD qualifications)***

The UFV recognizes the educational needs of older people, especially in terms of serving those who left school early, through the Age-Friendly University. As already mentioned, the number of undergraduate and graduate students has increased, but it is still not very significant, accounting for less than 1% of undergraduate students and only 1.22% of graduate students.

Education, although a constitutional right and reinforced by other regulatory frameworks such as the *Política Nacional da Pessoa Idosa* and the *Estatuto da Pessoa Idosa*, is far from meeting the needs of this population. According to Rezende and Ramos (2023), many elderly people are unable to access universities due to their low level of education. In their studies, the authors found that many of these people do not have a high school diploma, which would allow them to enroll in higher education and fulfill the primary role of universities, which is teaching. Demonstrating the same understanding, as already mentioned, at UFV this reality is about to change with the opening of the 60+ entrance exam.

Still considering the different educational demands of older people, it is necessary to consider the capacity of teachers to serve university students aged 60 or over. As highlighted by Fernandes (2020), the elderly population may require more attention and different strategies from the teacher during the teaching and learning process. In this sense, no action was identified at UFV.

That said, it is not enough to simply promote the inclusion of elderly people in universities; it is also necessary to offer learning opportunities that are compatible with their unique characteristics. In a way, it is believed that UFV has made progress in aligning itself with Principle 3, but it still lacks actions that allow it to fully meet this need.

***Principle 4 - Promote intergenerational learning to facilitate reciprocal knowledge sharing among students of all ages***

The fourth AFUGN Principle alludes to the importance of intergenerational exchanges in the promotion of knowledge. Among the research activities of UFV, the highlight goes to those developed by the UNIDES group (*Universidades na Década do Envelhecimento Saudável*) in which researchers of all ages and undergraduate and graduate students undergraduate students work together to achieve the project's objectives,

which will certainly provide the sharing of expertise and mutual learning.

In terms of scope, the highlight goes to the program entitled “*Ações para o Envelhecimento Ativo*”. In the program report, it was possible to identify actions aimed at promoting intergenerationality.

According to Buarque (2000), intergenerational exchanges provide valuable cultural, historical and personal knowledge for demystifying old age. Therefore, Cardoso (2011) states that it is essential that higher education institutions, when offering university services to elderly people, pay attention to the value of this coexistence between different generations. Mainly because, according to the author, during intergenerational relationships, learning between those involved will only be fruitful if there is empathy and respect.

Another UFV project that is also included in the “*Ações para o Envelhecimento Ativo*” program, permeated by techniques that allow working on the theme of intergenerationality, is called “*Idadismo Não*”. To collaborate with intergenerational actions, the project was first implemented in elementary and high schools in the city of Viçosa-MG, considering the potential for overflow and collaboration in improving family relationships.

On the UFV news website it was mentioned that the project is in its second edition, targeting elderly people and their families. This project was awarded at one of the largest longevity events in the country, at the 6th edition of *Longevidade Expo + Fórum*, where the 1st *Congresso Internacional Longevidade com Futuro* took place in 2024, in the city of São Paulo-SP.

It is clear that UFV is making progress in involving and participating older people and other generations in actions that seek to address ageism. Although highlights have been allowed, it is believed that UFV can propose initiatives in the action plan aimed at strengthening Principle 4 within the institution, since the importance of intergenerational contacts for deconstructing prejudices is evident, given the mutual gain acquired through the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

***Principle 5 - Expand access to online education for adults to ensure diversity of participation opportunities***

The fifth AFUGN Principle seeks to diversify older people's access to educational activities through online education.

It is important to highlight that, as mentioned by Schier *et al.* (2023), one of the barriers to entry for elderly people into university is due to lack of knowledge and/or inability to operate technological devices, such as cell phones, tablet or computer. For the authors, it is essential that universities enable elderly people to become capable of using such devices, so that they can feel properly included in the academic environment; furthermore, it will be through such devices that they will have access to online education. To overcome this type of challenge, elderly people have an ally in UNAPI.

With the practice of offering open and online courses, it can already be noted that the elderly population, together with those over 50, has been the majority of participants and/or registrants.

However, it is noted that UFV lacks actions that contemplate Principle 5, whether in the offering of courses in the online modality, or in actions that contribute to reducing the difficulties that elderly people may present with digital devices.

***Principle 6 - Ensure that the university's research agenda takes into account ageing- related needs and promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the diverse interests and needs of older people***

The sixth Principle refers to the role of universities in contributing, through their research, to issues related to aging.

Higher education institutions play a fundamental role in the dissemination of knowledge, since they are the ones most responsible for producing science and innovation. According to Bueno *et al.* (2023), it is necessary for universities to become aware of the production and application of new knowledge about the needs of the elderly population. For the authors, through the recognition of these needs, research groups can be created to identify the main demands of these individuals and thus initiate appropriate interventions. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that scientific research produced by universities is an effective tool for instructing in the implementation of more assertive public policies (Novaes *et al.*, 2019).

It was observed through the analyzed report that, in terms of research, since 1990 UFV has been developing studies on different topics, such as population aging, functional capacities of the elderly, care and social risk related to him, policies for elderly people, councils and funds for elderly people's rights, among many others.

Numerous publications, books, articles, comics, booklets, reports and other

documents are available for public consultation and, here, we highlight those found on the UFV Library page, the UFV Press and the IPPDS page.

Recently, UFV published the book entitled: “*A universidade e o envelhecimento populacional: diálogos e experiências em construção no Brasil*”, organized by professor Ms. Simone Martins *et al.*, and may be the first publication that addresses and highlights the importance of the role of universities in promoting and implementing public policies that address the issue of aging.

UFV also coordinates funded research projects involving a network of Brazilian and foreign universities. For example, the UNIDES group project, funded by the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* (CNPq), which aims to analyze the role that universities play in strengthening the actions of the Global Plan for the Decade of Healthy Aging. This is a project that brings together approximately 50 researchers, characterized by diversity in terms of areas of knowledge, gender, age, culture, etc. Another project with the same characteristics is entitled “*Em Comum-Idade: A UFV no fomento de ações para a década do envelhecimento saudável*”, financed by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes), which aims to contribute to the consolidation of UFV's work on the agenda of population aging and strengthening collaborative networks, focusing on actions to promote the Decade of Healthy Aging 2021-2030.

Using these examples, it is considered that UFV satisfactorily aligns itself with Principle 6 of AFUGN, although it requires monitoring and strengthening.

***Principle 7 - Expand students' knowledge about the dividends of longevity and the wealth it can bring to society***

The seventh Principle of an Age-Friendly University seeks to raise awareness about the greatness and benefits that a long life brings to society. This fact is relevant, since, according to Schier *et al.* (2023), longevity affects the distribution of resources, public policies, the labor market and educational and professional training, that is, it affects society as a whole.

To redefine old age, extension projects are being implemented by UFV, such as the “*Idadismo Não*”, which take place in schools and contribute to collectively changing the way of thinking, feeling and acting in relation to age and aging.

In addition, associated with the silver economy agenda, projects that address the

relationship between older people and the job market and retirement are being implemented at UFV. According to officially released news, the theme of aging and longevity remains prominent. In September 2024, UFV hosted the 2nd *Congresso Internacional Longevidade Gegop*, bringing together researchers, social investors, and representatives of public and private institutions in a great exchange of experiences.

Facts such as those mentioned indicate that UFV is sensitive and has taken steps to raise awareness about the issue, demonstrating alignment with what is expected of Principle 7 of AFUGN.

***Principle 8 - Improve access for older adults to university programs related to health and well-being, as well as arts and cultural activities***

The eighth Principle of AFUGN aims to facilitate access by older people to health and well-being projects and cultural activities offered by the university. Increased longevity, accompanied by good physical and mental health, leads older people to seek activities to fill their free time, with educational activities being chosen because they promote emotional well-being, increased social relationships and constant motivation for learning (Cachioni *et al.*, 2014).

It is worth noting that UFV is located in a city in Zona da Mata, in the interior of Minas Gerais, Brazil, where access to arts and cultural activities is restricted. In terms of health and well-being, as it offers courses such as nursing, physical education, nutrition and medicine, when analyzing the news portal and its institutional development plans, one can observe a strong performance within the institution and its surroundings, which allows us to infer that its commitment is demonstrated both to issues related to health and well-being, as well as to arts and cultural activities.

It is also worth noting that the university's organizational structure includes an art gallery, several theaters, a cinema, and spaces for socializing and leisure. In addition to the actions aimed at the general public, UNAPI's actions aimed at the general public should be highlighted 60+. These are examples that allow us to infer that UFV has been fulfilling what is expected over the years to achieve the objectives proposed with Principle 8 of AFUGN.

***Principle 9 - Getting the university to engage and participate in its own retirement community***

The ninth Principle of an Age-Friendly University addresses the need for the university to actively engage with its retirement community. This action is necessary, given that, as stated by Fernandes *et al.* (2023), with retirement comes a new stage in the life of the elderly person, accompanied by transformations that affect them in several aspects, as relationships, health, finances, among other areas of life, change.

No significant actions were found for this Principle, demonstrating that this is one of the Principles that should be promoted in the action plan for adherence to AFUGN. Among the few actions identified are the studies carried out by the *Departamento de Administração e Contabilidade* with *Agros – Instituto UFV de Seguridade Social*, aimed at the development of financial education programs by this institution.

Also noteworthy are the mini-courses offered by UNAPI, which are: “*Eu e a minha aposentadoria*”, and, “*Envelhecimento e projeto de vida: os sonhos não envelhecem*”. It is noted that this is a Principle that needs to be strengthened by UFV.

***Principle 10 - Ensure constant dialogue with organizations that represent the rights of the elderly population***

The last AFUGN Principle refers to the importance of universities maintaining dialogue with organizations that fight to guarantee the rights of older people. According to Buarque (2000), it is important that the knowledge produced by universities is in line with what society needs. Furthermore, according to Fernandes (2020), in order to produce useful knowledge, it is necessary to understand social gaps, and this happens through dialogues with people who are not included in universities, by observing social needs, and also through extension programs developed by universities.

In recent years UFV was appointed to execute the *Pacto Nacional de Implementação dos Direitos da Pessoa Idosa* in 5 Brazilian states (Minas Gerais, Paraná, Rondônia, Santa Catarina and São Paulo), which ended up resulting in the holding of training courses for counselors on the rights of the elderly, public managers and multipliers. When accessing the reports of these courses, it was noted that they were built based on scientific research, contemplating democratic practices and constant dialogues, especially with the elderly rights counselors, people who occupy a democratic space with a relevant role in the defense and promotion of the rights of the elderly.

Another fact worth highlighting is the participation of UFV in the construction of national diagnoses of the elderly, having also adopted participatory methodologies, including discussion groups and the application of questionnaires that made it possible to listen to a significant contingent of councilors, covering the entire national territory. These dialogues resulted in the publication of the 2nd *Diagnóstico Nacional dos Conselhos de Direitos da Pessoa Idosa*, which has been used by several institutions, including to guide the formulation of public policies.

The highlighted examples represent facts that demonstrate UFV's alignment with Principle 10.

In addition to the actions related to the 10 AFUGN Principles, it is noted that UFV innovates in the development of alternative technologies and methodologies to address and translate often dense topics, with the commitment to the overflow of knowledge. For example, it developed in partnership with Rapi-MG a series of podcast entitled “*Minuto da Pessoa Idosa*” and created the “*Geração Prateada*” comics, which deals with the rights of the elderly, the councils and funds for the rights of the elderly, allowing such relevant information to easily reach the population as a whole.

The UFV understands that the progress to be achieved requires collective work. In Brazil, it has developed, as a result of technical cooperation agreements, training actions for managers and employees of *Instituições de Longa Permanência para Pessoas Idosas* (ILPI).

UFV has many groups that work on the issue of aging, and most of them have come together and maintain constant dialogue with each other and with organizations that represent the rights of the elderly population. They work and practice intersectorality, intergenerationality and interinstitutionality strongly, in addition to understanding the importance of taking the lead and listening to the elderly in their actions. These groups assist public administrators, educators, counselors and others in developing solutions to improve longevity.

As a result of the efforts made, the *Observatório de Políticas Públicas para o Envelhecimento e a Longevidade* (OPPEL) was organically created at UFV. This is yet another sign that UFV is committed to building an institutional Longevity policy that is aligned with AFUGN's perspectives.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Aging is a reality that has been announced. We already know that people are living longer, and now it is up to everyone (government, universities, society) to think of strategies that can promote active and healthy aging. Universities can make a significant contribution to this process.

It was possible to observe that at UFV, the theme of elderly people and aging are themes worked on inseparably between teaching, research, extension and innovation. In teaching, it was possible to observe that the number of elderly people enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses is still small, but it is worth highlighting UNAPI, which facilitates the insertion in formal and non-formal education and remains committed to the execution of strategic training actions, whether those that contribute to the professional life or personal achievements of elderly people. It is also worth highlighting that the entrance exam notice for those over 60 was published at UFV in October 2024, which will allow the admission of elderly people as early as 2025.

The survey revealed UFV's commitment to actions that lead to relevant social impacts, whether they are research, extension or even innovative actions. However, although UFV develops actions that qualify it as an Age-Friendly University, its adherence process is slow.

Although no records were found that prove UFV's adherence to AFUGN, the commitment to adherence seems to be taken very seriously at the institution, both for students and for its entire internal public and, even though at the time of submission of this article it had not materialized, it can be stated, taking into account all the results presented, that UFV already behaves as a Age-Friendly University.

Given that the global initiative is still in its infancy in Brazil, and also considering its importance for strengthening a network of care and attention for the elderly, we suggest future research on issues not covered in this work, as well as that research can be carried out to monitor progress and to evaluate the impacts of Brazilian universities that are friendly to the elderly.

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