

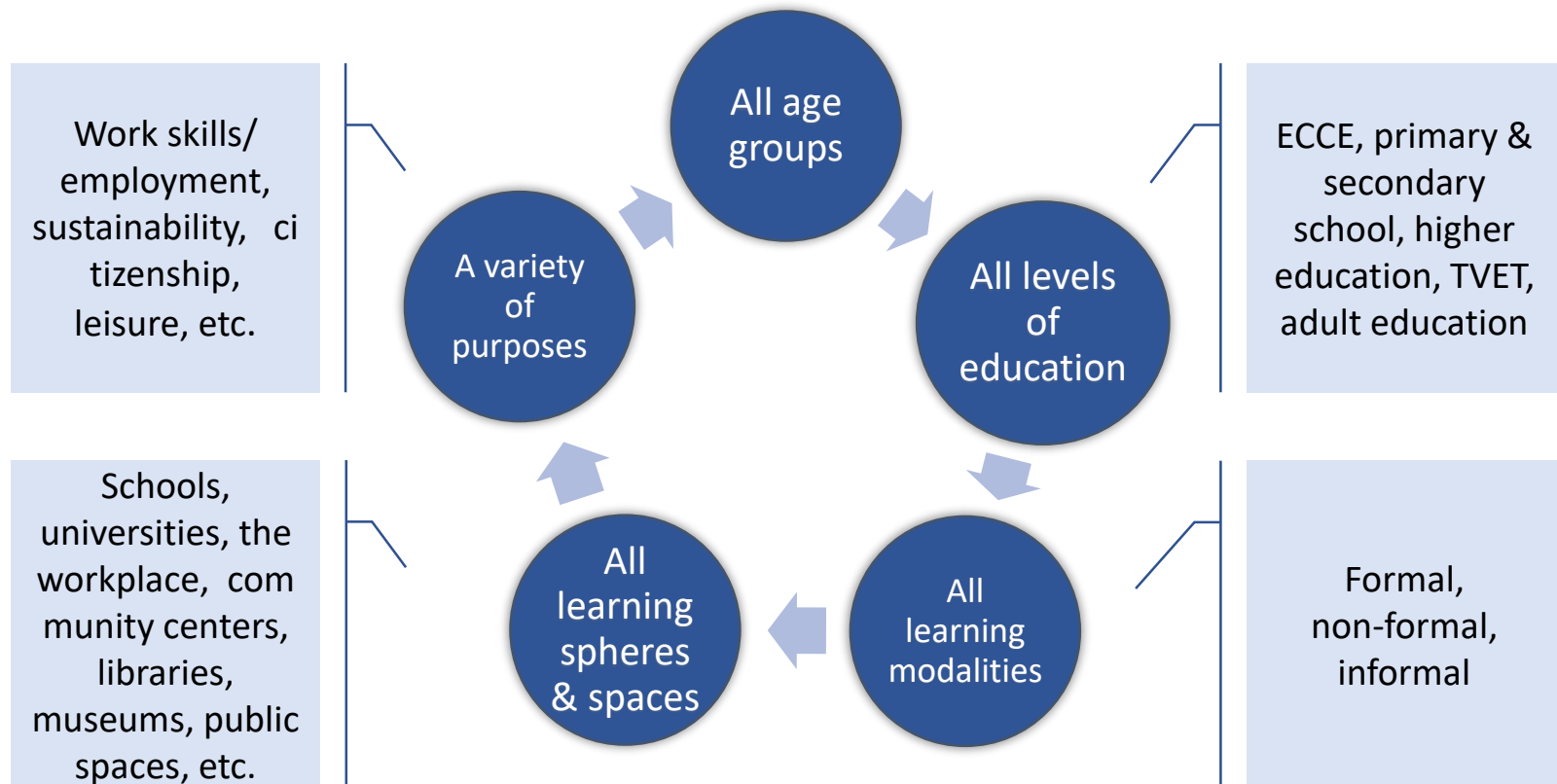
# Higher Education Institutions' Response to the Learning Needs of Ageing Societies

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## Key Elements of Lifelong Learning



UNESCO's (1998) 'World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century' emphasised the need for higher education systems to place students 'within a lifelong perspective' based on 'flexible entry and exit points' and with access 'at any age and without any discrimination' (pp. 3-7).



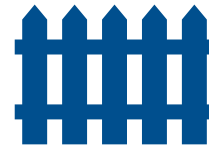


- Higher education institutions must culturally shift to engage older learners, recognizing the reality of long life, a change vital for lifelong learning provision.
- Traditionally focused on younger students, this shift requires integrating the needs of older people into the three missions of higher education: research, teaching, and social engagement.



## Motivations

- Cognitive interest
- Higher formal qualification
- Employment
- Contact and interaction
- Community-building
- Intergenerational connection
- ...



## Barriers

- Funding constraints
- Ageism and stereotypes
- The limited variety of education option
- Lack of recognition of prior learning
- Use of technology
- Structural barriers
- ...

## The Study: Selection of Cases

Region	Country	Name of the Institution	Public/Private
Africa	 Nigeria	University of Lagos	Public
Arab States	 Lebanon	American University of Beirut	Private
Asia and the Pacific	 People's Republic of China	Education University of Hong Kong	Public
Europe and North America	 Ireland	Dublin City University	Public
	 USA	Arizona State University	Public
Latin America and the Caribbean	 Brazil	Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais	Public



## A Glance at the Cases:

# Age-friendly Dublin City University in Ireland

# National Policy on HEIs and Lifelong Learning in Older Age

1997: the Irish Universities Act recognised a key role for higher education institutions in widening access to non-traditional or mature students

2007: WHO Global Age-friendly Cities Guide

2011: Dublin Declaration on Age-friendly Cities, signed by 38 international cities, including 31 Irish counties and cities

2012: DCU launches Ireland's first AFU initiative

2014: Establishment of Age Friendly Ireland

2019: Ireland is the first country to fully affiliate with WHO's Global Network of Age-friendly cities and communities

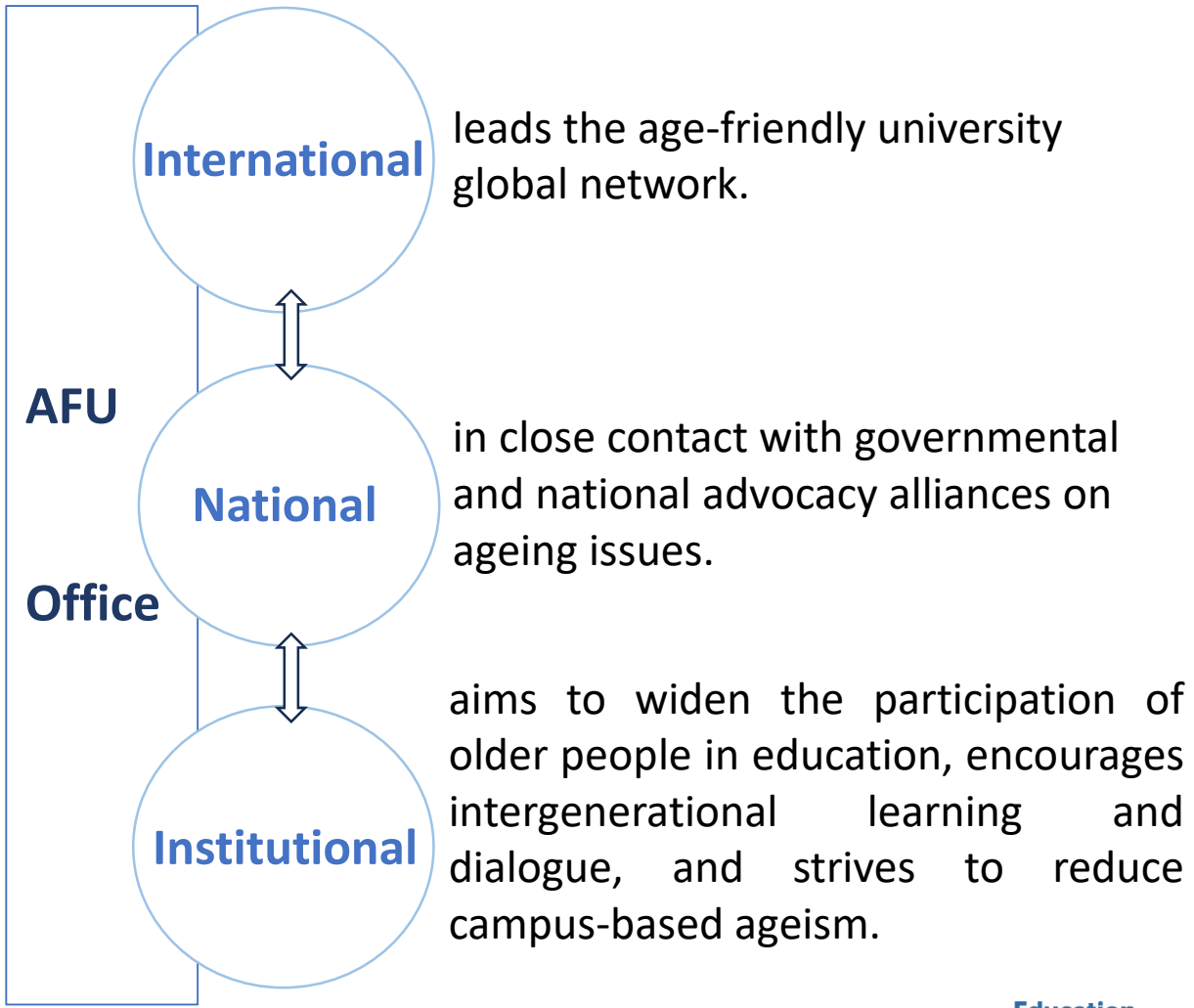
AFU mirrors a European interest in intergenerational solidarity and supports the silver economy as stipulated in the European Union Green Paper on Ageing (O'Kelly 2021).



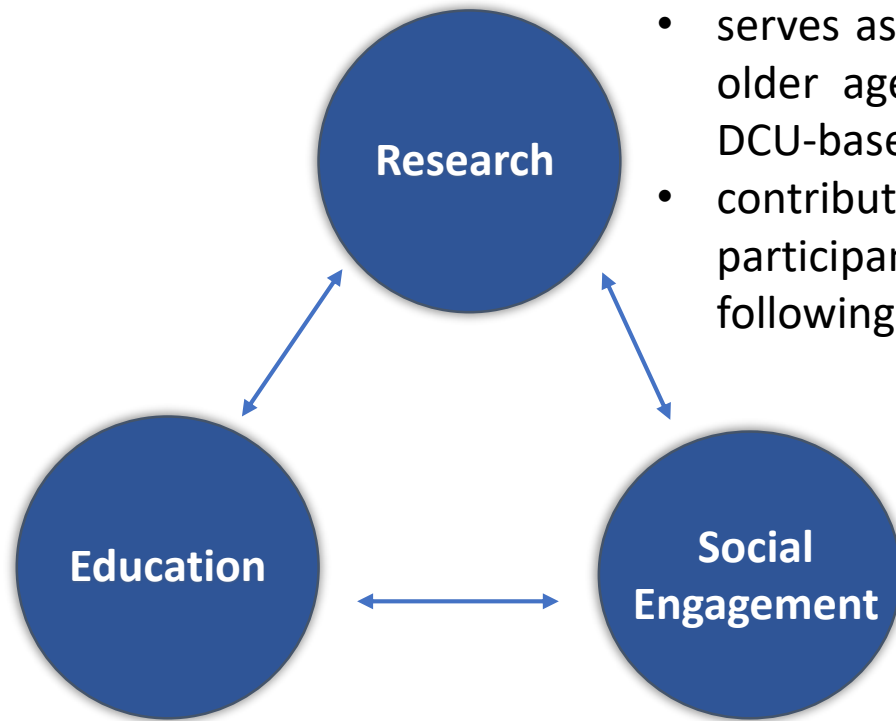


# Institutional Affinities to Learning in Older Ages

The AFU concept was born in Dublin, Ireland, at the Dublin City University, where practices of intergenerational learning had already begun in 2008 (Pstross et al. 2017).



# Implementing Education for Older People



- serves as leverage for grant applications on older age and ageing research through a DCU-based network.
- contributes to research by recruiting older participants for research projects, often following a participatory research mode.

- strives to widen the participation of older learners at DCU through collaboration with wider institutional services such as DCU Access.

- DCU offers vocational, non-vocational, formal, and non-formal learning opportunities for older learners

“Until we get integration and immersion of ages in the same classroom, we will never challenge stereotyping in ageing.”

--- AFU office coordinator

## The Benefits of Intergenerational Learning at DCU (based on interview data and the study by Pstross et al., 2017)

### Older Learners

benefit older learners through mental stimulation, knowledge acquisition, enhanced self-concepts and intergenerational encounters.

### Younger Student

Younger students' self-confidence is enhanced through the knowledge exchange with older learners, where 'each one involved is both a transmitter and receiver of this knowledge' (p. 167).

### University Staff

raise awareness of DCU staff about ageing: created a menopause weekly support group.

### The Community

provide a forum for building relationships between generations.

# Conclusion: A Way forward for Addressing the Needs of Older Adults in Higher Education

## Variability and insufficiency of national policy influence on older adult learning across countries

- Higher education institutions operating under national policies specifically aimed at older adult learning were more inclined to incorporate initiatives for older adults into their core institutional activities.

## Limited evidence of explicit inclusion of learning for older adults in the institutional core mission. Institutions adopted a wide variety of approaches and setups to address the learning needs of older adults

- Well-coordinated management and organization, including a dedicated office manages and coordinates learning opportunities for older adults, facilitating their participation in university core activities.
- Support from senior institutional and program leaders, as well as engagement with external stakeholders and the wider community, is crucial for ensuring program continuity and diversity.
- Significant potential and substantial benefits have been demonstrated in addressing the needs of older adults through the three missions of higher education.

## Designing and implementing sustainable learning programmes catering to the needs of older adults

- Intergenerational learning:
  - It is too simplistic to assume that all older adults enjoy learning alongside younger individuals.
  - Mainstreaming older people in intergenerational classrooms does not automatically guarantee intergenerational learning.
  - According to the European Network for Intergenerational Learning (ENIL, 2012), IL requires (1) the involvement of more than one generation, (2) the planning of activities before actual implementation, and consequently, (3) results in mutually beneficial learning. In this context, intergenerational knowledge exchange promotes intergenerational cohesion and can be understood as a way for people of all ages to learn together and from each other.
- Effective design and implementation of older people learning programs must prioritize the needs of the older people, firmly rooted in the principles of social and educational gerontology. This approach should be reflected in both the curriculum and the overall organizational structure to achieve optimal results.

# Thank you

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