

Turkey's first senior citizen university welcomes students over 60



Akdeniz University has launched Turkey's first "senior citizen university," which accepts students over the age of 60, in the southern province of Antalya.

Running under the motto, "Learning for an Active and Meaningful Life," the center is free and open to the public. Elderly students can attend weekly or monthly classes and take courses in various departments including philosophy, history, technology, communications, chemistry, biology, health, sociology and psychology. Coursework can be completed within three years with the assistance of volunteer lecturers, and students who complete courses will receive a certificate.

Professor İsmail Turan of Akdeniz University said they hope Turkey's first senior citizen university will be exemplary among other universities around Turkey with programs that enrich the lives of the elderly. Stressing that Turkey's population is aging, Tufan said such programs will keep elderly people active in daily life as they can interact and learn from each other. Young students can also attend classes to observe the education process. "Learning has no limit as you can continue education as long as you live. The program will help them to have a higher quality elderly life," Tufan added.

The elderly students do not take exams but receive a modern education to refresh their knowledge in specialized fields. The program will reach elderly people around Turkey and there are currently 60 elderly students attending classes. Alongside the university, the Akdeniz University Department of Gerontology is also conducting a project titled "Geroatlas" to design a detailed map of Turkey's elderly population.

Ayşen Yalçın, 61, is one of the new students who are participating. "I quite like the idea, as I support the view that elderly life must be as relaxed as possible," she said. Another student, Mustafa Cengiz Çöpelli, 60, said: "I want to lead my children and grandchildren even if I am getting older. What we want is to show that elderly people can still contribute to society even if they are retired or stay at home. The center is

a chance for us to remain productive and will help us enliven ourselves and avoid waiting for death."

A retired teacher, Zeki Özkara, 62, also attends the class. Özkara said more successful projects will be created for Turkey's elderly population. "The human lifespan is expanding but we still have aging problems. I think the courses are beneficial for all of us," he said.

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