ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS

The University of Cyprus (UCY) began discussions for the establishment of a Confucius Institute on its premises in April 2012, after the proposal of the Beijing Institute of Education (BIE). Discussions continued in September 2012, with the visit to Beijing of the Vice-Rector for International Affairs, Finance and Administration of UCY and the Senior University Officer for International Relations and Promotion Sector of the Research and International Relations Service. As a result, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between UCY and BIE, for the co-establishment of a Confucius Institute at UCY.

In April 2013, an Application was submitted to the Confucius Institute (CI) Headquarters by UCY and BIE, expressing the willingness of both parties to co-establish the Confucius Institute on UCY premises. The application was positively received by the CI Headquarters, while in the meantime, a delegation from BIE visited UCY in May 2013, during which time further progress was achieved and discussions on various issues took place regarding the logistics of the establishment.

In November 2013, UCY and the CI Headquarters signed the final Agreement, for the Establishment of the Confucius Institute at UCY. In December 2013, the Implementation Agreement between UCY and BIE was signed during the Vice-Rector’s and the CI Co-Director’s visit to Beijing. During this visit the UCY officials attended the first Board of Directors Meeting at BIE and they participated in the 8th Global CI Conference.

The Confucius Institute at UCY will contribute to the increase of exchanges of culture, friendship and cooperation between China and Cyprus. In particular, the Confucius Institute at UCY will act as the center for the diffusion of Chinese culture and tradition to Cypriots. In turn, this will strengthen the bonds between China and Cyprus and open the door to further cooperation in research, teaching, trade and industry.

To do so, the Confucius Institute at UCY will offer such courses as Chinese Language, Chinese Business, Chinese Medicine and Chinese Arts. Thus, the Confucius Institute at UCY will be turned into (i) a Chinese language and culture learning center, (ii) a training center for teachers of Chinese language, (iii) a testing center for the proficiency in the Chinese language (for both Cyprus and nearby countries), and (iv) a successful focal point for those interested in Chinese language and culture.

To reach these prominent goals, BIE and UCY will join forces to reinforce each other’s academic strength through facilitating the conduct of cooperation in research programs and the implementation of students, faculty and staff exchange programs.

Advantages:
1. Opportunities to Cypriots:
Cypriots have already started realizing the prospects of learning Chinese for business and tourism, but also for the enhancement of cultural bonds between China and Cyprus. UCY students, and Cypriots in general, will be given the opportunity to learn the Chinese language, a rapidly expanding language which is becoming more and more popular internationally.

2. Opportunities for the wider nearby region:
People from the wider region (e.g., Mediterranean, Middle East and North Africa) will be more closely exposed, through the Confucius Institute at UCY, to the Chinese language and culture.

3. Strengthening bonds between China and Cyprus
The Confucius Institute at UCY will provide a convenient vehicle for mutual understanding and cooperation between China and Cyprus. It is notable, in this respect, that China and Cyprus have been enjoying good relations of mutual respect and understanding for many years, at the economic, political and cultural levels.

4. Strengthening bonds between China and EU:
Since Cyprus is a member of the European Union (EU), a Confucius Institute at UCY will give the Confucius Headquarters access to the EU, but also to the Euro-Mediterranean basin. Through the Confucius Institute at UCY, China will have the opportunity to participate in EU-China Programs and other EU initiatives in the fields of education, culture, research and youth.

The Confucius Institute at UCY is expected to begin operation on UCY premises by June 2014, in a space of 135m². In the meantime, the UCY Language Centre has begun offering Chinese language courses for beginners to the UCY students.