

Second Confucius Institute Launched in Szeged

THE MISSION IS TO DEEPEN MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND FRIENDSHIP



BY REKA A. FRANCISCKI

→ CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES

→ SINCE LAST FALL, THE UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED IS HOME TO THE SECOND OFFICIAL INSTITUTE OF CHINA IN HUNGARY, chosen to be a gateway for a Hungarian-Chinese cooperation in education and business. (A Confucius Institute established in partnership with the Eötvös Loránd University has been operating in Budapest since the end of 2006.) According to Director Livia Szentmártoni (pictured right in box next to Chinese Director Zhang Xuemei), the aim of the institute in Szeged is to make Chinese language and culture more popular by organizing language courses, cultural and scientific programs, publishing books and curricula, and helping China and Hungary come closer together. She says the establishment of the institute was a milestone for the university as well as for local businesses. She echoes

are non-profit public institutions aligned with the Government of the People's Republic of China. Confucius Institute (CI) headquarters are located in Beijing, and the program is overseen by the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban), a non-profit organization affiliated with the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and the United Front Work Department. The institutes operate in co-operation with local affiliate colleges and universities around the world, and financing is shared between Hanban and the host institutions. The Szeged University of Sciences and the Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) signed a letter of intent to set up the institute in November 2010. An agreement on its establishment was signed at the Confucius Institute headquarters in Beijing three weeks earlier. The Institute was inaugurated in an applause-filled ceremony capped by a celebratory display of Chinese martial arts on October 10, 2012.



the words of Gábor Szabó, Dean of the Szeged University of Science's Education Department, who, at the opening ceremony, said, "Opening doors to the East is a key element of the strategic development of our university with the objective of enhancing our foreign language programs and attracting students from abroad."

Szentmártoni proudly reveals that more than 70 cities attempted to establish a new Confucius Institute, but only Szeged has succeeded. "A local MP, István Újhelyi, also present at the opening ceremony, stated that if we want to cut to the chase for Chinese business, economic and diplomatic relations, we have to 'learn China' and understand the Chinese way of thinking. And this is our mission: to promote Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese-teaching internationally, facilitate cultural exchanges, and in turn, advance the social and economic development of the City of Szeged as well as the whole country," Szentmártoni continues.

Busy months

"The past few months have been very busy," she tells Diplomacy and Trade. "Our delegation attended the 7th Confucius Institutes Conference, organized by the Chinese Language Education Council (Hanban) on December 16-18, when some 2,200 participants, leaders of Confucius Institutes around the globe and diplomats representing 108 countries, discussed the future plans and programs of the institutes. Our brand new institute was in the spotlight, as during its two-months-long career, it could already report great achievements. For instance, on November 26, we signed an agreement with organizers of the annual Szeged Open-Air Festival. STE will, as the main patron of the event, promote a play entitled Kung-fu Legend, to be staged during the festival in August 2013 by the Beijing-based Red Theatre. Also in November, in cooperation with the Saint Ignatius Jesuit College, we organized a roundtable conference entitled 'China Exposed - The real face of the Dragon', involving many well-respected researchers who study China, to introduce the real face of China from cultural, historical and economical aspects. Mariann Gecse, marketing manager of Huawei Technologies Ltd. and Zsolt Takács, CEO of China Mart were invited to share their views." ←



MORE CHINESE-HUNGARIAN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS IN SZEGED: The Gateway Program

→ A DELEGATION FROM THE SHANGHAI UNIVERSITY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND LAW (SHUPL) VISITED THE UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED on July 3, 2012 when a cooperation agreement was signed by the two institutions. From September, ten Chinese students could start a half-year training program at the University of Szeged, Faculty of Law to study contemporary issues of law, and international and industrial relations from a Hungarian and European perspective. The exchange program under the title "GATEWAY" is built on three pillars: besides student and teacher mobility, various joint activities in research are also envisaged. The arrival of 10 Chinese students was only the first step in this process. On behalf of SHUPL, Yan Li vice-rector expressed his support for a comprehensive cooperation framework including joint bachelor and master programs. The closing ceremony of the first six-month training program for students from Shanghai is scheduled for this month.