**PRESS RELEASE**

**Official visit of the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the University of Thessaly**

The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Greece, Mr. Xiao Junzheng, accompanied by the Educational Attaché, Mr. Tian Lei, visited the University of Thessaly and the University's Confucius Institute on Friday, July 8, 2022.

He was welcomed by the Rector, Professor Zissis Mamouris, the Vice-Rector for Research and Lifelong Education, Associate Professor Ioanna Laliotou and the Director of the Confucius Institute of the University of Thessaly, Professor Wang Xiaohong.

The Rector informed the Ambassador about the close cooperation that the University of Thessaly has developed with Chinese Universities at many levels. The Vice-Rector for Research and Lifelong Education, Ms. Laliotou, referred to the University of Thessaly's effort to create international undergraduate study programs as well as the international postgraduate programs already offered by the University of Thessaly.

Bilateral cooperation agreements with 9 Chinese Universities are currently active at the University of Thessaly in the context of its international relations. The two sides also focused on the ever-increasing interest of Greek and foreign students in learning Chinese at the Confucius Institute, stressing that, since its very first semester of operation, more than 400 students across Thessaly have enrolled in the Institute's various Chinese language levels.

The Ambassador attended two lectures of Chinese opera and cuisine, after which he was then given a tour of the Tsikriki mansion, where the Confucius Institute of the University of Thessaly is located, by the Institute's Chinese Director, Prof. Wang Xiaohong. Ms. Wang gave a brief introduction about the Confucius Institute of UTH to the Ambassador, with the information about the opening and the staff employed by the Institute and then she referred to the actions of the Institute. She referred to the Chinese language courses of various levels offered at the Institute as well as the various cultural and research activities it organizes. Finally, she presented the actions planned at the Institute for the next academic year. The Confucius Institute of the University of Thessaly will serve as a bridge between China and Greece, and a window for Greeks to understand China, which is the purpose of future events.

The Ambassador also had a pleasant conversation with the Greek teachers who teach the Chinese language at the Confucius Institute, appreciated their work and expressed his gratitude for the work they are doing.

Last but not least, the Ambassador expressed his satisfaction for this rich visit to the University of Thessaly and one of the most recognized international universities in Greece. He expressed his commitment of the Chinese government to further deepen bilateral relations between Greece and China in the fields of research and education, as well as its support for all actions and initiatives launched by the Confucius Institute and the University of Thessaly in general.