

## Hot issue

Cultural co-operation can generate more opportunities to strengthen people-to-people bonds between Belt and Road countries.

# new stories of the

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pressoffice@idcpc.gov.cn

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Song Chen/ China Daily

## Projects

The initiative has improved friendships between China and all affected countries.

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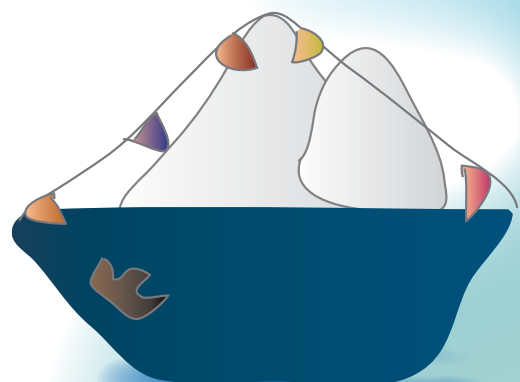
**Imre Hamar, director of the Confucius Institute at Hungary's Eotvos Lorand University, shared his experience of promoting language teaching to build bridges for cultural exchange.**

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# Cultural dialogues and cooperation key to Belt and Road Initiative

**For centuries, China and countries along the Belt and Road have been trading goods and sharing the best of rich historical and cultural heritage, as cultural cooperation can deepen mutual understanding and friendship, and generate more opportunities to strengthen people-to-people bonds between Belt and Road countries.**



## Intensified cultural exchanges

Progress has been made in bonding people across the world, an integral part of the initiative, through intensified cultural exchanges between China and the other participants involved in the initiative.

By the end of last year, China had signed some 318 official cooperative deals and action plans on cultural exchanges with participating nations and established Chinese culture centers in 11 countries. At least 491 Chinese cities had become sister cities with foreign counterparts in 63 countries by the end of May.

By the end of 2016, China had signed cultural communication cooperation agreements with 64 countries along the Belt and Road, which became guidelines in that field. Most countries now try to implement agreements to sign execution plans every two or three years.

According to China's vice minister of culture Ding Wei, China has established regional dialogues with countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, such as the annual meeting of Culture Ministers of SCO Member States, the China-Central and Eastern Europe Countries Cultural Cooperation Forum, the China-Arab Culture Ministers Forum, and the ASEAN-China 10+1 Culture Ministers Forum, all of which guarantee the basic framework of the Belt and Road countries' cultural cooperation.

"It is expected that 30,000 people, 1,000 Chinese and foreign cultural organizations, 200 experts, and 100 cultural events will foster cultural cooperation and communication in 2020," Ding said.

Eight hundred famous think tank academicians, Sinologists, and translators will come to China to communicate and study, and 150 international youth cultural restoration and museum management talents will be developed.

## Booming cultural trade

At the Second Silk Road (Dunhuang) International Cultural Expo, which was held in September this year, 500 enterprises from nearly 20 countries such as Russia, South Korea and China, held 124 Silk Road international culture industry promotion events, expressed intention to invest 67.52 million yuan (\$10.20 million), and sold products valued at 8.23 million yuan. More than 360 projects were promoted at the event, 13 of which had been signed, and more than 30 billion yuan of investment had been proposed.

China's Ministry of Culture will create more favorable conditions and expand international channels for cultural trade by building more bilateral and multilateral cultural trade mechanisms with other governments, and actively participate in making international cultural trade rules.

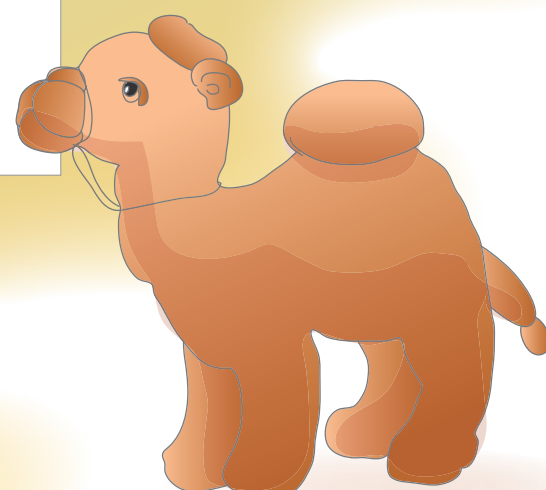
It will also continue to encourage the conclusive role of the three National Bases for International Cultural Trade in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen in broadening cooperation platforms and channels between China and countries along the Belt and Road.

## Dynamic heritage cooperation

The governmental cooperation in cultural heritage has gained momentum in recent years. In January 2016, witnessed by Chinese President Xi Jinping and King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage of China and the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Furtherance of Cultural Heritage Exchange and Cooperation.

Also, progress has been made in networking with countries along the Belt and Road, such as Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, to nominate the Maritime Silk Road to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The Ministry of Culture also encouraged cultural institutions, museums and universities to provide programs on archaeology and heritage restoration in Laos, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Iran and Saudi Arabia.



# Cultural exchanges along Belt and Road

As the Belt and Road Initiative is further promoted, the international community is paying increased attention to it and taking a greater part in its construction. Consequently, the initiative has improved friendships between China and all affected countries.



## Popularity of Chinese language rises globally

### Cambodia

The Confucius Institute has developed rapidly in Cambodia since it was established in 2009. It now has 14 teaching schools across the country, and Chinese language teaching has become a bridge connecting the Chinese and Cambodian people and strengthening their understanding and friendship.

### France

Over the past ten years, the number of primary and secondary students studying Chinese has quadrupled in France. Chinese has become the fourth largest foreign language studied in France after Spanish, German and Italian.

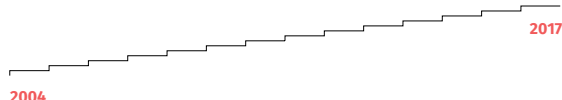
### Bangladesh

At present, there are two Confucius Institutes, one Confucius Classroom and one online Confucius Classroom in Bangladesh. Bangladesh holds a Chinese Bridge competition, a Chinese song competition and Chinese cultural festivals every year, which are always popular.

With increased cooperation between China and other countries in economic, political and cultural fields, learning Chinese has become a hot trend globally. At present, more than 60 countries include Chinese language teaching in their national education systems. The number of foreigners studying Chinese has climbed to 100 million from 30 million in 2004.

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**100 million**



## Confucius Institutes promote Chinese Culture

### Uzbekistan

A seminar on the cultures of Sinology and the Silk Road in Uzbekistan was held in Tashkent's Confucius Institute on November 28, 2016. Sun Lijie, the Chinese ambassador to Uzbekistan, said that in recent years, Sinology has made many achievements in Uzbekistan. The Sinologists have published a number of collected papers and a series of teaching books, contributing greatly to global Sinology research.

### The United Kingdom

Over years of development the Confucius Institute and Confucius Classroom have made many efforts in Chinese language teaching and Chinese cultural promotion. There are now nine Confucius Institutes and many Confucius Classrooms in the Manchester area, including institutes at three universities – Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds.

### Thailand

What began as the world's first Confucius Classroom at Traimit Wittayalai High School took from 2006 to 2016 to develop into 15 Confucius Institutes and 11 Confucius Classrooms in Thailand. The Confucius Institutes in Thailand have different school-running styles according to local conditions, and have become a way for the Thai people to learn Chinese language and understand Chinese culture.

## Sino-foreign cultural exchanges

Here are some important recent exchange opportunities between China and other countries:

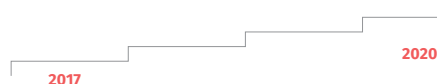
- The Fujian Tea Maritime Silk Road Western Europe Launch Ceremony is held in the UK
- The Road of Destiny with Buddhism is co-organized by China and Nepal
- The 1st "Blue Containers" on the New Silk Road, showcasing cultural artifacts from countries along the Belt and Road is held in Germany
- A Belt and Road-themed book exhibition is held at Sofia International Book Fair in Bulgaria
- A China-Bangladesh cultural and media exchange activity is held in Dhaka
- A "Sino-Italian New Silk Road Project" is launched
- An "Experience China, Indonesia Tour" is launched in Jakarta, Indonesia

China currently has 30 Chinese Cultural Centers around the world, including 11 in Europe, 10 in Asia, five in Africa, three in Oceania and one in Latin America. By 2020, the number of overseas Chinese Cultural Centers will be up to 50.

The activities cover political, economic, cultural, historical and social sectors and are aimed at promoting a global understanding of China. Cultural exchange is a long-term project and more cultural exchange programs are being planned.

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**50**







**Imre Hamar**, director of the Confucius Institute at Hungary's Eotvos Lorand University

## Language as a bridge for cultural exchange

**T**here are currently eight universities and more than 10 middle schools in Hungary teaching Chinese language, and Chinese ability has been listed among the Hungarian education department's examination programs. The Confucius Institute at Hungary's Eotvos Lorand University is an important platform for exchange and education.

Imre Hamar, the director of the institute and the university's vice-president, shared his experience of promoting language teaching to build bridges for cultural exchange.

Hamar was interested in oriental culture and liked to read about it when he was a child. He believed that if he wanted to deeply understand Chinese culture, he had to read original Chinese books. Driven by this idea, he later studied at the department of Chinese language and made great efforts to learn Chinese pronunciation and writing. There were many Chinese people that immigrated to Hungary in the late 1980s and many of them couldn't speak Hungarian; as a result translators were in great demand. Hamar thought that it was a good chance to learn even more Chinese. So, he worked as a translator for Chinese people and learned from them.

In 1997, Hamar came to China and studied Chinese language at Beijing Language and Culture University. He said that during his stay in China he not only learned Chinese but also made many good friends.

To promote Chinese language teaching in Hungary proved to be not so easy. Eotvos Lorand University, at the beginning, only had Hamar to teach Chinese grammar, history and literature. The important turnaround took place in 2006 when the university established a Confucius Institute. Today, in cooperation with Beijing Foreign Studies University, about 30 Chinese teachers are annual-

ly dispatched to work there.

The next development was that a teacher training center for all of Central and Eastern Europe was founded four years ago. It organizes two or three short-term trainings each year for 16 Central and Eastern European countries. And then, three years ago, the Confucius Institute applied to create a European Union project that would provide free Hungarian language training for Chinese people in Hungary, which played an additional important role in the teaching and exchange of Chinese and Hungarian languages.

Hamar is of the view that promoting language teaching builds bridges for cultural exchange, while the Belt and Road Initiative encourages construction of cultural exchange platforms. In 2007, Hungary held a Hungarian Culture Year in China. The Confucius Institute at Eotvos Lorand University, as the government's partner, held exhibitions at China's National Library and introduced Chinese works translated into Hungarian and Hungarian works translated into Chinese. Later, the university set up a research center for the Belt and Road to study the ancient Chinese Silk Road with a focus on contemporary political and economic issues. It has given rise to suggestions for reconstructing a Serbian-Hungarian railway.

In addition to its cooperation with the government, the Confucius Institute has also carried out two key projects: publication of Hungarian Chinese teaching materials and a more than 2000-page Chinese-Hungarian dictionary.

When asked about what Hungary might learn from China, Hamar's answer was Chinese people's working attitude and spirit of learning. He feels that China's emphasis on education can be of great value to other countries.