



Stelios Joannou Learning Resource Centre ready in 2015

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Construction of the University of Cyprus' landmark Stelios Joannou Learning Resource Centre should be complete and the pioneering building ready for its inauguration in September 2015.

Giving the press, including The Cyprus Daily, a tour of the library and learning resource centre's construction site, Rector Constantin Christofides said that, once complete, the innovative structure would be "the largest library ever created in Cyprus" and a valuable source of knowledge for all Cypriots.

Christofides thanked the late Elli Joannou for her €8 million contribution towards the library's creation in her husband's memory and the Joannou family for their ongoing support. Joannou had also donated and additional €1.5m for the architectural design of the centre.

Noting that €11m had been spent on the project so far, Christofides said that recent discussions

community, the general public—once they have become members of the library—will also be allowed access to the five-level, 15,700 square metre centre's anticipated one million printed books, over 30,000 e-magazines and 150 data bases.

Christofides said he particularly wanted the learning resource centre—which will also encompass offices, study rooms,

with President Anastasiades had left the university more confident for the learning centre's completion, and its inclusion in the 2014 state budget.

The Stelios Joannou Learning Resource Centre was not amongst the projects included in recent state budgets.

Apart from the University of Cyprus and local academic

computer labs and two amphitheatres—to be a place where young children would be able to visit and be inspired to learn.

He said that the university wanted the Stelios Joannou Learning Resource Centre to be considered Cyprus' national library and revealed that efforts were underway to encourage other local libraries to introduce the same systems as those to be used by the university.

Christofides said that he was confident the pioneering building—designed by world-acclaimed French architect Jean Nouvel—would also become a Cyprus landmark and even one of the images "shown as a rule whenever footage regarding the country is transmitted overseas".

While touring the impeccably tidy worksite under the attentive eye of J&P-Avax workers, reporters were informed how the various spaces would be used and how Nouvel's design made the most of natural light in what is effectively an artificial hill nestled into the surrounding countryside.

With a central cone filtering in natural light and glass box-like spaces hanging off the main building amongst the many elements still be put in place, it is already possible to visualise what the finished structure, able to host up to some 900 visitors, will be like one day.

THE INNOVATIVE STRUCTURE WILL BE "THE LARGEST LIBRARY EVER CREATED IN CYPRUS"



Future academic plans

Noting that, in the midst of a crisis, the university was involved in European programmes worth €50 million, creating workplaces for 500 young scientists. Christofides said he hoped these figures would be multiplied by 2020, opening up thousands of new jobs.

For this to be achieved, he added, the state would have to unfreeze hiring and promotion positions at the university.

Christofides continued that his fears top academics would leave the university after their salaries and benefits were earlier this year reduced by the state had been realised with staff members leaving Cyprus for posts around

the world including Oslo and even Oxford University in the UK.

He continued that 2014 would be an important year for the university's medical school which would be beginning its English-language instruction programme.

"We believe that within six years, once it is fully operational, the medical school will be completely self-funding through its English and Greek-language departments with an additional income of €7m per year," Christofides said.

He said allowing the programme to be delayed by the financial crisis "would be a huge mistake" and encouraged the powers that

be to "ignore the voices trying to keep this country in the Middle Ages". The rector was referring to criticism of the university's plans to introduce wider English-language instruction.

Christofides also noted that the university's Masters in Petroleum Engineering programme had begun this year. "We had 125 applications and chose the 25 best applicants. This is a programme that will develop on a large scale."

He added that an international committee of experts was currently moving towards the creation of a Chemical Engineering Department which would be added to the Petroleum Engineering programme.

Finances and student support

Rector Christofides told reporters about the support being given to University of Cyprus students whose families had been affected by the ongoing financial crisis.

Christofides said that the university aimed to ensure that not even one student would be forced to interrupt or halt their studies due to lack of funds "either because their parents have become unemployed or have serious financial difficulties".

"A number of families in Cyprus have come forward and offered their support," he said, noting that €400,000 had been donated to the Students Welfare Fund, half of which will be distributed this year and half in 2014.

Cultural events including concerts by high-profile performers from Cyprus and Greece are also in the pipeline to help raise more funds.

The rector also said that once new facilities on the university's Aglandjia campus were complete, the university would save significant amounts in rents.

More money—as much as €250,000 per year—will also be saved through the campus' 400 kilowatt photovoltaic park which will inaugurate by Energy Minister George Lakkotrypīs in January, when construction on a second park—which will generate 10 megawatt, enough electricity to support the entire campus—will begin in the buffer zone.

