



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01395

Name of petitioner

Jan Culik

Petition title

Targeted funding for lesser taught languages and cultures at universities

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to instruct the Scottish Funding Council to provide targeted funding for lesser taught languages and cultures at Scottish universities.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

I have written to the Scottish Education Secretary Mike Russell, but have not as yet received a reply. I have asked Sandra White MSP to present this issue to Scottish government on our behalf.

Petition background information

We hereby request that the Scottish Government take action to preserve the study of modern languages and cultures at our universities by putting in place targeted financial support. We request that the Scottish Government instruct the Scottish Funding Council to provide targeted funding for lesser taught languages and cultures, the way this exists in England.

Cuts in the funding of higher education are putting the existing provision at risk, especially the study of Slavonic and other East European languages and cultures, which are strategically and economically important. There is widespread recognition of the importance in the modern world of fostering and maintaining in-depth knowledge in a broad spectrum of modern languages and cultures. Concern has recently been raised about the poor linguistic qualifications of the population in Scotland and the UK as a whole. Linguistic and cultural skills relating to other countries are of vital economic importance.

Despite this, decisions on the future of this area of teaching and research are being made purely on the basis of perceived inadequate financial returns in the short term. A national strategy that looks beyond this narrow horizon is needed.

Targeted funding for lesser-taught languages and cultures existed in the past in the UK and it still exists in England (see 'strategically important and vulnerable subjects' (www.hefce.ac.uk/aboutus/sis/)). The provision has been lost in Scotland since devolution. If such targeted funding is not reinstated, Scotland runs a risk of losing much of its provision for the teaching of modern languages and cultures. The University

of Glasgow remains fundamentally committed to supporting as many languages as possible taught within the University to enhance its internationalisation agenda but is faced with severe funding crisis and will have to make decisions regarding the range and depth of language provision that it can provide over the coming years. We are seeking support from the Scottish Government for our unique languages based programmes in Czech, Polish and Slavonic Studies (in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures) and Latvian, Estonian, Hungarian (in Central and East European Studies, School of Social and Political Sciences). Once lost, the existing expertise will not easily be regained.

Scotland today is more than ever a multi-national and multi-cultural society; it has a large Polish community and many Scottish companies do business with companies in Poland, Russia and the Czech Republic, as was demonstrated clearly at a recent event in the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. The Scottish Government should be encouraging the learning of these lesser-taught languages and cultures and opening up to Scotland the vast riches of their cultures and history, for good strategic and economic reasons. Scotland has always been proud of her broad educational tradition and this rich heritage should be sustained by widening rather than shrinking the existing provision of languages offered at Scottish universities.

We therefore request that the Scottish Funding Council be instructed that the teaching and research in these areas be given special targeted financial support.

Signatories:

Dr Elwira Grossman, Lecturer in Polish Studies, University of Glasgow

Dr Clare McManus, Co-Director, Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies, University of Glasgow

Willy Maley, Professor of English Literature, University of Glasgow

Dr Susan A J Stuart, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Glasgow

Dr Laura Martin, Senior Lecturer in Comparative Literature, University of Glasgow

David Smith, Professor of Baltic History and Politics, University of Glasgow

Dr Andrei Rogatchevski, Senior Lecturer in Russian, University of Glasgow

Dr Ella Chmielewska, Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies, Programme Director of Cultural Studies, University of Edinburgh

Richard Berry, Professor of Political Economy of Central and Eastern Europe, Director, Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies, University of Glasgow

Dr Shamil Khairov, Lecturer in Russian, University of Glasgow

Dr Mirna Solic, Lecturer in Czech Studies, University of Glasgow

Dr Jan Culik, Senior Lecturer in Czech Studies, University of Glasgow

Dr Margaret Tejerizo, Senior Lecturer in Russian, University of Glasgow

Dr John Bates, Lecturer in Polish Studies, University of Glasgow

Dr Francesca Stella, Lecturer in Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow

Dr Andrew P. Roach, Senior Lecturer in History, University of Glasgow

Dr Vikki Turbine, Lecturer in Politics, University of Glasgow

Dr Mary Heimann, Senior Lecturer in History, University of Strathclyde

Sam Graeme Beaton, joint honours student in Slavonic Studies and Central & East European Studies, University of Glasgow

Marta Becquet, MPhil candidate in Polish Studies, University of Glasgow

Amy Mackinnon, joint honours student in Politics with Russian, University of Glasgow

Jitka Perinova, PhD candidate in Czech Studies, University of Glasgow

Izabela Rudzka, MPhil candidate in Polish Studies, University of Glasgow

Albin Sybera, PhD candidate in Czech Studies, University of Glasgow

Hana Tomsu, MPhil candidate in Slavonic Studies, University of Glasgow

Paul Vickers, PhD candidate in Polish Studies, University of Glasgow

Report by the European and External Relations Committee of the Scottish Parliament:
www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/europe/reports-11/eur11-01-vol1.htm

"Article 227: The Committee is concerned about the poor linguistic performance of the Scottish population compared with much of Europe, including regions whose populations are bilingual (in two native languages), and recommends that language skills be promoted in order to encourage a culture of internationalisation in Scotland, and to equip young people to compete on a level playing field (Recommendation 6)."

Language Matters More and More – position statement by the British Academy on the importance of language learning – February 2011

www.all-languages.org.uk/uploads/files/Press%20Releases/LMmm%20-%20A%20Position%20Statement.pdf

2010 report by the confederation of British Industry found that 36% of companies recruit employees specifically for their language skills.

p.48: ' 72% of UK international trade is with non-English speaking countries – but it is estimated that only 1 in 10 of the UK workforce can speak a foreign language. The CBI/Pertemps employment trends survey 2008 showed that 74% of employers are concerned about school leavers lack of modern languages skills...'

www.cbi.org.uk/pdf/20090406-cbi-education-and-skills-survey-2009.pdf

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01395>

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