

**PE1395/S**

**PETITION 1395 - Targeted Funding for Lesser Taught Languages and Cultures**

**The Petitioners' Response to the Scottish Funding Council Letter of 20th December 2012**

We note with concern that the Scottish Funding Council has confirmed, in its letter of 20th December 2012, that it has no mechanism of how to ascertain unmet demand for courses that have been closed down and are no longer being offered. The Scottish Funding Council states that "the universities will have an eye to emerging demand for courses or subjects that are not on offer and will often (sic!) take up those opportunities where they perceive that there is sufficient demand to create a viable programme of study."

It is common knowledge that students do not apply to universities for courses or subjects which are not on offer.

We are disappointed that the latest SFC statement is not based on factual evidence. This seems to be in line with previous statements, issued by the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government, which were often based on inaccurate or incorrect information, as we have shown in our previous submissions to the Petitions' Committee.

As we said in our submission of 15 November 2012, it is a matter of concern that the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council have decided not to provide long term strategic protection of the language-based study of the culture of Central and Eastern Europe, disregarding the factual arguments about the political, economic and cultural importance of this subject area of Scotland. All the arguments why it is important that they should do so are summarised in our submission of 15 November 2012.

We feel that the Government and its agencies have a duty to make sure that the short-term commercial principle, on the basis of which Scottish Universities are now primarily run, does not damage the strategic interests of the country.

We think that the Scottish Government should protect an economically, politically and culturally important subject which has to date been taught only at one Scottish university and is endangered by commercial pressures. Links between Scotland and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are growing, there is a growing demand for specialists in this field and this demand will not be met if the Scottish Government does not act to protect this subject. Valuable employment opportunities will be lost.

We would like to thank the Petitions' Committee for taking this important issue seriously and would like to ask its members to take whatever action is still available to persuade the Scottish Government to act in this matter. There is no doubt that if the Scottish Government takes no action to protect this strategically important area of study, it will disappear, to the economic, political and cultural detriment of Scotland.

Glasgow, 25th January 2013