

## Press release

Kerpen-Loogh – 25 June 2013

# German Society for Pre- and Protohistory (DGUF) hands over its petition against the cuts and the planned axing of NRW Federal State funding for archaeology and the preservation of historic buildings and monuments



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*The DGUF has today handed over its petition against the cuts and the planned axing of the Federal State funding for archaeology and the preservation of ancient buildings and monuments in North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) to Carina Gödecke (SPD), President of the NRW Parliament, and Michael Groschek (SPD), Minister for Building, Housing, City Development and Transport. More than 27,000 people signed the petition, including over 13,000 from NRW. This petition is thus the largest collection of signatures ever against cuts in the budget for the preservation of historic monuments in Germany.*

"The message has hit home," said Carina Gödecke. It would receive serious consideration in the 2014 budget deliberations in the autumn. The DGUF petition demands that the Federal State funding for archaeology and the preservation of buildings and monuments be neither axed nor cut. The NGO demands that, in the long term, the funding provided by the Federal State of NRW itself to support archaeology and the preservation of buildings and monuments be kept at the level of the 2012 fiscal year at least. In this year 11.3 million euros were available (lines 883 60 and 893 60 in the NRW Federal State budget of the Ministry for Building, Housing, City Development and Transport). The funding for 2013 has already been cut by 2 million euros.

At the hand-over, Dr. Frank Siegmund, initiator of the petition, asked Michael Groschek what specific comments he was able to make about the plans to cut the budget. Groschek referred to the sovereignty of parliament and the work currently being undertaken in the committees and said he was obliged to await the outcome. The Minister emphasised, however, that: "The government of NRW is determined to convert subsidy programmes to credit funding". Rengert Elburg, Chairperson of the DGUF, pointed out that loans were not a suitable tool for many private owners of historic buildings, and especially not for the preservation of archaeological sites, because digs did not make a profit from which a loan could be repaid. Michael Groschek replied: "We are aware of the special difficulty in relation to the preservation of historic sites. We have no intention of constructing an illusion". In this context he also protested against "being told what to do by the Federal Government". This was obviously an allusion to the statements by Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, who recently criticised the fact that NRW had withdrawn its support for the preservation of historic monuments as a "misguided priority".

Carina Gödecke emphasised the link between funding and the ongoing amendment of the law on the protection of historic buildings and monuments. At the beginning of June the DGUF was one of the parties consulted on this. In addition, the NGO had also



made concrete proposals as to how the legal situation and funding could be significantly improved.

While the petition was being handed over, Frank Siegmund pointed out that the current bill meant the Federal State would give away an estimated 16 million euros annually. Carina Gödecke and Michael Groschek agreed that this assessment needed to be speedily examined at the specialist level.

Diane Scherzler, DGUF Vice Chairperson, reminded the President of the NRW parliament and the Minister that the cultural assets in today's NRW belonged to humanity, and that NRW had a responsibility which extended far beyond the borders of the Federal State itself. Many signatories to the petition had also emphasised this in their comments. Carina Gödecke rejected this point of view - the primary concern of the NRW government had to be NRW. More than 1,800 signatures came from abroad, and all five continents were represented. The signatories from abroad expressed their consternation about the unprecedented austerity plans of the Federal State.

Now that 27,000 signatures had been collected and the DGUF had proposed concrete solutions which also took account of the tight financial situation in the Federal State, the ball was now in the court of each individual member of parliament. How they play it will be seen in the budget deliberations for 2014. The DGUF will maintain a critical watch on this.

#### **Further information:**

A selection of comments made by the signatories, more on the supporters of the petition, background information on the finances and the legislation, and press photos can be found at [www.DGUF.de](http://www.DGUF.de).

#### **German Society for Pre- and Protohistory / Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ur- und Frühgeschichte e.V. (DGUF)**

The DGUF has more than 700 members and is thus Germany's largest national association working in the field of primeval and early history which brings together scientists and those interested in archaeology.

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