

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 346 (2013)¹ Regions and territories with special status in Europe

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe,

1. Recognising:

a. that Europe's unique character and strength lies in its diversity;

b. the huge progress the continent has made in developing a large variety of constitutional and political systems to accommodate this diversity;

c. that Europe has a pioneering role in the field of multi-level governance, in developing, articulating and defining the working methods and complex inter-relationships of democratic governance at several different levels (local, intermediate, regional, national and supra-national);

2. Convinced that:

a. much of the future of the European space, including its future peaceful and prosperous development, will depend on making greater progress in conflict prevention and resolution, which will require the political will to pursue peaceful political dialogue, to move forward on identifying and negotiating legal and constitutional solutions, and to develop satisfactory models of decentralised democratic governance for regions with specific issues and identities;

b. the regional level of self-government remains an under-exploited structure for the political and economic

development of European States and for responding to the legitimate democratic demands of their citizens;

c. special regional autonomy status can be an effective counterbalance to secessionist tendencies;

3. Recognising that the special status enjoyed by regions of some European States has brought stability and prosperity to those regions;

4. Bearing in mind:

a. the 2002 Helsinki Declaration on Regional Self-Government; and

b. the 2009 Council of Europe Reference Framework for Regional Democracy;

5. Welcoming the resolve of the Committee of Ministers to seek peaceful political solutions to European conflicts,

6. Therefore asks the Committee of Ministers to:

a. invite member States to make greater use of the special status model, as a realistic option for a negotiated solution to regional territorial issues, including frozen conflicts;

b. involve the Congress, the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) in this work;

c. examine how special regional status can contribute to addressing the territorial issues faced by countries with which it is co-operating in the framework of the Council of Europe's policy towards neighbouring regions;

d. include, in the context of its political dialogue with the Congress, a transversal examination of the conditions for successful regional autonomy.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 30 October 2013, and adopted by the Congress on 31 October 2013, 3rd Sitting (see Document CPR(25)2, explanatory memorandum); rapporteur: Bruno Marziano, Italy (R, SOC).