

The Bureau of the Congress

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5 June 2025

Terms of reference for a committee activity

Committee on Governance, Civic Engagement and the Environment

Action required : for decision

¹ This document is classified as confidential until it has been examined by the Bureau of the Congress.

Committee on Governance, Civic Engagement and the Environment

TERMS OF REFERENCE 1/2025/GOV

REPORT ☒ EVENT ☐

Rapporteurs: (to be appointed)

TOPIC: Regions and territories with special status in Europe

Political objective	Relevance to the political priorities of the Council of Europe and the Congress	Proposed follow up	Timeline (Terms of Reference, Rapporteur, decisions by the Committee, adoption by the Congress, co-operation with other institutions etc.)	Implementation requirements (expert, missions, interpretation, Secretariat involvement, etc.)
<p>Strong and dynamic regional identities are a crucial element both for a region's development and vitality, and for the development of European integration as a whole.</p> <p>Regions with special status exist in several member states of the Council of Europe. Such regions have specific, guaranteed powers (e.g. legislative, administrative, financial) that are more extensive than those held by other regions.</p> <p>They are established with a view to responding to the particular needs of certain territories whether because of their history, geographical position, or culture or linguistic characteristics.</p> <p>Granting special status to a specific region can often secure</p>	<p>Congress documents:</p> <p>Resolution 493 (2023) "Delivering on the Reykjavik Summit: revised Congress priorities, working procedures and structures"</p> <p>Congress Resolution 488 (2022), Recommendation 483 (2022) "Regional identities: promoting dialogue and diversity in unity"</p> <p>Congress Resolution 398 (2016), Recommendation 385 (2016) "Autonomy and borders in an evolving Europe"</p> <p>Congress Resolution 390 (2015) "Trends in regionalisation in Council of Europe member States"</p>	<p>Dissemination of the materials to national, local, and regional authorities of the member States.</p> <p>Presentation to associations of local and regional authorities.</p> <p>Follow-up through the co-operation activities of the Congress, through its Centre of Expertise on Good Governance.</p> <p>Follow-up and report to the Bureau and Governance Committee on the Committee of Ministers' response to the recommendation.</p>	<p>Draft Terms of Reference approved by the Governance Committee (25 March 2025).</p> <p>Rapporteurs to be appointed.</p> <p>Approval of the terms of reference by the Bureau.</p> <p>Finalisation of the expert's contribution to the report.</p> <p>Debate and approval of the preliminary draft report, resolution, and recommendation at the meeting of the Governance Committee.</p> <p>Presentation and adoption of preliminary draft report, resolution and recommendation at one of the Congress Sessions in 2026.</p>	<p>Preparation of the expert contract.</p> <p>Translation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - draft explanatory memorandum; - draft resolution/recommendation; - other related documents for the preparation of the report. <p>Rapporteur and expert:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - travel and subsistence to present the texts at internal and external meetings; - Secretariat missions.

<p>or make stronger the territorial integrity of a state by making room for legitimate aspirations in favour of different degrees of autonomy (e.g. preservation of regional identity or economic and administrative advantages) while cementing the principle of national unity within the state.</p> <p>Experience shows that only dialogue and negotiation, with a shared desire to make progress, can resolve crises between nation states and regions. Granting special status can also allow for smooth integration or re-integration of a region or a territory into the national constitutional framework, sometimes after a major conflict.</p> <p>Special status autonomy is developed against the background of and taking into consideration three main principles: subsidiarity, territorial cohesion and solidarity.</p> <p>The Congress adopted a report “Regions and territories with special status in Europe” in 2013, and the Congress Chamber of Regions held a debate on this subject on 16 October 2024.</p> <p>Following this, a new report will take into account the important developments that have taken place since 2013 and will enlarge the knowledge base concerning the specificities of such regions.</p>	<p>Resolution 373 (2014) “Inter-regional cooperation in Europe: trends and prospects”</p> <p>Congress Resolution 361 (2013), Recommendation 346 (2013) “Regions and territories with special status in Europe”</p> <p>Resolution 349 (2012), Recommendation 331 (2012) “The governance of macro-regions in Europe”</p> <p>Resolution 293 (2009), Recommendation 278 (2009) “Regions with legislative powers: towards multi-level governance”</p> <p>“Reference framework for regional democracy” (2009)</p> <p>Resolution 268 (2008) “The need for regional cultural identity”</p> <p>Other Council of Europe documents and initiatives :</p> <p>European Charter for regional or minority languages (ETS. No 148, 1998)</p> <p>European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (ETS No. 106), its Additional Protocol (ETS No.159), Protocol No. 2 (ETS No.169) and Protocol No. 3 (CETS No.206).</p> <p>European Cultural Convention (ETS No.018)</p> <p>“United around our values”, Reykjavík Declaration (2023), 4th</p>			
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<p>Some have been policy-based or constitutional changes designed to deliver on regional aspirations and opportunities. Others have been in response to political circumstances or tensions, which have been resolved to varying degrees, and may be ongoing.</p> <p>The new report will examine how these changes of circumstance have come about, and whether any trends can be observed, or lessons learned.</p>	<p>Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe</p>			
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