



Special Session Proposal

National Regions in regional development – National, ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic renaissance of European regions and identities

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Abstract

Although there is certainly no consensus among the experts of regional science on the definition of the word 'region', it is probably universally agreed that 'identity' plays a key role in the question on what makes a region today. Regional identity is also the main reason on why regionalism plays an important role as a pillar of territorial administration and the principle of subsidiarity in many European countries, as well as in the European Union itself. The European Union has many types of 'official' regions that sometimes are well distinguishable from their neighbouring areas due to their characteristics (see national, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural characteristics), so sometimes they have developed a regional identity. And there are many other geographical areas in the European Union, which do have a strong character and identity even without any administrative competences.

The character and identity of many of these areas is made often by the fact that in terms of population they are dominated by national or ethnic community groups that are in a minority situation in the encompassing state. These communities are not only special sources of the cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe but could also be regarded as a resource of regional development. The characteristic, historically rooted traditions, the culture, language and religion of these communities are also important elements of the social and territorial cohesion of Europe. However, these possible functions of these regions and areas are not really acknowledged and explored, these areas tend to suffer many times from linguistic, cultural, social, and economical asymmetries, disadvantages and discrimination, that makes life more difficult for the people living there.

A certain increase of political and public interest towards these regions and areas can be experienced currently (see for example two successful current Citizens' Initiative of the EU: one for "National Regions" and another for "Minority Safe Pack"). Therefore, it can be worth dealing specifically with these issues in the context of regional science as well, in line with the objective of our special session. The Session is open to presentations on this topic, any ideas related to identifying, analyzing, and development of these highly interesting areas and regions all across Europe.