



Declaration nr. 1

Name of the person introducing the declaration: Miguel Martínez Tomey

On behalf of the party: Chunta Aragonesista

**Declaration:** Full implementation of article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty

Whereas:

- The new Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union aims at *“reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions”* and to do so establishes that *“particular attention shall be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions.”*
- This mandate for special attention is made in binding terms for both EU institutions and member States , not only because of the general clause of sincere cooperation, under which Member States shall take any appropriate measure general or particular, to ensure fulfillment of the obligations under the Treaties (Art. 4.3 of the TEU), but also because under Article 175 of the TFEU: *“Member States shall conduct their economic policies and shall coordinate them in such a way as, in addition, to attain the objectives set out in Article 174”*.
- Most of the specific problems and regions considered in Article 174 have been addressed so far with limited tools and funds to tackle decisively their handicaps or, unfortunately in some cases, no specific means whatsoever were used.
- The Cohesion Policy of the European Union for the period 2014-2020 only allocates 0.27% of its budget to outermost regions and sparsely populated areas.
- Some member States, like the Spanish State, showed little or no commitment at all to these regions and areas of its territory when negotiating the Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 with the European Commission, especially with regard to the most sparsely populated areas of Aragon and Castile which, as a result, will not receive one single extra euro in order to try at least to stop their century-old decline.

The European Free Alliance declares that:

- The Spanish State as all the other member States and the European Commission should take at least the same interest and commitment to the regions and areas with permanent natural or demographic handicaps as to the rest of the cases considered by article 174 of the TFEU ;
- Specific plans, strategies and funding should be set up and adapted to the complex nature and features of each particular case in cooperation with independent experts and local and regional authorities, in order to ensure that the EU’s legal obligations under the TFEU be duly met;

The EFA deplores the continuous disregard of the EU and most of its member States for the territorial imbalances and lack of opportunities for the recovery of these areas and regions, which result in the irrecoverable loss of their population, human landscape, cultural heritage, traditions, language and identity.

Explanatory note:

Overall, the EU regional policy has managed to reduce to some extent regional disparities, but it has proven to be particularly ineffective for the regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, which remain as a sort of “shadow areas” with little or no positive reaction to the EU instruments and methods. Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty recognized the need to pay “particular attention” to them, but at least the tools and funds agreed by the Commission and the Spanish State for such purpose fall well below of what is needed for these zones, some of which have only half the population they had 100 years ago and the same population density of the subarctic regions of Sweden and Finland.