

MANIFESTO TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON HIS VISIT TO THE CITY OF LEÓN, "CRADLE OF PARLIAMENTARISM"

On the occasion of the visit of a representation of the European Parliament to the city of León, in an act of homage and recognition by the European Union to the Cortes of the Kingdom of León in 1188, the citizens of this almost forgotten medieval Kingdom want to get closer to the highest representatives of the sovereignty of the European Union, not only to recall the historical importance of the Kingdom of León and its legacy, that continues to this day, but also to ask the European legislature to pay special attention to the socioeconomic situation of the current provinces (NUT 3), which were the base of that Kingdom, Salamanca, Zamora and León, and which suffer a constant loss of population and economic activity and the official statistical forecasts predict that this loss will increase in the next decade if they are not adopted urgently. measures to avoid it.

The civil society of the Leonese Region, represented by a large group of cultural and neighborhood associations, without any political ties, which integrate more than twenty thousand people and keep alive the cultural and social heritage of its royal past, intends to show the representatives of the EU Parliament the value of that legacy, and at the same time transmit our deep concern for the socio-economic and identity crisis that we suffer and that grows every year.

A. THE LEGACY OF THE KINGDOM OF LEON

The year 910 A.D. marked the birth of the Kingdom of León, with the definitive transfer of the royal seat of the Asturian kingdom from the city of Oviedo to León. The Kingdom of León continued to have independent kings until 1230, when King Ferdinand III of León unified the crowns of the Kingdoms of León and Castile.

For centuries, the history of the Kingdom of León and its legacy of rights has been concealed, despite its coat of arms being one of the quarters of the coat of arms of Spain. With the commemoration of the 1,100th anniversary of the birth of the Kingdom in 2010, the value of this transcendental legacy has begun to be highlighted. The Kingdom of León's relations with other European kingdoms were constant throughout its history, with marital links in territories as far away as Poland and Armenia, military alliances in the wars of the Reconquest, reaching its maximum territorial and military hegemony with the coronation in 1135 of Alfonso VII in the city of León as Emperor, Imperator Totius Hispaniae, by the nuncio of Pope Innocent II. He was the

only Emperor crowned as such in Spain, to whom all the kings and nobles of the Iberian Peninsula and southern France, including the caliphs of the Muslim taifas, paid vassalage in one way or another. Shortly afterwards, **the Kingdom of León gave rise to the Kingdoms of Portugal (1143) and Castile (1157).**

But the importance of the Kingdom of León and the legacy it has left us is centred especially on the cultural and legal-social conquests. In addition to the Cortes of 1188, there are some achievements of particular relevance whose effect has lasted to the present day.

- **The legal protection of women:** Women enjoyed rights superior to those of any other kingdom of their time, judicially guaranteed, participating directly in local and kingdom government. Their rights are set out in different regulations (decrees), from the Charter of León of 1017 to the Cortes of 1188, which expressly recognise their right to inheritance, including that of the Kingdom and participation in the "neighbourhood councils", a system of open and participatory government of the towns, which survives today, expressly recognised by Spanish legislation on local government (the Open Council, in which women were already involved before the Romanisation of the peninsula, as recorded in the chronicles of Roman historians. The daughters of kings received important legacies that allowed them to be independent and many of them took an active part in government, with women being the main advisors to kings such as Alfonso VI and Alfonso VII. This legal system allowed Urraca I (1081-1126), daughter of the former and mother of the latter, to ascend to the throne of the Kingdom of León, and her sister Teresa, as Countess of Portugal, to fight for the title of Queen (a title that would be recognised by her son, Afonso Henriques, the first King of Portugal, her cousin Alfonso VII of León). Urraca reigned in her own name ahead of her two husbands and rebelled against the ill-treatment of her second husband, Alfonso I the Battler, King of Aragon, even obtaining the annulment of her marriage (although the cause that was admitted was the consanguinity of the two spouses). Urraca was the first to include in her diplomas and charters an express reference to women's rights, in the charter she granted to the inhabitants of Santiago de Compostela in 1105, to both men and women ("cunctis habitatoribus uiris ac feminis"). Other queens kept their royal signatures alongside those of their husbands, and the last private King of León, Alfonso IX, named his daughters as heirs to the kingdom instead of his son, Fernando III, who usurped the crown from them.



Medieval miniature depicting Queen Urraca I of León.
Source [Wikimedia commons](#).

- **Respect for religious "freedom"**. In the context of the religious war for the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Muslim caliphs, the three monotheistic religions that coexisted on the peninsula - Muslim, Jewish and Christian - were allowed to coexist. This respect for religious beliefs and practices had its greatest exponent in King Alfonso VI, who was recognised as King of the three religions after his conquest of the Taifa of Toledo in 1085, guaranteeing the coexistence of the three religions in the Decree called "Carta inter christianos et judeos".
- In 1218, Alfonso IX of León founded the **Estudio Superior de Salamanca**, elevated to the category of University by Alfonso X in 1254, being the first and most important of the Spanish Christian Universities and a model for later ones in Spain and America, and also the oldest University in Europe.
- **The promotion of the Camino de Santiago**, the main route of entry for European cultural currents and the departure of Iberian ones to the rest of Europe, with the Crown's decisive support for conventual institutions and the construction of churches and cathedrals. It is also maintained that Alfonso IX of León is the creator of **European travellers' law**, with his Decrees for the protection of foreign pilgrims, medieval rights from which passports and the protection of travellers in transit were born.

In a kingdom with this tradition, which maintained the council government of towns and cities, Alfonso IX came to the throne at the age of just seventeen, inheriting a kingdom weakened by the war with Castile. In order to strengthen it and enlist the support of an already thriving bourgeois class, in the spring of **1188** he convened a Curia Regia, a Cortes held in the cloister of the Royal Collegiate Church of San Isidoro in León. These Cortes were attended, for the first time in history, by representatives of the towns and cities, together with the traditional estates of the nobility and the clergy. The effective presence of the common people can be seen in the Decrees themselves, issued "***cum electis civibus ex singulis civitatibus***". The Cortes recognised important rights for all citizens and the agreed nature of the King's power, rights that can be considered a prelude to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself. This means that the Cortes of León of 1188 are considered **the first "parliamentary" Cortes in the world**, the first with representatives of the people. The Cortes of León of 1188 were continued in the Constitution given at the Council of Santiago in 1194, in the Cortes of Benavente in 1202 and in the Cortes held again in León in 1208. Although courts were held in other kingdoms a few years later (Aragon in 1218, Germany in 1232, England in 1265, France in 1302, etc.), the singularity of the León courts lies in their primacy and in the participation of the common people and the recognition of their rights.

For all these reasons, in 2011, with the endorsement of the Royal Academy of History for the work of José Manuel Martínez Fernández, secretary of the now defunct Fundación León Real, the Junta de Castilla y León awarded the city of León the official title of "**Cradle of Parliamentarism**". In 2013, UNESCO incorporated the Decrees of these Cortes as **Memory of the World**, at the proposal of the Spanish Government by the Director General of Books, Rogelio Blanco Martínez. This international recognition is now completed with the visit of representatives of the Parliament of the European Union to the place where those first Cortes were held.



Image of a page of the Decrees, issued by the Cortes of 1188 and the King and the representatives of the clergy and the nobility on the one hand and the representatives of the towns and villages on the other.

B. THE CURRENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE 'LEONESE REGION'.

From 1833 to 2007, the former Kingdom of León was reduced to three provinces which formed the Region of León, Salamanca, Zamora and León (NUTS 3), currently part of the autonomous community of Castilla y León (NUT 2), the only historical region in Spain without its own self-government. For years, these three provinces have suffered the greatest loss of population in the whole country, in percentage and absolute terms. In the last fifty years, these provinces have lost 248,600 inhabitants, and now have almost half the population they had a century ago, while the population of the country as a whole has practically tripled. This is unique in the whole of the European Union. With a very ageing population and no job prospects for young people, the forecasts of the National Statistics Institute (INE) for the year 2037 maintain this trend, with Zamora - 16.5%; León - 8.6% and Salamanca - 6%. Demographic decline and ageing make these provinces, along with some of their neighbours to the west, the 'geriatric' of Europe.

The economic data are equally catastrophic. According to the labour force survey for the fourth quarter of 2022, the activity rate in the three provinces is well below the national average (almost 8 points in Zamora and León, 6 in Salamanca); in parallel with an employment rate also below the national average. In relation to the Urban Indicators 2022, the city of León has the second lowest activity rate in Spain, 50.2%, with Salamanca occupying the third worst position. These three provinces also head the unemployment data of the Community and the city of Ponferrada, in the province of León, has the worst data in the Labour Force Survey of the last quarter of 2022. The Region

of Leon is also at the bottom of the country in GDP growth: in 2021 it has grown below 4%, when the national average has been 5.5%. This situation is particularly serious in 'La Raya' with Portugal, the longest and oldest border in Europe, which is the most depopulated and deindustrialised in the whole of the EU.

The old Kingdom of León, cradle of parliamentarism, pioneer in the defence of women's rights, religious freedom and international law, is not only suffering the oblivion of its historical legacy, but also a real "demotanasia", the demographic death caused by public policies of concentration of business activity in certain regions to the detriment of others. The acute socio-economic crisis affecting most of its former territory is particularly critical in the provinces of León, Zamora and Salamanca. While their material and human resources have contributed and continue to contribute to the development of the richest regions of the country, the León Region is languishing demographically and economically.

The case of the province of León is particularly alarming. Since the 1970s, it has lost a quarter of its population, and by 2050 it is expected to have half the population it had in 1970. With the end of coal mining, with a management of MINER funds that has not generated the industrial reconversion of the mining regions that was promised, it has been joined by the abrupt closure of all its thermal power stations, without any action to replace this industrial activity. The total disappearance of this sector has meant that many localities have lost almost all their inhabitants, with a reduction of more than 50% in the number of county seats. This has led to the loss of value of their heritage, with some town councils selling dozens of flats for as little as €3,000 each, and not without difficulty. The economic crisis of 2008 also took away the only financial institution based in the town. A very low level of industrialisation in other sectors and a lower demand for labour in agriculture and livestock farming explains the constant loss of population in a province with housing and services designed to house almost twice as many inhabitants as it has now.

Faced with this situation, young people from León, with a solid education, have to emigrate to other regions or countries in search of work; and an increasingly ageing population, with no capacity for entrepreneurship, sees its villages die, without new activities to generate employment and sustainable development. This region is already the oldest in the whole of the European Union and the city of León has been described as the 'Detroit' of Spain because of its economic decline. Political decisions, taken outside the historical region, do not envisage effective measures to reverse this situation,

distancing it from the social and territorial cohesion that are the objective of the European Union's policies and budgets.

We therefore call on the Community institutions to directly promote measures which, within their sphere of competence, can contribute to reversing this situation. We also call on the Governments of Spain and Castilla y León to require the implementation of a special plan for the Region of León to achieve sustainable development and to converge with the most developed regions of our country and the EU.

C. DEMAND FOR MEASURES TO TRY TO REVERSE THE ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS IN THE LEONESE REGION

In order to achieve the territorial and social cohesion advocated by the EU, it is not only necessary to act in territories with very low population density and income levels, but also to prevent in those areas where there has been a constant loss of population of such magnitude that the territory could lose half of its inhabitants in 50 years.

The civil society of León therefore urges the European Union, represented in the visit of the European Parliament to León on 30 June and 1 July 2023, to develop direct regulatory measures to help stem the socio-economic crisis in our region. We put forward some ideas that we believe can contribute to this from the regulatory activity of the EU institutions.

1. CONTROLLED DEPLOYMENT OF RENEWABLES AND COMPENSATION FOR CLEAN ENERGY GENERATION.

The climate neutrality objective set by the EU for 2050, reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, cannot mean sacrificing some territories in favour of those that consume more energy.

Since the Commission presented its "Target 55" package of measures on 14 July 2021 to adapt the EU's legislative framework on climate and energy to these objectives, various regulations have been issued, with the involvement of the European Parliament. However, as far as we know, this legislation does not include specific measures to ensure that the territories that will host large renewable energy production plants receive direct benefits from them.

The deployment of renewable energies must be carried out, on the one hand, in a way that is compatible with the conservation of the natural and social heritage, and on the other hand, by reverting part of the wealth generated in the territory where the renewable energy generation plants are installed, in order to activate its economic activity and overcome demographic decline.

The construction of large electricity generation facilities using photovoltaic and wind power technology or plants to produce green hydrogen generates environmental benefits for society as a whole, direct economic benefits for a few, but direct damage to the territories where they are located. It has been noted that these large installations generate little stable employment in the area and damage other sustainable development alternatives, as well as affecting local ecosystems and consuming a large amount of water in the production of hydrogen, in competition with local agriculture.

These damages must be compensated for in order to avoid turning the areas where they are located into energy colonies of the most populated and industrialised ones. In Spain, areas in demographic decline are being taken advantage of for the deployment of large renewable energy plants, with financial compensation only for the direct owners of the land that will house them, which will not even cover the cost of dismantling them when their useful life is over, and without compensating the surrounding area, which will also suffer the effects of these installations.

We therefore **urge the European Parliament to regulate specific measures to compensate the provinces (NUT 3) that host these large renewable electricity generation plants and to guarantee their decommissioning when their useful life is exhausted, as well as to not allow the creation of these plants in territories with some type of Community environmental protection that is incompatible with these large installations, such as Biosphere Reserves.**

Regulation at EU level could actively contribute to overcoming these problems:

1.1. Establish an economic compensation fund in favour of provinces generating green energy.

The regions that produce clean energy sacrifice their territory in which these large installations are located, whether they are dams to generate hydroelectric, photovoltaic, wind power, etc. These plants produce energy that is consumed far away from the place of generation and are operated by companies whose fiscal domicile is also not the place where they

produce the energy. The neighbours directly affected do not even benefit from cheaper electricity, and we also contribute to the cost of transport and the loss of energy that this entails. In addition, the surrounding territory is also affected in one way or another by these installations. An increase in depopulation has been noted in the localities directly affected by these installations and, when the number of plants is very large, as is the case for example in León, where new projects have been presented to install almost 2,000MW, the effect extends to almost the entire province, especially in the tourism and agri-food sectors. It is necessary to compensate for the sacrifice of these territories with economic resources capable of promoting and generating sustainable economic activities to retain and attract population.

The European Union could impose the creation of a special fund to compensate regions that generate green energy. In Spain, the so-called "energy tax" existed until 1985, which was levied on the provinces according to the amount of electricity generated in each one; its abolition was not compensated, to the detriment of the least industrialised provinces, which produce the most energy. Imposing that a percentage of the VAT levied on energy consumption be paid to the provincial governments (NUTS 3), linked to their reinvestment in projects that generate sustainable economic activities in the affected regions, seems to be an appropriate way to ensure a certain return to the affected territories.

1.2. Guarantee the decommissioning of installations once they have reached the end of their useful life through a "restoration fund" imposed and generated by the EU.

Wind and photovoltaic installations and all the machinery needed to generate energy have a limited lifespan, estimated at an average of 25 years. Once this useful life has been exhausted, it is necessary to remove the equipment and restore the land that has housed it, where metal structures, large concrete blocks, etc. have been placed. The cost of this dismantling is enormous.

Although it is the responsibility of the companies that have installed and/or operated them to bear these costs, mechanisms must be put in place to guarantee this operation, even in the event that the operating companies go bankrupt. In León and other mining provinces we have already seen how the dumps generated by coal mining have not been restored by the extracting companies and now significant amounts of public money have to be allocated for this, for example, 150 million euros from the Just Energy Transition funds.

This must be prevented from happening again by guaranteeing sufficient financial resources for the decommissioning of these installations and the restoration of the land. To this end, it is proposed that the creation of a monetary fund to meet these costs be imposed by Community legislation. All companies operating these new installations should be obliged to set up this restoration fund, contributing a percentage of their gross annual turnover, sufficient to cover the cost of returning the land on which the plants have been located to its former state. This fund could be collected and managed by the EU for all EU countries.



Measures should be put in place to ensure that the economic benefits of large renewable energy plants are returned directly to the affected territory and to guarantee the withdrawal of the installations by the company that operates them, once their useful life has expired.

1.3. Reserving space on transmission and distribution grids for self-consumption facilities of general interest, especially for irrigating farmland.

The progressive development of electricity generation facilities for self-consumption is encountering the problem of saturation of the transmission and distribution networks from the place of generation to the place of consumption. The capacity of the lines is rapidly being absorbed to the point of exhaustion by large installations generating electricity for sale to the grid.

This prevents smaller installations for self-consumption by other productive activities from being able to install their own generation plants and sell the surplus production they can generate at certain times to cover consumption costs when consumption exceeds production capacity at other times. This is preventing, for example, irrigation communities from having to undertake larger installations than they would need if they could market the surplus at certain times, in order to have the maximum amount of their own energy available in the months when they need it to operate their irrigation pumps. This problem can occur in other industries or

services that are considered to be of general interest, such as certain industries, hospitals, etc.

Community legislation should impose an obligation on Member States to reserve sufficient capacity in electricity transmission grids for self-consumption installations with surpluses to cover grid consumption when necessary. Also, when necessary, existing grids should be extended to guarantee the necessary capacity for installations linked to activities of public interest.

1.5. Adequately assess the compatibility of solar and photovoltaic installations with environmental protection and sustainable development in the areas where large energy generation facilities are to be installed.

The necessary deployment of renewable energies cannot entail the sacrifice of natural areas whose preservation is essential to guarantee biodiversity and the development of other sustainable economic activities in rural areas. The fight against climate change cannot be waged at the expense of the environment, which the European Union has been working to protect almost since it was founded. Simplifying the procedures for granting authorisations for large renewable energy plants cannot mean that they can be located anywhere in our territory. The principle of not causing significant damage to the environment and the right of rural inhabitants, however few there may be in some places, to remain in their villages and to preserve and improve their way of life, cannot be infringed by the need to change our energy model.

We therefore believe that a very precise regulation is needed at Community level, which establishes insurmountable red flags to ensure the compatibility of large energy generation plants with the safeguarding of the environment and sustainable development wherever they are installed and in their areas of influence. We believe that minimum distances should be established between these plants and population centres to avoid direct damage caused by constant noise, radiation or other factors derived from these installations. And it should be directly prohibited to locate in areas with a level of environmental protection that is incompatible with this type of large installations, such as areas declared Biosphere Reserves, ZEPA areas, for example.

2. SPECIAL VAT FOR INDUSTRIES LOCATED IN LESS POPULATED REGIONS

The development of the least populated regions and of those that are losing population with the disappearance of their main economic activities, as is the case of the provinces of the former Kingdom of León, from Asturias to Badajoz, especially on the Spanish-Portuguese border, requires direct measures to benefit the establishment of industries in these areas. Rather than aid for local entrepreneurship, which is very scarce due to the ageing of the population, it is necessary to attract productive investment to the smaller towns and villages with a loss of population and to encourage the development of the few existing ones. One way to achieve this is for **products manufactured in these small towns to be taxed at a lower rate**. In addition to encouraging the establishment of industries in these localities, this helps to compensate for marketing and transport costs, which are generally higher in less developed areas, as they are further away from logistical hubs and places of consumption.

Value added tax (VAT) is a Community tax applied throughout the European Union. There is a special reduced rate for the outermost regions of the Union. It is proposed **to apply the same rate to the industrial production and manufactures of companies whose registered office and production sites, are located in localities with a population of less than 1,000 inhabitants.**

3. RAIL AND ROAD NETWORKS CONNECTING TO THE EUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORK

The west of Spain and in particular the Leon region, which together with Extremadura forms the central inland block, are being left behind in the rail and road transport networks, in particular the Trans-European Transport Network. There is no overall planning that takes into account the importance of the "rack/border" effect of these territories with their Portuguese neighbours. On the other hand, road connections with Portugal are seriously deficient between the two States and rail connections are non-existent between the Portuguese region of Tras-os-Montes and the Spanish region of Zamora. The Spanish Government's investments are relegating the corridors of western Spain in terms of deadlines and budgets, in favour of the more populated areas of the country (on the Mediterranean Axis, the "Y" of the Basque Country and the radial connections with Madrid).

The structuring of this territory requires closer deadlines, which guarantee the competitiveness and driving capacity of the economy, and the development of two railway lines, which are integrated into the European transport rail network, in the Atlantic Corridor: **the connection to Galicia**

via Ourense-Ponferrada-León, and from there to the Cantabrian ports; and the reopening of the old **Vía de la Plata**, extending it to connect the ports of Huelva and Gijón, to link up with the Gijón-Nantes sea motorway.



West-East Atlantic corridor via Monforte de Lemos-Ponferrada-León and Pontevedra Zamora; and South-Cantabrian Atlantic corridor, Huelva to Gijón

Opening to freight and passenger traffic the so-called "Vía de la Plata", between Astorga and Mérida, extended to connect with the ports of Huelva and Gijón, would make a decisive contribution to the development of all the provinces of western Spain and would **boost the Gijón-Nantes motorway of the sea**, which reduces transport time, costs and CO2 emissions in transport to central and northern Europe from the Iberian peninsula or from third countries. On the other hand, the exit from Galicia via Ourense to León would also boost the ports of Avilés, Gijón and Santander, and improve the connection with La Rioja-Zaragoza-Barcelona.

It is also essential for the survival of the Portuguese-Spanish border regions **to speed up rail connections with Portugal**: opening a new rail connection from the Portuguese region of Trás-os-Montes to Zamora and

improving the line linking Fuentes de Oñoro (Salamanca) to Vilar Formoso (Beira Alta).



Railway links we propose:

- In red: improvement of the Monter de Lemos-Ponferrada-León line.
- In yellow: non-operational and partially dismantled sections of the Via de la Plata line between Astorga and Plasencia.
- In green, proposed new section connecting Portugal with Spain, on the Porto-Bragança line in Sanabria and/or Zamora.



On the other hand, Spanish roads are seriously deficient in these three provinces. **The former mining area of El Bierzo has been demanding for decades a direct connection to Asturias and Orense with high-**

capacity roads. The structuring of the communication networks in the core of the north-west area is based on two traffic distribution nodes. It is necessary to connect the city of Ponferrada (León) with high-capacity roads to the Asturian ports of Cantabria to the north and Vigo to the west, as well as with the Bragança node to the south. The bulk of the investments in this route should be focused on these connections, as it is the line with the highest demand in terms of population and industry, as well as speeding up the repair of a viaduct that collapsed a year ago in the connection with Galicia on the only high-capacity road linking El Bierzo with Galicia, the A-VI.

The connection between the Portuguese region of Tras-Os-Montes and the neighbouring Spanish provinces is extremely deficient, with roads that do not allow the circulation of articulated lorries and in many cases not even small lorries or minibuses, as is the case on the road **between the Zamora town of Puebla de Sanabria and the Portuguese town of Bragança**, where only cars can pass through the border town of Rionor. Opening this connection is a historical demand on both sides of the border, even calling for a fast road between Bragança and León.



Image Technical association of municipalities León-Bragança
 Ponferrada to Ourense motorway (red) and road links between Oporto, northern Spain and Europe (yellow), via a road between León, Bragança and León, of which the first section would be the improvement and extension of the platform between Bragança (Portugal) and Puebla de Sanabria (Spain), via Rionor (blue).

The León region of La Cabrera, which exports slate to the whole of Europe, also needs to improve its provincial road network, which is winding and narrow, which means more time, consumption and emissions in the transport of these heavy materials. It is necessary to improve the exit from this region to the west, which has to cross a pass at an altitude of 1,800 metres (Fonte da Cova), and to the north and east, extending the road to La Bañeza-León.

The improvement of this road network should be considered a priority, as it increases market sizes, the accessibility of industries in the area and the mobility of citizens. The development of more prosperous markets, the accessibility of people to new opportunities and the interconnection between almost confined regions contribute to a more harmonious territorial development.

In order **to speed up the execution of these infrastructures**, the involvement of the European Union would be decisive, through the **application of funds for this objective**. It is therefore proposed to the Community institutions, at this time to the European Parliament, to consider this need to improve the rail and road networks of western Spain as a priority within the "**CONNECT EUROPE**" **mechanism**. Community funds should be expressly allowed to be earmarked for improving communications in the least developed NUTS 3 regions in countries that no longer receive direct aid for this purpose, such as the Cohesion Funds, both from Next Generation EU funds and funds from the 21-27 Multiannual Financial Framework. In this regard, the 6 June extension of Spain's Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan foresees new milestones and objectives in the area of transport, but with a particular emphasis on improving public transport in the country's main metropolitan areas and municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. **The EU should also demand that Spain pay special attention to transport networks in areas in demographic decline, especially rural areas, such as those mentioned above.**

Improving communications networks in the least developed regions and/or those with a constant loss of population, with cross-border connections and exits to the motorways of the sea such as those mentioned above, would have a transformative effect on the economies of these territories, **achieving progress in territorial cohesion**, one of the objectives of the EU funds. Consideration should be given to improving transport mesh networks and prioritising communications in the most depressed areas in the revision of Regulation (EU) 1315/2013 on the EU guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T).

D. THE "CORTES DE LEÓN" PRIZE.

In order to spread the legacy of the Cortes of the Kingdom of León of the year 1188 as the origin of representative Parliamentarism and at the same time to promote this form of government, we propose to the European Parliament to create an International Prize that serves as recognition and

material support to the persons or entities that during the year prior to each award, have stood out in any part of the world in the active defence of Parliamentary Democracy and of the Rights and Freedoms that are proper to it.

In many parts of the world, democracy and the guarantee of Human Rights is still a goal that many people and organisations are struggling to achieve, and even in democratic countries there are dangers of regression in the respect of these values. **The "Cortes de León Prize" would serve as an express support of the Parliament of the European Union and an international recognition to those who stand out in the defence of egalitarian representative parliamentarism in any part of the world and would contribute to the success of their struggle.**

The award would be granted by the European Parliament, in accordance with the regulations to be established, and would be presented in the city of León. The Order of the Royal Banner of San Isidoro, created 875 years ago and some of whose members are presumed to have attended the Cortes of 1188, which maintains the legacy of the Parliamentary debate in the Royal Collegiate in the ceremony of the Cabezadas, could actively participate in the organisation of these awards.

León, 1 June 2023

Associations and other entities signing this manifesto
See on the website of [León Propone](#):

[Adhesiones para el Manifiesto al Parlamento Europeo. – León Propone \(leonpropone.org\)](#)