

THE EMERGENCE OF A DEMOCRATIC RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION IN EUROPE

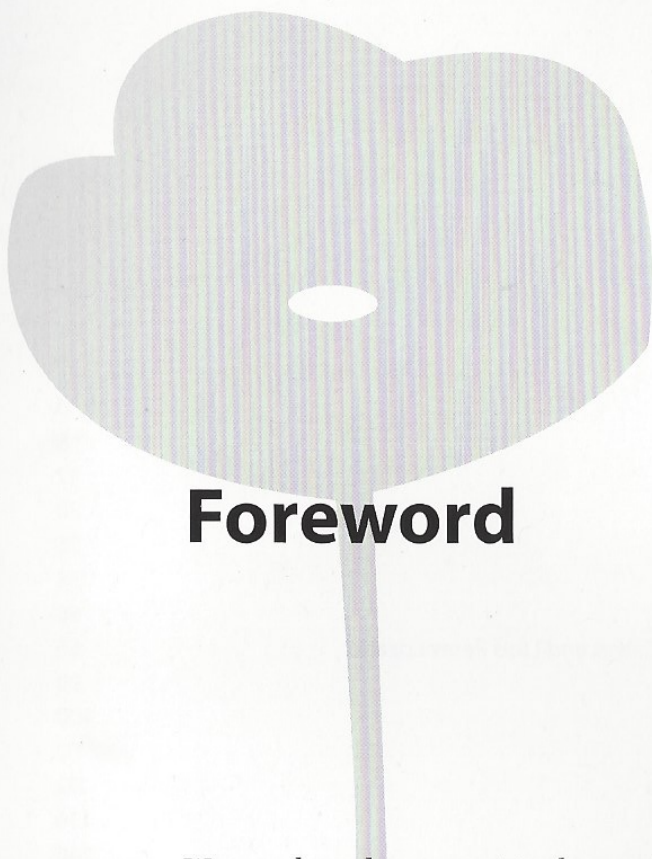
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2016



Foreword

We are pleased to present to the members of the European Free Alliance this multi-authored book on *The Emergence of a Democratic Right of Self-Determination in Europe*. Prepared under the auspices of the Centre Maurits Coppieters, this book endeavours to study the right to self-determination of peoples – a fundamental collective right. More than ever before, it is the subject of heated debate.

The Scottish referendum on September 18th, 2014, and the Catalan plebiscitary election on September 27th, 2015, exemplify the exercise of this right. Yet, the United Kingdom and Spain had two very different ways of dealing with the claim of one of its nations to freely decide their political status. The first has recognized the right to choose for Scots and the second has been attempting to thwart such a right for the Catalans.

This book goes beyond Catalonia and Scotland and presents the cases of 22 nations, which claim a right to self-determination. These case studies show a clear evolution towards a democratic right to self-determination, but they also reveal a resistance in some countries to the idea that peo-

ples should be able to determine their path towards autonomy or greater autonomy, or to independence and with ties to the European Union. Its content is diverse – it looks into the struggles of the peoples of Europe from many different perspectives, be they cultural, economic, historical, legal, political or sociological.

We would like to thank all the authors that took part in this project and provided all these perspectives. We are grateful to our friends in the Centre Maurits Coppieters, its Galician President Xabier Macias and its Flemish Director Gunther Fritz Dauwen, who trusted us to make this book happen. We are particularly thankful to our Catalan friend Ignasi Centelles who has invested much time and energy into this project.

The right to self-determination of peoples is more alive than ever. It is important that the peoples of Europe and the international community as a whole persist in the quest for the recognition of this fundamental collective right that is theirs. Achieving freedom for a people is a matter of conviction and perseverance.

It is, to use the formula of Ernest Renan,
a plebiscite of every day.

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