



ASAMBLEA
DE EXTREMADURA



WORKING GROUP ON "GENDER EQUALITY"

WORKING PROGRAM

2016

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CALRE

1. INTRODUCTION

Equality between men and women is one of the foundational values of the European Union, dating back to 1957, when the “equal pay for equal work” principle was included in the Treaty of Rome.

In the past few years, much progress has been made, as shown by, for instance, the increase of the employment rate of women, and their increasing participation in decision-making.

However, this trend is offset by persisting disadvantages in other areas. Gender equality is still not achieved in terms of financial resources access throughout women’s life cycles. The pay gap is wide and inequality is still high, also in terms of pension. It should not be forgotten that gender violence is still widespread. Essentially, everywhere in the world women are still facing severe inequalities.

The European Commission’s ["Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019"](#) reaffirms priority key actions such as equality in decision-making. It also highlights the need to incorporate a gender equality perspective in every EU policy, as well as in the financing programmes.

One of the thematic objectives where gender equality is promoted at European political level is the equal participation of women and men in the decision-making processes. Closely related to this are the so-called horizontal questions, i.e. the roles assigned to gender in our society, such as the one concerning childcare or paternity leave.

The regional legislative assemblies are one of the most immediate partners to meet citizens’ needs and demands.

They should stand out as gender-sensitive parliaments, with structures, functioning, methods and tasks meeting the needs and interests of both

men and women on the principle of equality. Parliaments are the appropriate place to promote the gender equality objectives, because they are a reflection of society. Thus, they should be a reflection of the changing dynamics of the electorate, highlighting the contribution of gender equality to economic growth and sustainable development.

Finally, the European Union has the obligation of fighting any kind of discrimination in the definition and execution of its actions, as pointed out by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in its Opinion on the EU roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.¹ It should be considered, that according to the jurisprudence, discrimination against trans and intersex people is defined in the legislation on matters concerning gender equality. However, they are defined as elements of a social movement, and according to the criteria concerning civil society organizations, they are included in the context of LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex); therefore, they have no access to the organizations involved in gender equality, or do not have the appropriate information or skills to promote their interests.

Furthermore, it should be noted that lesbians often suffer multiple discrimination -for being a woman and a lesbian-, so the equality support measures for LGBTI people should come together with measures supporting women and girls equality, in order to achieve equality, non-discrimination and a violence-free life for lesbians.

For this purpose, the need of regional legislative assemblies to respect and guarantee equality, regardless of gender, gender identity, gender

¹ Opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on the EU Roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, which resulted in European Parliament Resolution of 4th February 2014 on the EU Roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity ([2013/2183\(INI\)](#)).

expression, race or sexual orientation should be highlighted.

2. BACKGROUND

The working group on “Equality and opportunities for gender equality” was created by the CALRE Plenary Assembly, which took place in L’Aquila on 25th and 26th November 2011, after adding an Annex to the Declaration of the Conference on “*CALRE and gender representation in Regional Parliaments*”.

In this Annex, the Presidents reaffirmed their belief that regional parliaments should play a significant role in promoting the removal of obstacles to full gender equality in social, economic and cultural life, thus promoting equal access to elective offices.

It was also deemed necessary to consider starting a structured common dialogue, undertaking the discussion on gender representation, particularly in the public participation sphere, through the creation of a forum. This could become a real platform for proposals, and a valuable tool to address this social issue.

As a result of such commitment, this working group was created. During **2012**, it was coordinated by the Regional Council of Trentino-Alto Adige. Working in partnership with renowned experts, they carried out a comprehensive study of the situation of women participation in political spheres at national and regional level, and the actions promoted at these levels to reduce gender inequality, both in the public and private sectors. In total, 36 regions from 7 countries participated, and their conclusions were presented at the CALRE Plenary Assembly in Mérida. These were also submitted to every European institution.

Throughout **2013**, the Group was coordinated by the Parliament of the Åland Islands, who proposed the preparation of an analysis by

Stockholm University on how political parties and CALRE regions promote and encourage women to become candidates in elective processes, and which measures are deemed more efficient or yield better results. In addition, a review of the different gender projects in Nordic countries was included, fostering an exchange of good practices with cases from non-EU countries. The treaty conclusions and recommendations were presented at the CALRE Plenary Assembly in Brussels on 21st and 22nd October 2013.

In **2014**, there was a break in the functioning of the working group. Its mission was resumed in **2015** under the Welsh General Assembly, who opted to implement a discussion forum about experiences and strategies to increase women participation in democracy. This included measures set by parliaments and parties to encourage/ensure women representation at different levels, identifying if parliaments with strong female presence create different policy and legislation as a result of this positive representation.

The results of this task were presented at CALRE's Plenary Assembly on 23rd October 2015.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTION LINES FOR 2016

Further to the task carried out by this group in the past years, and in line with the spirit of the Annex to the Declaration of L'Aquila of 2011, the Working Group on Gender Equality for 2016, through a participative process, aims at:

- ✓ Analysing the efforts of parliaments to become more gender-sensitive institutions, as well as the wide range of strategies that may be implemented in every parliament on this matter.

Here, the task of this group shall focus on promoting a study on

gender at parliamentary level, i.e. which leadership or high-level positions are held by women within the parliament organisation. Also, in which sectors their work is focused, given that sometimes women's skills and competences are often undervalued, particularly in professions where there is a female predominance because it is considered that these have "female" features, instead of acquired skills and competences, not forgetting gender traditions and roles that define their place in society.

These factors can trigger a gender-based predisposition when establishing salaries and evaluating the value of the work performed by men and women, translating into worse salary conditions for women, i.e. the so-called pay gap.

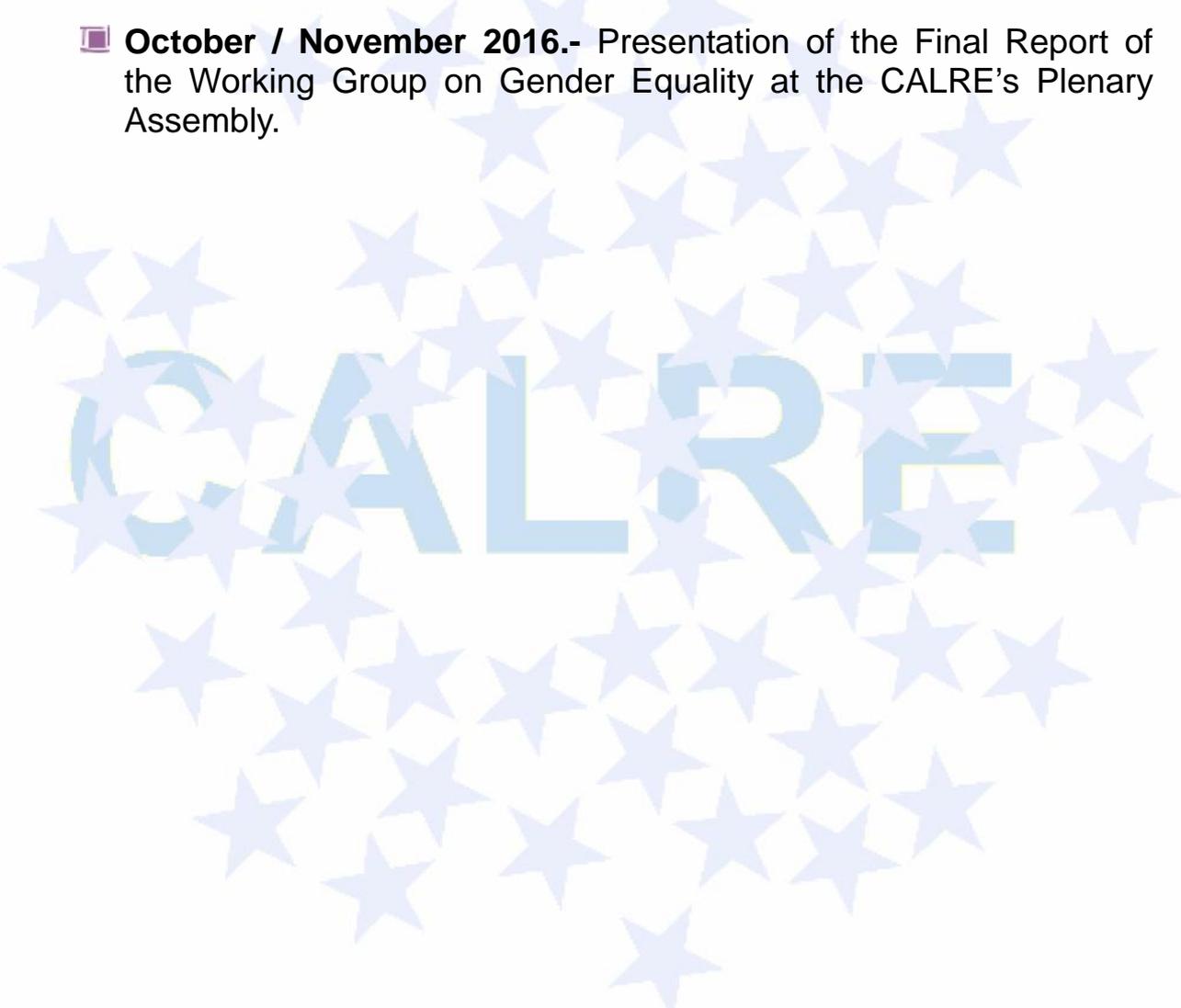
- ✓ Directly linked to the previous item, carrying out a study on the measures adopted by the European regional parliaments on equal opportunities for mothers and fathers who are parliamentary members. This is aimed at finding the balance between professional and family life, or parental leave, encouraging parliaments to adopt or support initiatives which help parents to manage their childcare responsibility without having an effect on their parliamentary tasks, for instance, through maternity or paternity leave replacement for people holding an elective post, or the implementation of distance voting systems.
- ✓ Within this framework and considering that the EU coordinates its actions through global policies on equal opportunities and non-discrimination in support of equal treatment in employment and labour matters, gathering relevant and comparable data through this study about the application of these actions in the case of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex people (LGBTI), ensuring that same-sex couples enjoy the same respect, dignity and protection from the rest of society.

- ✓ Enabling good practice, experiences and strategies sharing among CALRE members in a wide range of areas, including the incorporation of the gender perspective in the set of policies originating from parliamentary institutions, or the promotion of equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes.
- ✓ Setting up meetings with representatives from EU bodies and institutions to learn first-hand the activities and policies on gender equality within the European Union.
- ✓ Organising a seminar/meeting to present the analysis results and foster a discussion forum among the Presidents of the European Regional Legislative Assemblies.
- ✓ Elaborating a common opinion, where the results and conclusions of the developed work is stated, to present it to the CALRE Plenary Assembly, and then submit it to every European institution.

4. ACTIVITY CALENDAR

- **January 2016.-** Appointment of Mrs. Blanca Martín Delgado as Coordinator of the Working Group on Gender Equality.
- **Until 29th February 2016.-** Time frame for the incorporation of members to the working group.
- **From March to August 2016.-** Development of the proposed action lines with the implementation of collaboration networks between parliaments to analyse their efforts in becoming more gender-sensitive institutions, as well as the strategies adopted in this matter.

- **September 2016.-** Working Group Meeting and Seminar at the Extremadura Regional Assembly in Mérida (Spain), where the results of the analysis shall be presented and the sharing of experience, strategies and good practice shall be encouraged.
- **October / November 2016.-** Presentation of the Final Report of the Working Group on Gender Equality at the CALRE's Plenary Assembly.



CALRE