



**10th Conference of the European Regional Legislative Parliaments (CALRE)
Plenary Assembly
Venice, 30 and 31 October 2006**

Final Declaration

The Presidents attending the 10th Conference of the European Legislative Assemblies held in Venice on the 30th and 31st October 2006

Toscana	Rheinland-Pfalz
Veneto	Castilla y León
Friuli Venezia Giulia	Canarias
Piemonte	Galicia
Bolzano	Asturias
Puglia	Madrid
Emilia Romagna	Aragón
Liguria	Extremadura
Lazio	Cantabria
Marche	Rioja
Trentino-Alto Adige	Castilla la Mancha
Umbria	Pais Vasco /Euskadi
Abruzzo	Andalusia
Sardegna	Navarra
Sicilia	Murcia
Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft	Valencia
Communauté française de Belgique	Kärnten
Wallonie	Voralberg
Régions de Bruxelles Capitale / Brussels	Wien
Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	Salzburg
Vlaanderen	Steiermark
Baden Württemberg	Oberösterreich
Bayern	Niederösterreich
Mecklenburg Vorpommern	Burgenland
Schleswig Holstein	Açores
Hamburg	Madeira
Brandenburg	Wales / Cymru
Berlin	Åland

adopted the following Declaration:



Ten years after its constitution, the Conference of the Presidents of the European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) welcome the progress achieved in terms of European integration while emphasizing the shortfalls which still exist in facing up to the challenges that enlargement and the demand for greater participation in the Union's decision-making process. The CALRE confirms the opinion expressed in Madeira in 2001, according to which, the success of Europe's transformation depends greatly upon the full support of the people of Europe.

From this point of view, it is essential for the EU to undergo further development to enhance transparency and the direct participation of citizens and of their state, regional and local representatives in the decision-making process, thus bringing citizens even closer to Europe. On the other hand, it is necessary for European institutions to strengthen their openness to citizens and to allow their representatives to bring the voice of Europe directly to the regions and amongst the people, so that citizens may truly be in touch.

Regional parliaments are the political level closest to the citizen and therefore have a decisive role in shaping European public opinion. From our responsibility as democratic institutions, representing the citizens of Europe, we demand our participation in the decision-taking process on the future of the Union as an essential element to favour the involvement of citizens in the European integration process.

The Conference believes that European construction process and the coming to terms with its enlargement should directly involve regional parliaments with legislative powers; these regional parliaments should put at the disposal of the regions of new Member States and of Neighbouring Countries their experience of regional democracy, citizen representation and the ways Parliaments operate.

Moreover, the Conference deems it necessary for Regional Parliaments to further pursue the dialogue that has been fostered up until the present with European Institutions, especially in terms of inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Following are some of the considerations made by the Conference on the subject.

Subsidiarity and Participation

The Presidents are in favour of a rigorous application of the principle of subsidiarity unequivocally established by the treaties in force. The principle of subsidiarity is of basic importance within the democratic process and for the participation of citizens. The European Union must go back to its original responsibilities. It should regulate only those aspects which cannot be regulated at national, regional or local level. It is only in this way that decisions can be taken in a manner both efficient and as close as possible to the citizens themselves. This also reflects the basic consensus achieved at the Subsidiarity Conference in St. Pölten in April 2006.



It must be possible to efficiently check the compliance with the principle of subsidiarity. Owing its very nature, such check of the subsidiarity principle cannot take place solely at European level. Regional parliamentarians with legislating authority constitute the lowest of the three decision-taking levels (European, national and regional) and hence are particularly favourably placed to oversee the principle of subsidiarity.

The Presidents welcome the European Commission's decision to apply as from September 1st, 2006, the procedure to inform National Parliaments directly about all new proposals and consultations, so as to facilitate the taking of a stance with regard to these matters. Account is thus taken in substance of the request made by the Presidents in their Declaration of Catalonia of October 2005. The Presidents expect that Regional Parliaments with legislative powers should be involved in such activities in each member Country so as to be in a position to take a stance on the documents emanating from the Commission in a timely and efficient manner.

The Presidents have stated in their Catalonia Declaration their demand for such participation. In particular they invite the Commission to take due account of the positions taken by Regional Parliaments with legislative powers.

Finally, the Chairmen welcome the experimental work carried out by the Committee of the Regions for its network of consultations on subsidiarity, also involving the Municipalities, Regional Governments and Regional Assemblies without legislative competences. They invite the Commission to take account of the results of these experiments.

The Role of Regions with Legislative Powers

The Conference considers that the constitutional role attributed to regions with legislative powers and to their bodies – parliaments, governments and guaranteeing institutions – should be recognized in a Protocol to be included in the Treaties.

Such an acknowledgement should give rise to specific procedures, amongst which the right of regional assemblies with legislative power to appeal to the Court of Justice regarding the subject of their own competence, and also for other changes within the internal organization of bodies of the EU, especially within the Council, the Committee of Regions and the mechanisms of participation in European inter-parliamentary cooperation thus enhancing the relations between regional legislative Assemblies and the European Parliament.

The Role of Parliaments in the Architecture of the European Union

The Conference confirms the fact that Regional Legislative Parliaments, together with State Parliaments and the European Parliament, are indispensable tools in the process of European construction and that the entire process must be subject to the principle of inter-parliamentary cooperation. This principle requires the listing of rules and procedures that regulate the relationships among the three parliamentary levels: the



European, the state and the regional levels. Thus, having recalled the Declaration adopted in Madeira in 2001 the following options are to be pursued:

- I. strengthening of Regional Legislative Assemblies within the states of the European Union in order to guarantee the necessary involvement of Regions that advance the European process, establishing and even reinforcing stable ties with respective state parliaments;
- II. opening of European inter-parliamentary procedures (the Conference of chairmen of State Parliaments, COSAC and inter-parliamentary forums) to regional legislative parliaments;
- III. confirmation of the role of regional legislative parliaments in the shaping of community decisions by means of a protocol to be enclosed in the Treaties.

The Role of Parliaments vis-à-vis Citizens on the Topic of Enlargement and Dialogue with the New Neighbours

The Conference considers that the Legislative Assemblies of the European Union – the European Parliament, the National and Regional Parliaments of the Member States – must play an active role in informing their respective citizens both on the subject of the extension and on the dialogue with the New Member States, the new neighbours and their Regional Assemblies.

Bearing in mind that its main objective remains that of reinforcing the role and the influence of Regional Parliaments with legislative competences in the decision-making process of the European Union, the Conference favours :

- organizing in 2007 a Forum of Chairmen/representatives of the European Regional Assemblies on the subject of regional democracy and the conduct of the Assemblies, with a significant participation from representatives of the new Member States and of the new neighbouring Countries;
- each definite initiative proposed by the Standing Committee be directed to promote the supply of information to the citizens and their understanding of and participation in the process of European integration;
- each definite initiative (together with National and Regional Parliamentary Assemblies, the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) be intended to promote democracy in Europe and the role of the Assemblies in the representation and the nurturing of a common European feeling;
- a dialogue and cooperation with the organizations active in the field of decentralization and regionalization, in particular the Council of Europe and the European regional associations;
- each initiative be directed to invite its own members in particular to reflect further on decentralization and the participation of citizens, so that the experience gained in this



field may be made known in the regions of the new Member States and the new neighbouring States.

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The Presidents emphasize the important contributions to the regional inter-parliamentary dialogue of CALRE – Working groups regarding “Subsidiarity”, “Decentralization, regional democracy, Charta of Regions” and “e-democracy. CALRE considers all these issues food for thought and work, as an extremely important contribution on the part of inter-parliamentary cooperation towards the construction of Europe and wishes to thank those parliaments that foster and support such initiatives.

The Conference also holds a positive view of the work carried out with Community institutions - the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Committee of Regions and considers it now necessary to start an ongoing dialogue with the Council and with the Member States.

The Conference, furthermore, is pleased to acknowledge that an internal group of Regions with legislative powers within the Committee of Regions has been established; Regional governments, with the support of their parliaments, can fully express their constitutional role and highlight the need that this role be taken into account in the work of the Committee.