



12 March 2015

**INVITATION TO JOIN 2015 CALRE Working Group -
*GENDER EQUALITY: Enhancing the Participation of Women in Democracy***

Dear CALRE Member

During last November's CALRE General Assembly, hosted by the Galician Parliament in Santiago de Compostela, I agreed that I would Chair and coordinate a Gender Equality Working Group, as part of CALRE's 2015 Work Programme.

Equality, and indeed Gender Equality, is a very broad subject, encompassing a range of issues – all of them important.

I think it would be useful from the outset, however, to establish that this particular Working Group will have the specific remit of discussing experiences of, and strategies to “**Enhancing the Participation of Women in Democracy**”. I would also like to stress that, whilst I very much hope for a positive representation of women CALRE Members within the Working Group, that men are also very welcome to join and participate in the programme.

As some of you may be aware, Wales became the first country in the world to gain gender parity within its national legislature in 2003, and in 2006 we set another milestone in becoming the world's first country to achieve more women than men in parliament.

I believe that the National Assembly for Wales has a good story to tell when it comes to the representation of women in democracy.

But, whilst I am happy to share this story with you, my purpose in agreeing to coordinate this Working Group is not to rejoice in Wales' accomplishments.

Indeed, despite the National Assembly for Wales' very promising start, we have gone backwards in recent years in our representation of women Assembly Members; and there is now serious concern that there will be further decline from our present 40% at our next national elections in 2016.

Since becoming Presiding Officer (Speaker / President) of the Assembly in 2011, I therefore made it one of my key priorities to highlight this important issue and to try to reverse this negative trend. The focal point of this work has been through my [#POWiPL](#) (Presiding Officer's Women in Public Life) campaign which, through several different strands and approaches, has looked at ways to increase the participation of Women in Public Life.

An important part of the remit of the *Assembly's Women in Democracy Caucus* I established last year was to seek and impart best practice, especially from other parliaments. I am looking forward, through this Working Group, to discuss and exchange best practice with fellow CALRE Members in a range of areas, including:

- measures that parliaments and parties put in place to encourage/ensure female representation at varying levels; and
- identifying whether parliaments with strong female representation create distinct policies and legislation as a result of this positive representation.

I therefore plan to host a *Gender Equality Working Group Seminar* here, at the National Assembly for Wales in **Cardiff, Wales** with a provisional date of **Friday 26 June** being considered for this meeting.

I very much hope that, as well as wishing to attend this proposed seminar, that some CALRE Members will also wish to volunteer to deliver presentations on the experiences of their own Regions, which they think may be of interest to the Working Group participants.

May I therefore encourage those of you interested in this subject matter to join the 2015 Gender Equality Working Group, by completing the attached form and returning it by **Monday 30 March**.

Should you have any queries about the Gender Equality Working Group, then please don't hesitate to contact Al Davies (Al.Davies@Assembly.Wales / Tel: +44 0300 200 6255) within my Private Office.



**Dame Rosemary Butler AM
Presiding Officer
National Assembly for Wales**