



## **2015 CALRE'S DECLARATION**

**MILAN, October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015**

### **Plenary Assembly**

Eighteen years after its establishment in Oviedo, the CALRE (Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies), continues to be a player on the European stage and a 'megaphone' to the demands of citizens and local realities.

The European Regional Assemblies with legislative powers, related to eight EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) have shared from the very beginning the objective of increasing their influence on the European stage, proposing themselves as a platform of cooperation to build common paths, which take into account the needs of individual territories and the civil society.

The CALRE is the place where the representation of territories and plural communities is expressed. Territories and communities with different features and different experiences, but equally engaged in giving new impetus to the process of European political integration, with the purpose of continuing to guarantee a future of peace and prosperity.

The CALRE supports a *bottom-up* vision of Europe, founded on the leadership of territories and its citizens, a Europe of people and Regions, an alternative to the centralization of state and European bureaucracies.

*The social, political and economic reality following the Treaty of Lisbon*

The serious economic and financial crisis of recent years, which has hit the EU countries particularly hard, has generated significant changes in economic and social dynamics: labor crisis,

increase in poverty, fragility in the resilience of economic and social systems have unfortunately generated a growing lack of confidence in public institutions and politics.

Because of a particular juncture of critical events on the international stage, Europe is also facing an unprecedented flow of migrants, that unfortunately causes a return to a selfish and indifferent Europe, to the detriment of the generous and inclusive one that we have tried to build through the unification process of recent decades, according to the vision of the Founding Fathers.

The CALRE supports a forward-looking, tolerant and social Europe, capable of adopting policies of lasting stability, of targeting the causes that lead to destabilization at source, also through interventions that will help to remove the causes of forced displacement and illegal migration from the countries of origin to the more developed ones.

All the Eurobarometer surveys indicate that there is a growing disaffection of citizens towards European institutions, that, in recent years, has represented both cause and effect of the perceived gap with regard to the decision-makers in Brussels. The EU institutions are felt more distant than the daily lives of European citizens and, sometimes, unable to fully understand the problems that emerge in the territories, and incapable of proposing effective solutions.

Given this scenario of public disaffection, regional assemblies, as one of the institutional interlocutors closest to citizenship, must take the initiative, not only through its legislative function, but as models of institutional exemplarity to recover the interest and, especially, the trust of citizens. In this regard, and as it is already being developed in most parliaments and assemblies of CALRE, the principle of public transparency and citizen participation, through the resources provided by the e-Democracy, must be assumed as a constant in the assemblies daily activity.

To this extent, transparency comes as a key element of decision-making process which reinforces the democratic nature of institutions and the citizens trust in the administration.

### *The CALRE and the State of the Union: governance*

At an European institutional level the CALRE considers that it is essential to have a bottom up approach. It will involve in the legislative process local and regional authorities, especially regional Parliaments with legislative powers. Their function is not to be merely advisory but also proactive, enhancing the leadership of those Institutions that best represent Regions and Local Authorities.

The CALRE, as representative of the regional assemblies with legislative powers, welcomes the resumption of the debate on the future of Europe and the dialogue initiated by the Committee of the

Regions with the European Parliament, in which it was suggested a future institutionalization of the Committee of the Regions and its configuration as third European chamber with legislative powers, representative of the Regions and territories.

The Presidents of the Parliaments of the CALRE, endorsing the words of the President of the Juncker European Commission in his speech of the State of the Union in 2015 - "There is not enough Europe in this Union. And there is not enough Union in this Union. "- add: "There are not enough Regions and Parliaments in this Union." The European project cannot ignore the involvement of the Parliaments at each level, European, national and regional level.

In this sense, singularities, proposals and initiative of the Regions and local authorities should be an asset in the European common project and contribute to the response to the major challenges currently facing the EU in institutional, political, economic, social and humanitarian matters.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, the Parliaments of the CALRE must strengthen their ability to participate, both in the monitoring of the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity and in the political dialogue. This effort has to be led with the European partner of reference, the Committee of the Regions, as well as through closer cooperation with the respective national Parliaments.

The European Commission must not only be, as announced by its President, "great and more ambitious in important issues and more modest in less relevant aspects", but it will have to better respect territories and get them more involved, the more relevant the addressed issues will be. Without this *shift thinking* it will be more difficult to overcome the distance between European citizens and Institutions and we will continue to build on weak foundations of consent.

The CALRE's regional Parliaments have the responsibility to increase the capacity of representation of their territories with regard to the European authorities. Therefore, it is appropriate to stimulate and ensure participation in the European legislative process, ensuring an effective transposition of European legislation. The goal is to ensure that EU legislative action, impacting more than 70% on territorial legislation, may incorporate a cross-policy approach between the different responsibilities.

*Better regulation* is a process that concerns all legislative levels. The regional Parliaments of the CALRE stress the importance of investing resources and capacity in public policies evaluation and in the analysis of territorial impact, even at an European level, in order to help European legislators to make sustainable and compatible with the well-being of the territories choices.

The CALRE invites the European Commission to distinguish the regional representative institutions of the territories (Institutional stakeholders), which are an integral part of the process of a multi-level governance, from the holders of private interests (Private stakeholders), because only the first ones, democratically elected, constitute the democratic synthesis of the real needs of citizens. Similarly, also to the Committee of the Regions, place of representation of regional and local authorities, it should be given a different role from that assumed by the holders of individual interests.

CALRE invites the EU institutions to continue the debate about the reform of the EU own financial system and wishes the involvement of the Committee of the Regions and CALRE itself.

#### *The CALRE and the State of the Union: policies*

CALRE's regional Parliaments have the task, together with regional governments, to promote policies aimed at removing the inequalities of development, to increase opportunities for growth and social inclusion of citizens and to promote economic cohesion of territories: this must be done through an effective planning of structural Funds.

The CALRE believes that, as part of the EU's priorities of stimulating employment, growth and investment, the Regions can and must play an important role in the implementation of the Juncker Plan, by investing in circular economy projects that will strengthen the inclusive nature of the labor market.

The Juncker plan, announced in November 2014, aims to boost growth and employment in Europe expecting to mobilize about 315 billion euro for the three-year period from 2015-2017. It develops along three lines: 1. the creation of a strategic investments fund; 2. the creation of a credible guarantee reserve; 3. the increase of Europe attractiveness with respect to foreign investments. In this context, Regions must be protagonists both in the definition of innovative and effective projects and in the integration of the available financial instruments.

In an unfavorable economic situation, it is imperative to monitor the implementation of the programming of Structural and European investment Funds and of the European Investment Fund, in relation to the assessment criteria of the projects, and their impact and proper use in the territories, in accordance with the European territorial priorities.

In this regard, we need to strengthen the investment capacity of regional and local authorities, keeping strong the principle of a balanced and soundness public finances and, at the same time,

effectively implementing the provisions of the European Commission Communication regarding the application of flexibility margins within the European economic governance.

The CALRE declares its strong support to the institutional and administrative work that is taking place at an European level. This work regards the cross-border cooperation, the development and the implementation of macro-regional strategies. These are the integrated framework that allows Member States, third countries, but above all Regions and local authorities with common territorial characteristics to face shared challenges and to intensify cooperation in economic, social and territorial cohesion.

This must take place with the cooperation of the economic and social subjects of the territories involved, in accordance with a proper interpretation of the subsidiarity principle in the process of macro-regional strategies.

The CALRE also highlights how useful the instrument of EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) will be, even if not yet sufficiently used, to turn into action the principles of cross-border cooperation.

In the light of the constant flow of migrants (coming mainly from Mediterranean countries, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East) that in recent years has had a major impact on the European hospitality, the CALRE considers it appropriate a review of the current Dublin system and the implementation and enforcement of the existing common rules by all EU Member States, as well as a closer coordination between the different levels of government in order to face the challenges of welcome and integration.

The CALRE encourages effective diplomatic action by Europe to control illegal migration. It must combat illegal migration and but always, at the same time, promote and claim the respect of fundamental rights of migrants, by responding to this historic challenge with "generosity, solidarity and responsibility". (*Brussels Parliament*)

Also in view of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the Framework Convention of the United Nations on Climate Change, to be held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December. The Regional parliaments with legislative powers are well aware that the fight against climate change will be won in the territories and especially in cities, where about 75% of Europeans live and work, using about 80% of all the energy produced in Europe.

The CARLE therefore hopes that this challenge will be faced by adopting sustainable policies of spatial, landscape and transport planning.

In order to allow a sustainable, smart and inclusive real growth of our territories, Europe has to continue the development of a stable political strategy which also advances in gender equality.

### **ATTACHED TO THE DECLARATION**

#### ***CALRE on the International stage***

The context in which regional, sub-national and national Parliaments in the European countries operates is changing both in relations to supranational institutions and given the growth at a purely local level of Municipalities and metropolitan cities. It is therefore important to consider the reasons that justify the level of territorial representation with which regional, sub-national and national Parliaments are still invested.

This reflection is true in an European context, but also in the rest of the globe and for this reason the CALRE has initiated a process of strengthening relations with the other associations in Europe and outside Europe. During 2015, this process has led to the signing of a *Memorandum of Understanding* with the NCSL (National Conference of State Legislatures), the conference that brings together the legislators of the Federal States of America, and a *Memorandum of Understanding* with the Committee of the Regions, that has renewed an already signed collaboration agreement, relaunching it on a new basis and with new resolutions.

Its activity in the international context has helped to strengthen the conviction of the utility of continuing the development of a productive dialogue between the different sub national legislative realities. The development of a regional parliamentary democracy could help to develop new skills and best practices to meet the major challenges facing our territories nowadays such as migrations flows, social inclusion, climate change and the development of a good governance under the use of the new technologies of information and communication.

For these reasons, the CALRE has promoted the organization of a World Forum of the Sub national Legislative Assemblies, with the aim of promoting the exchange of experience and good practice, of reflecting on representation and sovereignty issues, of identifying common policies on topics of relevance to all of our Assemblies, but even more of promoting a mutual recognition with a view to building a true global democracy.

Under these principles, the CALRE brings to the attention of the Legislative Assemblies that will take part in the work of the World Forum, the "Manifesto of the regional and sub national Legislative Assemblies for a true global democracy" annexed to CALRE's Declaration of Milan and integral part of it.

