PARLAMENTO DE ANDALUCIA

CALRE

Final report and proposals
for work in 2016

CALRE Working Group on e-Democracy
2015 Edition

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This year marks the third edition of the Working Group on e-Democracy of the European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), coordinated by the Andalusian Parliament.

The Presidency of the Andalusian Parliament would like, first, to acknowledge the trust that the CALRE Presidency and the assemblies and parliaments of this body have placed in the coordination of this Working Group which, in its 2015 edition, consists of eighteen regional parliaments and assemblies from six European countries: Styria (Austria), Salzburg (Austria), Vlaans (Belgium), Walloon Region (Belgium), Wallonia-Brussels (Belgium), Andalusia (Spain), Parliament of the Principality of Asturias (Spain), the Canary Islands (Spain), Extremadura (Spain), Galicia (Spain), Murcia (Spain), Åland Islands (Finland), Abruzzo (Italy), Lombardy (Italy), Molise (Italy), Piedmont (Italy), Umbria (Italy) and the Azores (Portugal).

Likewise, the Presidency of the Andalusian Parliament would like to extend its gratitude to the 26 parliaments and assemblies which, this year, have collaborated with the WG on e-Democracy by completing the questionnaires for two reports on "*Good Practice and Innovative Projects on e-Democracy in European Regional Legislative Assemblies*" and "*Analysis of the implementation of the Principles of Pubic Transparency in European Regional Legislative Assemblies*".

These are the assemblies of Abruzzo (Italy), Andalusia (Spain), Parliament of the Principality of Asturias (Spain), the Azores (Portugal), Calabria (Italy), the Canary Islands (Spain), Cantabria (Spain), Extremadura (Spain), Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy), Lombardy (Italy), Madrid (Spain), Molise (Italy), Upper Austria (Austria), the Basque Country (Spain), Piedmont (Italy), Parliament of the German-speaking community (Belgium), Emilia-Romagna (Italy), La Rioja (Spain), Saxony (Germany), Salzburg (Austria), Schleswig Holstein (Germany), Styria (Austria), Tuscany (Italy), Voralberg (Austria), Walloon Region (Belgium) and Wallonia-Brussels (Belgium).

Context

In the early 21st century, public institutions in general and regional institutions in particular are undergoing a deep transformation in the field of management and governance due to continuous innovation in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

This means not only the implementation and development of new management models, but also a new relationship with the citizens. This represents a leap from the traditional model of the representative Democracy towards an open Democracy, favouring both the direct participation of the citizens in the institutions, and Active Listening between representatives and the represented, as ICTs have eliminated space and time barriers.

However, in parallel to the development of the means that allow for fluid, two-way communication between the representatives and the represented, currently, the regional assemblies and parliaments are experiencing increasing alienation and mistrust from the citizens towards the institutions.

On the one hand, the citizens demand more active participation in their institutions and in the legislative processes, while on the other, they

criticise the lack of response and/or interest of the institutions in meeting their demands and involving them in the decision-making processes.

In this context, e-Democracy, also called Digital Democracy, appears as an ally of the institutions since it offers a unique opportunity, by using the ICTs, to publicise the work they do and promote the citizens' participation in democratic processes through the different phases of e-Information, e-Consultation, e-Participation and e-Voting.

Along the same lines, the implementation within the assemblies and parliaments of the principles of Public Transparency, accompanied by the processes of *e-Information* and *e-Consultation*, is the best response to the alienation of the citizens and the first step to regaining their trust in the institutions.

Thus, e-Democracy and Public Transparency are two elements inherent to the 21st-century democracy and a cornerstone of institutional and parliamentary activity.

Activity report

Under these premises, the Working Group on e-Democracy is holding its third edition, focused on the analysis and monitoring of the implementation of the principles of e-Democracy and Public Transparency in CALRE assemblies, and on the compilation of good practices in this field.

In 2015, the Working group on e-Democracy has gone a step further in its analysis by completing the usual report on *"Good Practice and Innovative Projects on e-Democracy in European Regional Legislative Assemblies"* (to be added to the 2013 and 2014 editions), with an individual study entitled *"Analysis of the implementation of the Principles of Pubic Transparency in European Regional Legislative Assemblies"*, to tackle the important issue of Public Transparency in our society.

The presentation of both studies, available on the CALRE website (www.calrenet.eu), complies with the lines of action included in the Work Programme of the Group on e-Democracy and with the objectives set up at the beginning of this year. That is, to encourage the transparency and accountability of the European regional assemblies applying the principles of access to public information and active publicity; to implement e-Democracy tools in the European regional assemblies, to share the proposals and projects for good e-Democracy practices as a means to progress towards a more participative, collaborative democracy that meets the demands and interests of the citizens and, from the experiences and conclusions contained in those reports, to evaluate the implementation, development and management of e-Democracy and Transparency tools by European regional parliaments.

The analysis of the Working Group on e-Democracy was competed with a meeting held at the Andalusian Parliament (Seville, Spain) on 5 and 6

October this year, with the attendance of the experts Mr. César Calderón, a specialist in Open Government, Transparency, Participation and Communication, and the European Foundation for the Information Society. During the meeting, models of good e-Democracy and Transparency practices were presented by the parliaments of Salzburg (Austria) and the Parliament of Cantabria. Two studies on e-Democracy and Transparency were also presented.

Conclusions

From the studies made and experiences shared, the Working Group on e-Democracy presents the following conclusions:

1. The CALRE parliaments and assemblies maintain their commitment to and positive progress towards the implementation and development of the different phases of e-Democracy (e-Information, e-Consultation, e-Participation and e-Voting).

2. Specifically, the indicators show significant progress in the development of the phases of e-Information and, particularly, of e-Consultation. However, the implementation of the e-Participation phase is uneven and the implementation of e-Voting is almost negligible, possibly due to the great diversity of legal scenarios in this area.

3. The development, year after year, of new initiatives and innovative projects in the field of e-Democracy has made the parliaments and assemblies willing to create open, receptive, participatory institutions.

4. The CALRE parliaments and assemblies show a high level of commitment to Public Transparency, which develops in parallel to the approval and application of the regulations and legislation on Transparency in the different regions and countries.

5. It should be underlined that 80 percent of the assemblies have a specific space on Public Transparency on their websites, which meet most of the indicators recommended by Transparency International in the field of Active Publicity. Furthermore, 75 percent of the assemblies have put in place the necessary mechanisms for citizens to request information from the institutions, thus completing the process of Public Transparency.

6. The reports on e-Democracy and Transparency show that the institutions have integrated these principles into their daily activity by their own conviction, well aware that this is the correct path to follow and that Participation and Transparency are synonymous with 21st century Democracy.

7. In this respect, as an additional point, the Working Group on e-Democracy highly appreciates the initiative of the CALRE Presidency

in 2015, which has committed itself to a new design for the CALRE website and a greater presence on the Social Networks, thus complying with some of the most recognisable premises of Digital Democracy in the phases of e-Information, e-Consultation and e-Participation.

Recommendations

From the analysis carried out, the Working Group on e-Democracy makes the following recommendations, aimed at maintaining optimal development of the principles of e-Democracy and Transparency:

a) Information and Communication Technologies are in a continuous process of innovation and transformation. For this reason, it is recommended that the assemblies and parliaments systematically update the means and mechanisms used to implement the different phases of e-Democracy.

b) To further analyse the real demand from the citizens as regards the implementation of *e-Voting*, as its use in the CALRE assemblies is negligible and is hampered by current legislation. It would be recommendable to further analyse and study the techniques and procedures of e-Voting to ensure that votes are cast under optimal

conditions and that voting is not contaminated within the electoral process through technological means.

c) It is recommended that mechanisms for citizen participation in parliamentary procedures be improved by providing online means for the management of the Popular Legislative Initiatives (PLIs) and citizens' questions at plenary sessions, taking into account the regional regulations and internal rules of each Parliament.

d) It is recommended that the principle of Active Listening be applied in order to adapt the management of the contents and processes of e-Democracy to the real demand of the citizens and thereby make the work of the assemblies and parliaments more effective and to be perceived as closer to the citizens.

e) It is recommended to encourage direct communication with citizens, Active Listening and participation through effective and intensive use of email, segmenting its contents by creating thematic mailing lists to facilitate citizens to receive only the information that interest them and not the wide and overwhelming information that would create a parliament. Coherently, it is recommended a greater use of syndication between the public more related to the legislative assemblies..

f) To further analyse the suitability and appropriateness of creating an inter-parliamentary network for document exchange and

professional collaboration between the CALRE parliaments and assemblies to offer mutual advice on the implementation of e-Democracy and Public Transparency.

Proposals for 2016

As regards the lines of action for 2016, the Working Group on e-Democracy proposes the following:

→ To monitor the implementation of good e-Democracy and Public Transparency practices while maintaining the analysis pattern established in the 2013, 2014 and 2015 editions so as to complete a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of progress.

→ To evaluate the convenience of discussing, in collaboration with the Universities, also through the analysis of the data, the impact of the processes of e-Democracy and Public Transparency on the citizens in order to receive feedback that would help to improve the processes currently underway in the parliaments and assemblies.

→ In collaboration with the CALRE Presidency, to promote the elaboration and approval of a Declaration on Parliamentary Transparency at the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies.

Seville, 6th October 2015

The Coordinator of the Working Group on e-Democracy

President Juan Pablo Durán Sánchez

President of the Parliament of Andalusia