



Conference of the Regional Legislative Assemblies of the European Union

## **CALRE Presidency Programme 2013**

This document contains the work programme of the CALRE presidency for 2013. It follows on from the work carried out by previous presidencies. It also pays particular attention to the work currently underway in the European institutions which will determine direction taken by regional policies over the next few years.

Since the Oviedo Declaration in 1997, CALRE has done some remarkable work and has enabled its members to establish regular collaboration among one another, to exchange good practices and to make the voice of regional legislative assemblies heard in the European institutions.

CALRE has always taken care to establish links with the European institutions and with associations representing local and regional authorities. It promotes dialogue between the regional entities of the European Union, but also with regions in candidate countries or countries bordering the EU. CALRE intends to maintain this spirit of collaboration to avoid distorting one of its main qualities, i.e. its open-mindedness linked to the constant dialogue that it has established among its members. CALRE plans to continue along the same lines in 2013.

### **Topics broached in 2013**

CALRE also serves as a discussion forum for its members, who debate subjects that are of interest to the regions and that are linked in particular to current affairs in the European Union. In this context, in 2013 CALRE hopes to promote debate among its members on the following subjects:

**Financial framework of the European Union 2014-2020**

In principle, 2013 will see the end of the negotiations on the financial framework of the European Union for the period 2014-2020. Given the current budgetary context and the wish of certain member states to restrict their contribution, there is a risk that the forthcoming European budget will lack ambition and that its effects will be felt as regards the funding of European Union regional policies.

CALRE will continue to argue in favour of reaching an agreement that is as ambitious as possible, saving the policy of cohesion that is essential to place the convergence regions on the same footing as the competitive regions in the European Union.

### European budgetary pact

The 2008 banking crisis and the resulting economic crisis have had a negative impact on the economic and social climate. The economic and social harm caused to individuals is largely absorbed by the regional, institutions that are close to the citizens. Unfortunately, the crisis has adversely affected not only national, but also regional public finances. The fall in revenue suffered by certain regions has weakened their social and territorial cohesion missions and their investment capacities. CALRE wishes to draw the attention of the European institutions to this issue.

The general worsening of public finances promoted almost all the European Union member states to sign a European budgetary pact in 2012 (Treaty on stability, coordination and governance), compelling the parties to the agreement to gradually reduce their deficit and the amount of their debt. In this context, the regions will also have to contribute towards the effort to be made. This obligation for the regions to reduce their annual deficits and their level of indebtedness will have consequences for the policies they pursue. The regions' margin of manoeuvre when drawing up their budgets will be restricted.

Aware of the need ultimately to reduce the overall level of public indebtedness, CALRE will nevertheless argue that the implementation of the budgetary pact should be accompanied by measures designed to avoid overly restrictive austerity.

### The immigration challenge facing the regions

Immigration, which poses problems in terms of management for some regions, particularly those in border areas, may be seen as an opportunity when considered from a different point of view.

In some regions, the population is ageing significantly owing, in particular, to the low birth rate. This ageing of the population brings with it substantial costs which weigh

on the increasingly limited section of the population in employment. Immigration is a means of partly offsetting this phenomenon.

Moreover, the current economic crisis is accentuating the flow of labour from regions with high levels of unemployment to regions where there is a scarcity of labour. In this case, the free movement of workers within the territory of the European Union serves as an instrument of social adjustment, offsetting regional disparities and absorbing the collateral damage caused by the crisis.

### European Year of Citizens

The European Union has declared 2013 “European Year of Citizens”, setting the following objectives:

- To inform citizens about the rights and opportunities that come with European citizenship, and in particular the right to live and work anywhere in the Union;
- To encourage debate about the obstacles that prevent individuals from making the most of these rights, and to draw up practical proposals intended to overcome these obstacles;
- To participate in civic forums on European policies and issues.

The CALRE presidency will be sure to take part in the events organised in this context, fully in line with the intention expressed in the Merida declaration.

### Democratic deficit in the European Union

The democratic deficit within the European Union is a recurrent concern for CALRE, which regularly highlights the gap between the citizens and the European institutions.

During the course of this year, which precedes the 2014 elections, CALRE will support initiatives aimed at encouraging citizens to cast their votes at the next European Parliament elections.

To this end, the CALRE presidency will support all initiatives aimed at increasing the democratic legitimacy of the European Union.

### CALRE cooperation with the European institutions

Following on from the work carried out by previous presidencies, CALRE has always taken care to establish links with the European institutions. It will continue to do so 2013.

The Committee of the Regions, whose task is to represent the interests of local and regional authorities with the European institutions, is a privileged partner of CALRE.

CALRE will continue to join in with the various activities organised by the Committee of the Regions.

Further to the creation of the REGPEX database by the Committee of the Regions, the regional assemblies now have an efficient tool through which to find out about the opinions of other regional assemblies regarding European draft legislation from the point of view of respect for the principle of subsidiarity.

CALRE will encourage its members to make use of REGPEX both to publish their own opinions on subsidiarity with regard to European draft legislation and to consult the opinions expressed there.

CALRE wishes to maintain the links forged by previous presidencies with the European Commission.

This year will be marked by the lack of structural dialogue between the Commission and the associations of local and regional authorities owing to the forthcoming European elections, as a result of which it will not be possible to prepare a work programme for 2014. CALRE will nevertheless closely monitor the implementation of the Commission's work programme for 2013, paying special attention to the subjects that mainly interest the regions.

Finally, CALRE is particularly keen to strengthen the relationship that it has with the European Parliament. Interparliamentary dialogue is an essential feature of CALRE. It will take steps to encourage contacts between regional representatives and MEPs.

In this context, CALRE wishes to maintain the contacts established between CALRE and the members of the European Parliament Committee on Regional Development whose legislative activity concerns the regions above all.

### **CALRE cooperation with regional and local associations**

CALRE will maintain the links formed with associations representing local and regional authorities.

CALRE will pay particular attention to the work of la REGLEG, the executive counterpart of CALRE, whose activity concerns the regions with legislative power. It would like to continue the existing collaboration between the two networks.

Contacts will be made with REGLEG in order to determine what joint activities could be undertaken on this basis. The REGLEG president will be invited to the CALRE general meeting.

CALRE considers it essential to maintain its collaboration with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The priorities of the Congress for the period 2013-2016, i.e. improving regional democracy, resolving the difficulties facing local authorities owing to the economic and financial crisis, and collaboration through new partnerships, also number among the objectives set by CALRE.

Contact will be made with the Congress in order to determine what joint activities could be undertaken on this basis. The president of the Congress will be invited to the CALRE general meeting.

## **CALRE activities**

### **Principle of subsidiarity**

Respect for the principle of subsidiarity is essential to ensure that the projects initiated by the European institution are efficiently implemented and so that the actions taken by the latter have due legitimacy. Decisions adopted at the most suitable level of authority will be more effectively applied on the ground.

CALRE will continue to encourage its member to participate in the subsidiarity monitoring network coordinated by the Committee of the Regions, examine European draft legislation from the point of view of subsidiarity and, where appropriate, pass on their opinions to the European Commission.

It will put forward the argument that the Commission should integrate as well as possible the remarks made by regional authorities with regard to draft legislation that meets with disapproval among regional bodies.

### **Working groups**

CALRE encourages the working groups to continue the discussions started in previous years, the results of which have enabled CALRE members to increase their self-knowledge, to improve the quality of their legislative activity, to gain a better understanding of the concerns of their electorates and to anticipate as well as possible the developments that have impacted on the work of regional parliaments.

## Cooperation between CALRE members

CALRE is in fact first and foremost a forum for dialogue between the presidents of European regional assemblies with legislative power. With a view to strengthening the links between its various members, encouraging reciprocal knowledge, exchanging experiences and passing on information, CALRE will continue with the work accomplished during previous years.