



**WORKING GROUP ON  
"GENDER EQUALITY"**

**WORKING PROGRAM  
2017**

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## **1. PLAN OF ACTION**

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND LINES OF ACTION FOR 2017**

## **3. ACTIVITY CALENDAR**

## 1. PLAN OF ACTION

The "*Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities*" Working Group, created in 2011, has worked sporadically up to the present, reaffirming the commitment of European Regional Parliament Presidents, at the CALRE Plenary Meeting held in Varese last October, to fight for equality and the elimination of obstacles that might hamper it reaching its objectives.

The activities carried out during 2016 have not only provided the opportunity of testing the current state of legislation regarding this subject, but have also allowed the pooling of data which has shown the important lack of equality in the regional parliaments: almost illusory equality plans and conciliation measures with unequal regulation, not to mention the scarcity of resources to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, identity or gender expression.

Modern societies demand increased gender equality, considering it a precondition for genuine democracy. However, as can be seen in the study carried out last year by the Working Group, despite the increasing inclusion of women in political processes, they remain underrepresented in most regional parliaments. This weakens the efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy of our institutions and hinders the parliamentary ability to promote equality.

Evidently, discriminatory behaviour in the public sphere, albeit in different degrees, exists in our parliaments, preventing women from carrying out their work with total freedom and security, and discouraging them to become politically committed.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that these phenomena be recognized and conclusions drawn by last October Inter-Parliamentary Union Report on the subject<sup>1</sup>, which showed a need for reflection on the overwhelming male

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<sup>1</sup> "Issues brief on sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians."

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**PDF Versions**

[English](#), [French](#)

dominance in the political sphere, both numerically and hierarchically, and the worrying levels of gender-based violence suffered by women parliamentarians, particularly on social media and the Internet.

Nor can we ignore discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, sometimes even more muted than that which creates the differences between men and women.

On the other hand, and taking into consideration the gender component and possible discrimination based on sexual orientation in the 2017 work area of the Equality Group, parliaments can no longer ignore a situation that demands a solution to a reality that concerns us as representatives of the people and affects the rights of women, parents and children, namely, reproduction by gestational surrogacy.

The legal, ethical and economic implications of this issue are unquestionable, but it is also true that the exercise of a comparative law that contrasts the pros and cons of the different options contemplated in each country, as well as its legislative evolution, could contribute to the elimination of the situation of the evident legal insecurity and discrimination that affects countless European citizens.

It is for this reason, it would be desirable to have sufficient evidence before adopting a position as public representatives and legislating on this issue, where the role of the EU has, so far, been barely visible, without losing sight of the work carried out within the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH)<sup>2</sup>.

In short, given the persistence of inequalities and discrimination in our society and the question of how parliaments can become agents of change and defenders of equality and equality of opportunity, it must firstly be recognised that they are not neutral and, secondly, carry out an examination of conscience from an integrating point of view.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hcch.net/es/projects/legislative-projects/parentage-surrogacy>

Parliaments must personify an example of equality for the societies they represent, improving day by day, adopting a serious commitment of leadership in order to bring about changes in mentalities and cultures, the essential component of which is education in equality and tolerance.

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND LINES OF ACTION FOR 2017**

While continuing with the work carried out over the past year and through a participatory process among its components, during 2017, the Gender Equality Working Group aims to:

- ✓ Complete the analysis, carried out last year, on the efforts made by regional parliaments to become more sensitive to gender equality and non-discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation through a study on the sexism, violence and harassment suffered by our parliamentarians.
- ✓ Create, in correlation with the rights of pregnant women and parents who have had children through gestational surrogacy, suffering the consequences of the disparity of regulations that presently exist in the European Union, a questionnaire to analyse how the Member States of the European Union have legislated in this respect, without losing sight of the work carried out at the Hague Conference.
- ✓ Collaborate closely with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), working within this framework and taking into consideration that the European Union coordinates its action through global policies on equal opportunities, so that the Working Group can serve as a reference for the implementation of its tool for evaluating gender-sensitive parliaments in the European Union.
- ✓ Promote the exchange of good practices, experiences and strategies among CALRE members, including gender mainstreaming in all policies emanating from parliamentary institutions.
- ✓ Organise reciprocal visits to other parliaments in order to become

acquainted first-hand with the activities and policies developed in the field of equality and other matters related to the principle of this Working Group.

- ✓ Convert the Working Group web space into a place for the exchange of information and news about the subject matter originating from the different regional parliaments.
- ✓ Organise a seminar/meeting to present the results of the study and promote a forum for discussion among the Presidents of the European Regional Legislative Assemblies.
- ✓ Prepare a common opinion, confirming the results and conclusions of the work carried out, to be presented at the CALRE Plenary Assembly and sent to all European institutions.

### 3. CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

- **Up to 3rd April, 2017.** - Period for the incorporation of members to the Working Group.
- **6th April, 2017.** - Presentation of the Work Plan in the First Standing Committee of the CALRE.
- **From April to September, 2017.** - Development of the proposed lines of action with the implementation of collaboration networks between parliaments through the previously-mentioned studies and analysis, along with visits to other regional parliaments to get a first-hand look at the tools and resources used in the fight against inequality.
- **5th & 6th October, 2017.-** Working Group Meeting and Seminar in Cáceres, where the results of the studies will be presented and the exchange of experiences, strategies and good practices will be promoted, creating a common agenda complete with tools and objectives.



- **November, 2017.** - Presentation of the Final Report of the Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Working Group at the CALRE Plenary Assembly.