



## Seville Declaration

On the 20th Anniversary of the Founding Declaration of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), enshrined in the Oviedo Declaration on 7 October 1997, the regional assemblies and parliaments with legislative powers it comprises reconfirm their commitment to CALRE' s mission and to the spirit which two decades ago gave rise to this meeting space where the Conference stands as both a player and interlocutor throughout Europe, claiming the prominence of these institutions in the institutional European architecture.

On such an important date, coinciding with the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, CALRE wishes to highlight the work carried out over the two past decades by assemblies and parliaments that strive to work and collaborate jointly taking into account both their different legislative powers and their cultural, linguistic and territorial singularities; and participate in a forum which gather different political sensitiveness, opinions and ideas, in favour of plural dialogue and debate on the European Union.

For all these reasons, and on the occasion of its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies

### Claims

- The essential role of the European Regions, in particular of the regional assemblies and parliaments with legislative powers that directly represent the people's will, in the process of European integration. In this regard, CALRE reaffirms its conviction, expressed in previous statements, that these singularities, experiences, proposals and initiatives from the different regions and local authorities are an asset for the Common European project .
- Multilevel, bottom-up governance, where the regional and local authorities participate in the elaboration of public European policies with direct impact both on the territories and citizens they represent, well aware that the life of the citizens is increasingly influenced by the decisions taken at the European level. Therefore, while



respecting the different legislative powers, CALRE deems it necessary to keep developing direct communication channels between the regional assemblies and parliaments and the European institutions to participate in and contribute ex ante to the legislative process of the European policies.

- A "real" key role of the regional assemblies and parliaments within the institutional European architecture. CALRE agrees with the Resolution of the European Committee of the Regions on the White Paper on the Future of Europe, which states that "*the supposedly key role of devolved local and regional authorities provided for by the Lisbon Treaty has not yet been fully realised in a genuine approach of subsidiarity and participation in the European legislative process. As it is, regional bodies still tend to be almost always on the receiving end of EU policies rather than playing a meaningful role in drawing them up, particularly as regards the legislative process*".

In this regard, we express our commitment to ensure that our Parliaments and Assemblies know about, debate and lay down guidelines on the great problems affecting the European Union.

Therefore, CALRE members call on the European Institutions to analyse the introduction of a "green card" procedure in order to allow a legislative proposal to be made, provided that a sufficient number of national or regional parliaments request it.

- In a context of international trade liberalisation and the restoration of a new world political and economic order, which questions the role of the European nation states, the regional parliamentary assemblies must play a major role to synthesise, on the one hand, the demands for autonomy and, on the other hand, the process towards a stronger European Union. Only through these can the increasingly perceptible tension between the two apparently opposed, but potentially complementary, elements of globalisation and autonomy successfully come together.
- The fundamental principles of CALRE's mission, as expressed in the Varese Declaration: "*the value of the individual and community, subsidiarity, proportionality, freedom and representative democracy; without forgetting the principles of equality and solidarity present in the spirit of the common European project*".
- The work achieved by the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies over the past twenty years as a cooperation platform and a place for debating and sharing good practices. CALRE wishes to highlight in particular the work done by the Working Groups over these two decades during which, besides the principle of subsidiarity and the cohesion policies, intrinsically linked to CALRE's mission, other issues have also been addressed such as interactive Democracy, Evaluation Policies, the phenomenon of immigration, Depopulation and Ageing, Natural Disasters or Gender Equality, just to mention some of the most relevant ones. The work done by these groups has contributed significantly to improving European awareness among the citizens' representatives in each and every Assembly and Parliament, and among citizens themselves. Likewise, in the past twenty years, there has been a consolidation of the collaborative relationships with other European institutions, in particular with the Committee of the Regions, natural partner of CALRE; and with other European and international regional associations and bodies.



However, with the explicit recognition of the work achieved, in the diverse forums and meetings organised through this year, the need has been expressed to go beyond the work carried out so far and to open a space for reflection which would provide the basis for achieving CALRE's objectives and action lines over the next twenty years. Furthermore, we deem it necessary to progress in two directions: i) to create a common frame of reference to facilitate and strengthen the contributions of every working group, and we propose that this frame of reference be the elaboration of a Strategy for Sustainable Development in the European regions; and ii) to adapt the current working groups both to the common frame of reference and new objectives. The Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies is fully convinced that, if 2017 is a defining year for the European project, the coming years, with the completion of the Europe 2020 strategy and the definition of the European scenario for 2025 referred to in the White Paper on the Future of Europe, will provide the basis for Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and therefore for the future of the new generations, and the role of the European Union in a global scenario.

Considering this decisive moment of the European project, the specific and common circumstances of each and every region, and calling on the foundational spirit of CALRE and on what was expressed above, the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies

### Expresses

- Its support to the Rome Declaration, signed on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome by the 27 heads of State or Government of the 27. CALRE welcomes, in particular, the following statement in the text: *"We will work together at the level that makes a real difference, be it the European Union, national, regional, or local, and in a spirit of trust and loyal cooperation, both among Members States and between them and the EU institutions, in line with the principle of subsidiarity"*. Likewise, the Conference recognises as their own the work commitments included in the same Declaration: a safe and protected Europe; a prosperous and sustainable Europe; a social Europe; and a stronger Europe on the world stage.
- The need to work together (institutions, public representatives and citizens) to face the current EU challenges in various levels of governance, as a common project on the world stage. Thus, CALRE appeals to the words spoken by the president of the Committee of the Regions, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, in his speech as elected president: "No institution can respond by itself to the multiple crisis that the Union has to face. We must work together".
- The conviction that European integration will get greater support from society if three basic pillars are attained: economic union, the social dimension and political union, taking into account national and regional characteristics. In this regard, CALRE considers it essential to apply multilevel governance and fully develop the European Treaties, in particular the principle of Subsidiarity.
- Its concern regarding the persistent disaffection among the citizens towards the European institutions in particular, and towards the common European project in general. According to the latest Eurobarometer, just over half the European citizens



believe that it is good for their country to belong to the EU, and a similar amount express their support to the EU, against almost nine out of ten that feel attachment to their city or region, or the nine out of ten that feel attachment to their country. CALRE believes it is essential to develop initiatives aimed both at promoting the European pedagogy, in line with the model "Reflecting on Europe" of the Committee of the Regions, and contributing to inform the citizens about the positive influence of the European policies and the common European project as it goes, so to revert the outspread belief that "all that is negative comes from Brussels".

In this regard, it seems to us that promoting the celebration, across Europe, of 18 October as the Day of the European Social Charter could be a stimulus to raise citizens' interest in and understanding of one of our hallmarks: the European social model.

CALRE considers that belief, together with other factors such as the economic and financial crisis of the past decade, to be at the origin of the growing Europhobic and Eurosceptic movements in recent years, and it appeals to the European pedagogy from all the levels of governance to counteract this scenario and, as the president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, pointed out, during the debate on the State of the Union "let us recover the Union as our Union". To this purpose, the Conference considers vital to encourage an active European citizenship that would endorse the European project and be a direct participant in the debate on the present and future of the European model. For that reason, CALRE welcomes with satisfaction the adoption by the European Commission of the European Parliament and Council's draft Regulation on the European Citizen Initiative, aimed to streamline access to such an important citizen's tool. However, it also calls for a substantial reduction in the number of declarations of support required, currently set at one million.

- The need, as expressed before, to vindicate the Treaties, the general principles of the Union Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union against the challenges it is facing. In this regard, CALRE welcomes and supports the process on the White Paper regarding the future of Europe, initiated by the president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and his statement during the debate on the State of the Union, on 13 September 2017, reminding us that : "Europe is more than a single market. More than money, more than the Euro. It has always been a matter of values".

Given the challenges facing Europe, and taking into account also the vicissitudes of the world scene, CALRE agrees that the principles that must consolidate the Union are freedom, equality and the rule of Law, so to construct a stronger, more united and democratic Union that, rooted in a community of values based on cosmopolitan consciousness, and fully aware of the civilising mission it must accomplish on the world stage, will contribute to a stronger single market, a stronger economic and monetary Union, a stronger EU as regards the fight against terrorism, and a stronger EU as a global player.

CALRE observes, once again, that the same challenges persist on the political, economic and social European agenda, with a special impact in the regions and upon their citizens. Under these circumstances, the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies



## Considers

- That it is necessary to respond collectively, from all the institutional levels, to the decisive and strategic challenges that will determine the future of the common European project, and that it is necessary to match such responses with the European citizens' demands. However, the European level can only operate within the scope of its competences. According to CALRE, the strategic challenges are: promotion of employment; economic growth based on promotion of innovative and sustainable industries that will take advantage of regional endogenous resources to promote sustainable, inclusive growth in all territories, including rural areas; the promotion of strategic public investments; the fight against depopulation and ageing, poverty and exclusion; equal opportunities; gender equality; education; research, development and innovation; the fight against climate change and coordination and response to natural disasters; security policies and the fight against terrorism; and the global response to the humanitarian crisis of refugees and migratory movements.

Furthermore, we commit ourselves to work to overcome these challenges and to contribute to the progress of each and every European region, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals, and ensure that our Parliaments and Assemblies collaborate closely in the shaping of a common strategy.

For CALRE, all the political actions to meet these challenges should take as a guiding principle the European Treaties, the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the Union, the European Social Charter; and the principles of equality and solidarity typical of the spirit of the common European project.

Furthermore, in order to strengthen the role of the regions in this scenario, it is necessary to maintain a strong and efficient cohesion policy after 2020 that shall guarantee its full financing for all regions of the EU.

- That it is necessary that the recovery of the European economy, targeted from the institutions, has a direct impact on the daily life of its citizens. Despite macroeconomic data, unemployment and the risk of poverty and social exclusion remain a problem in most European regions. According to the survey "Reflecting on Europe" conducted during this year by the European Committee of the Regions, unemployment is the main problem or concern for 30 per cent of the European citizens. Altogether with the development of policies aimed at job creation and stimulation of the economic sectors to foster innovative and sustainable growth, CALRE considers it is necessary to consolidate and guarantee social policies as an intrinsic part of the European project, taking into account the limited competence of the European Union in the field of social policy. As such, CALRE welcomes with satisfaction the adoption of the key principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights by the European Commission, as well as the adoption by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament, of the legislative report on the review of the Posting of Workers Directive within the European Union. Both events are important first steps towards real equal treatment under common rules for all European workers. However, CALRE underlines the importance of matching the progress of the social Europe and an efficient mechanism for social inspection throughout Europe.



- That the United Kingdom's withdrawal procedure from the European Union should be used to open a space for reflecting on the common European project. On 30 March 2019, the European Union will be a Union of 27, thus confirming that the disunity and disintegration threats which were still hypothetical until recently, have turned into reality. In the course of the year 2017, the anti-European currents have raised their voice more loudly and have been present in the elections in several European countries. According to CALRE, as has already been pointed out, the response to these movements is "More Europe", not only in social policies but also in areas where cross-border cooperation provides "European added value", and "Less Europe" for issues which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, can be more effectively resolved at national or regional level. This will inevitably foster the recovery of the citizens' opinion in favour of the European project.

Besides, in the face of Brexit negotiation, CALRE considers that the financial consequences of the UK withdrawal should be solved by improving efficiency. Likewise, it reaffirms the Resolution on Brexit as adopted in the 2016 Plenary Assembly.

- That there were deficiencies in coordinating the response from the Union and its Member States to the refugee's humanitarian crisis, the worst one in Europe since World War Two, and that it is urgent to achieve an agreement concerning the reform of the Dublin Regulation. CALRE calls on the Member States to apply the principle of solidarity to find a solution to the refugee crisis and unauthorised immigration.

Moreover, CALRE considers that the management of large-scale mixed population movements (including both refugees and migrants) is still a pending matter for Europe, especially regarding human trafficking, above all of women, and unaccompanied minors. For this reason it demands a civilised response from the European institutions, in line with what it represents in the global context, based on the regulations that we have adopted and on respect for universal rights. CALRE recognises the work accomplished by its regions in this field, in particular by those countries which are first receiving countries of unauthorised immigration. Therefore, it reiterates its call to increase the financial and human resources in these regions, and in other EU countries, to ensure effective border control, on the one hand, and to get the necessary resources for comprehensive care, on the other.

Furthermore, it reiterates the willingness of the regions to participate actively in resolving this situation, and it undertakes to promote a series of common initiatives by the parliaments and assemblies that consider it appropriate.

- The response to the terrorist attacks suffered in Europe should be effective and in accordance with a joint and coordinated security policy in which the EU Agenda on Security and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union should be applied. In this regard, the regional assemblies and parliaments consider their duty, as institutions, to contribute to respecting and encouraging human rights with freedom of thought and belief, and the supreme values of Democracy.
- That the European Union should lead the fight against climate change, in accordance with the provisions of the Paris Agreement. Environment conservation and sustainable



development policies should be implemented under a concrete action plan aimed at preserving a sustainable natural environment, and preventing and acting in cases of natural disasters as those that have ravaged the European territory, with particular attention to earthquakes, floods, avalanches, fires, and droughts. More specifically, as regards natural disasters, the EU should also act, in accordance with the distribution of powers, and also through regulations, on risk prevention (e.g. through a directive on restraints on land use) by introducing a coherent method of risk analysis. Moreover, in accordance with recent statements by the Committee of the Regions concerning the measures for adapting to earthquakes, it considers it useful for the European Union to use Structural and Investment Funds to create the conditions for effective resilience against disasters. (cf. Article 5, item 5, letter b of E.U. Regulation 1301/2013).

- That the European institutions should be the guarantors of equality of rights and opportunities for men and women. CALRE advocates that its assemblies and parliaments be an example in gender equality not only in terms of representativeness and legislation, but also through the exemplary behaviour of its representatives.
- That the European Union should promote the harmonisation of health standards to ensure access to public health for all the citizens of the European Union, especially in the less favoured regions of the Member States.
- That the European Union should promote projects for smart cities that would prevent the emergence of peripheral areas of economic and social disadvantage within large and medium-sized urban centres, with a view to foster the healthy growth of cities.
- That it is necessary to strengthen the role of the European Union in the world governance through a Strategy for Foreign Policy which would put on the international agenda the values and guiding principles of the European project with the aim of contributing to achieve peace in the conflict areas.

In view of the scenario and the above-mentioned considerations, CALRE wishes to reaffirm its role as a necessary link, together with regional governments, between the citizens and the European Union. For this reason, the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies

#### **Commits itself**

- To maintain its spirit of meeting-point for sharing good practices and contributing to the debate and reflection on the needs of the common European project based on every member's experiences, and the preparation of common documents, that would include parliamentary initiatives contributing both to the understanding of decisions adopted by the European institutions, and the promotion of shared initiatives, based on good practices, which could help resolve the great challenges facing Europe. On this point, CALRE calls to the spirit of the Foundational Declaration and to the conviction that *"cooperative relations between the parliamentary institutions facilitate people's understanding, and the consolidation and strengthening of democracy through the enriching acquis of mutual exchange of experiences"*.
- To contribute actively to overcome the difficulties facing European Union and to reactivate the integration project in order to achieve greater and better integration among the Member States.





- To undertake to identify a space to directly involve representatives from the student and academic sector, the youth sections of parties and associations with the specific purpose of participating in the debate on European affairs.
- To continue developing direct communication channels with other parliamentary institutions, in particular with the national Parliaments of CALRE's Member States, and with the European institutions (European Parliament, European Commission, European Committee of the Regions and European Council). Particularly, CALRE expresses its interest in opening direct interaction channels with the European institutions both for the monitoring of subsidiarity, and to facilitate knowledge of good practices, by following the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), and to assess the impact of community policies in the European regions.
- In the framework of the 2015 Agreement between CALRE and the CoR, the Conference undertakes to intensify collaboration between the two institutions, by developing a preferential channel of communication and information between CALRE working groups and the committees of the CoR, also through greater participation by the representatives of the regional legislative assemblies which are CoR members.
- To consolidate the collaboration with other Regional European Associations and promote an annual forum of their representatives to encourage the achievement of common objectives and actions.
- That the regional assemblies and parliaments, as institutions closest to the citizens, be an example of good governance as a necessary step for recovering the confidence of citizens in their institutions. In this respect, the assemblies and parliaments of CALRE commit themselves to comply with the principles of Public Transparency, they commit themselves to contribute actively to the development of a democratic culture, to undertake continuous work to inform and raise awareness, and to foster the development of tools for the so-called interactive Democracy or e-Democracy in order to encourage citizens' participation in the legislative processes of their regions, and to advance in the development of a deliberative democracy. Likewise, CALRE expresses its conviction that the evaluation of public policies ex ante and ex post is a guarantee for good governance, thus enabling the legislative authority to account for its activities before the citizens they represent.
- To join #CohesionAlliance by subscribing to the attached Declaration, proposed by the European Committee of the Regions and the Associations of European Regionalism, as a coalition of regional and local authorities that believe that the Cohesion Policy should remain the essential pillar of future growth and development of an ascending Europe of Regions and Territories.
- To promote spaces and forums for the citizens to debate on European issues and contribute to the European pedagogy, by following, as a model, initiatives such as *Reflecting on Europe* from the European Committee of the Regions and by developing own projects, both individually and collectively, to enhance the European identity and appropriation of the European project by the citizens, while paying particular attention to the involvement of young people.





- In this regard, CALRE will promote the development of initiatives that contribute to making the legislative Parliaments and Assemblies into real schools of citizenship, thus facilitating understanding of the processes that help to transform citizens' concern into a parliamentary initiative and governmental action.