



Consiglio Regionale  
del Veneto



Unioncamere  
Veneto



CALRE  
Working group "cohesion policies"

Activity Report 2014

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Work program 2015

November 2014



## 1. Introduction

This document describes the activities performed in 2014 by the one-year old **Working Group “Cohesion policies”**, coordinated by the Regional Council of the Veneto Region, which was for seven years at the head of the Working group “Financial federalism”.

The program of activities 2014 was presented last March in Brussels; at that time the Working group had already changed its name in “Cohesion policies”, in order to underline a renewed interest in the goals of the European institutions aiming at removing the inequalities in development, increasing growth opportunities and social inclusion of citizens, and supporting economic cohesion among territories.

With regard to the themes and proposals involved, the Working group intends to keep on working on previous initiatives, in line with the documents presented and discussed so far in the framework of the meetings of the Working group “Financial federalism”<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, it will also deal with the specific topics related to the cohesion policy.

As a consequence, the Regional Council of the Veneto Region reaffirmed that it is committed to analyzing some topics related to the financial federalism given that it is a fundamental lever to build and support the Europe of Regions. In this respect, our effort complies with the goal of widening our analysis in order to include also the topics within our new competences.

In particular, the 20th October 2014 the workshop “*Cohesion policy and financial federalism: a winning combination to support development*” was held in Venice. It gave the Working group’s members the chance to have a fruitful exchange on the strategies likely to increase the efficiency in public resources’ management, as well as to foster the territorial development.

**We would like to stress that we think that in recent years the involvement of the Working group’s members has not been effective;** many of the proposals put forward by the Working group have thus not been implemented.

**As a consequence, we hope that the change of strategy conceived last year - aiming at strengthening CALRE’s action at European level and pushing for a real European regional policy – will have a new impetus, thanks to the CALRE’s presidency and the entry into force of new Working groups.**

**CALRE’s action will be more incisive** and able to have a concrete impact on European initiatives related to regional development **only through a joint action involving all the stakeholders sharing the same objectives.**

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<sup>1</sup> For further information please read the final documents of the Working group “Financial Federalism”, presented between 2008 and 2013 on the occasion of CALRE’s plenary assemblies.

## 2. Main events

In 2014 the following meetings have been held:

- **March 13th, 2014 (Brussels):** presentation of the 2014 working program.
- **October 20th, 2014 (Venice):** CALRE's training workshop – Working group “cohesion policies”.

### *2.1 Training workshop on “Cohesion policy and financial federalism: a winning combination to support development” (Venice, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2014)*

The training workshop held in **Venice on 20 October 2014** was an important occasion to exchange views on the cohesion policies, which is now at the “heart” of our Working group, as already said above.

The workshop was attended by members of regional representations at Italian and European level; in particular: **Eros Brega**, President of the Italian Conference of the Presidents of Legislative Assemblies in Regions and Autonomous Provinces, **Miguel Santalices Vieira**, delegate of Pilar Rojo Noguera, Galician Parliament and CALRE's President, and **Marialuisa Coppola**, Regional Minister for Economy, Development, Research and Innovation of the Veneto Region and member of the EU Committee of the Regions.

Two detailed technical reports were presented by **Raul Prado**, former director of DG REGIO in the European Commission, and by **Prof. Francesco Palermo**, Italian Senator, associate professor of Public Law at the University of Verona and Director of the EURAC's Institute for Studies on Regionalism and Federalism – European Academy of Bolzano/Bozen.

The first report addressed some issues that had already been analyzed by the Working group “Financial federalism” in previous years.

First of all, **Raul Prado** underlined that European harmonised data on the expenses (and incomes) of Regions are not available. Since 2011 we have been stressing that this represents a serious lack of information for European institutions, although we are aware that the collection of data on financial flows between levels of government requires a lot of work to be designed, standardized and encouraged. At this sensitive time we need the European institutions to be provided with reliable data and information on the financial flows at regional level. We must keep on pushing in order to ensure that future revisions of ESA will allow the collection of more data. In this way, “national accounts in the EU will meet the challenge coming from a changing economic context, progress in methodological research and users' new needs”.

Furthermore, the speaker analysed another issue that is dear to us: local and National public expenditure. He reminded that the “Sixth Report on economic, social and territorial cohesion”, presented in Brussels by Commissioner Hahn at the beginning of September and published a few

weeks ago, devoted a specific chapter to the “Key role of regional and local authorities in public expenditure and investment” and to the efficiency of public administration in Member States.

To sum up, the report clarified that for the period 2014-2020 the cohesion policy can become an essential instrument of the European growth and investment policy (the strong arm of Europe 2020). Since a paradigm shift has recently occurred, the cohesion policy is nowadays at the service of all Regions, although the dimension “in support of the recovery of less-developed regions” is still predominant. It is thus crucial to intensify the efforts of cooperation and lobbying within the European institutions, starting from the Commission. If it is still true that relations with Regions depend on the position of Member States themselves, in practice several operational contacts do exist with all the Regions and should be institutionalized and formalized.

Prof. **Francesco Palermo** shared some reflections on the following topic: “*Italian Roads to Subsidiarity. Does cohesion mean centralization? Recent trends on financial relations*”. In particular he analyzed the apparent oxymoron between the concepts of “cohesion” and “fiscal federalism”. According to the speaker, the antithesis between these concepts exists only when subsidiarity is not followed by procedures allowing all the stakeholders to develop real territorial policies. The Italian experience shows that so far multilateral relations have not been able to realize a real cohesion among territories; bilateral relations appeared to be more efficient.

After the debate among the members of the Working group, we identified **future actions to be undertaken** in view of the achievement of shared objectives through new initiatives and lobbying activities in European institutions involving the members both of the Working group and of the European Parliament. In particular, the group relaunched the proposal for a coordination network among MEPs coming from those European Regions having legislative assemblies. They will thus be involved in CALRE’s activities and encouraged to advocate within the European Parliament, in order to strengthen CALRE’s role at European level as well as to build a network able to implement a real European regional policy through the promotion of Regional Councils. This initiative needs to be relaunched in the new European Parliament and we are confident that it will achieve the expected results.

### **3. Future prospects**

The working group aims to provide a new input to scheduled events by involving in its actions those who share the European federalist ideals. Therefore, we propose again to:

- share with all the Presidents of CALRE's Regional Assemblies the objectives of the work program and the contact points within the European institutions;
- establish within the working group "Cohesion policies" a network of financial and statistical experts suggested by the CALRE's regions, with the objective of comparing and exchanging data and metadata on the financial flows between levels of government;
- establish a network of MEPs coming from Regions having legislative assemblies in order to involve them in CALRE's activities and push them to work effectively in the European Parliament;
- establish stable relations with the Commissions of the European Parliament, with the help of those MEPs dealing with the same topics CALRE is working on;
- keep the relevant section of CALRE's website updated through the publication of documents and reports as well as of the agenda of the working group;
- monitor the experiences - already existing in some Regions - aiming at developing and consolidating processes of autonomy, in order to identify their main features, to supporting them, and to give them visibility among the other Regions.

#### **4. Members of the Working group**

The “Cohesion policies” working group is coordinated by the President of the Regional Council of Veneto Clodovaldo Ruffato and it is currently composed by the Presidents of the following regional assemblies:

1. Regional Council of Valle d’Aosta
2. Regional Council of Piemonte
3. Regional Council of Lombardia
4. Council of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano
5. Regional Council of Veneto
6. Regional Council of Friuli Venezia Giulia
7. Regional Council of Emilia Romagna
8. Regional Council of Umbria
9. Regional Council of Basilicata
10. Parliament of Steiermark
11. Parliament of Galicia
12. Parliament of Wallonia