

Declaration of Reggio Calabria

**Approved by unanimity
Reggio Calabria 28 October 2003**

The Presidents of the Regional Legislative Assemblies, meeting at Reggio Calabria on 27 and 28 October 2003, approved the following Declaration:

1. Constitutional reforms of the European Union

The Conference has followed with attention the proceedings of the Convention, in which it was unable to participate, as a result of the non-application of parliamentary representation including at regional level. The declaration of Laeken of Heads of State and of Government had underlined the importance of regional legislation where foreseen by the internal systems.

The Regional Parliaments stated their positions in the Declarations of Madeira of 30 October 2001 and of Brussels of 29 October 2002. CALRE had the opportunity of re-stating them in the course of the hearing before the plenary session of the Convention on 25 June 2002.

In the text approved by the Convention, CALRE expresses satisfaction at the new organisation that the Constitutional Treaty aims at ensuring for Europe as it prepares for the first enlargement to ten States. In particular it points out that various proposals made in the declarations of Madeira and of Brussels have been accepted, namely:

- § on the reciprocity of the principle of loyal co-operation (para. 2, art. I-2)
- § on the participation of Regional Parliaments in the legislative process, in the form of co-operation with the National Parliaments and in the pre-legislative phase (protocol on subsidiarity and art. I-46)
- § in recognition of the constitutional provisions and those regulating the internal organisation of each State (para. 1 art. I-5)
- § in the clear attribution of competencies to the Union and to reformulation of the clause on flexibility;
- § On the faculty of the Committee of the Regions to refer the question to the Court of Justice (protocol on subsidiarity).

CALRE expresses its disappointment that the Regions, and in particular those Regions having legislative capacity, are not recognised directly, but only through their respective National Constitutions and that they are not attributed any capacity of appeal to the Court of Justice except by way of national internal procedures.

CALRE, in dialogue with the organisation of the Presidents of the Regions having legislative capacity (REG LEG), considers that the process of reform should be completed, starting off from the proceedings of the Intergovernmental Conference.

CALRE notes that the Protocol on the role of the National Parliaments should emphasise the possibility for the member States to freely organise their representation in such co-operation, involving, wherever foreseen by the National Constitutions, the Regional Legislative Assemblies and in the same way arranging for their information on any documents to be consulted.

In addition CALRE considers it necessary to have a clearer definition of art. I-22 (formerly art. 203) on the participation of representatives of Regional Governments in the Council's proceedings.

CALRE considers it necessary that the presence of the Regional Legislative Assemblies in the Committee of the Regions be revised. CALRE also regards it as necessary that the Committee of the Regions be improved further and its status be raised to that of a fully fledged European Institution. The Committee of the Regions must be consulted on all regional competencies of the States that have regional legislative competence. If the European Institutions were not to accept the opinions expressed by the Committee of the Regions, they should explain their motives.

2. COSAC

In the framework of the Italian Presidency CALRE, in implementation of the Brussels Declaration and on the basis of the proposals of the Standing Committee, has established contacts and drawn up proposals to the Presidents in rotation of the Conference of Organisations specialised in EC Questions (COSAC). The proposed amendments to the internal regulations that were drawn up by CALRE and proposed by the National Members at Athens on 5 and May 2003 specifically by the Italian and German delegations, with the backing of other member Countries, were the subject of subsequent discussion and examination on 7 October in the Plenary Meeting of COSAC. The Italian

Presidency invited the three Presidents of European Regional Legislative Assemblies to attend this meeting.

CALRE welcomed the proposals by the German, Belgian and Italian delegations and the debate on the role of Regional Legislative Assemblies during the session on the 7th October. CALRE welcomes COSAC's decision to set up a working group on the revision of internal rules of procedure in order to involve the Regional Legislative Assemblies in their work. CALRE also invites COSAC to communicate to the Intergovernmental Conference the beginning of this initiative, aiming at a possible adaptation of the *Protocol on the role of the National Parliaments* of the proposed Constitutional Treaty.

2. European institutions

European Parliament

CALRE is gratified to note the dialogue established with the European Parliament, with its President Pat Cox, with the President's Office and with the President of the Committee on Regional Questions, Transport and Tourism, as well as the results achieved in the negotiations. The agreements with the President's Office of this Committee provide for wider institutional relations between the European Parliament and the Regional Parliaments. This happens through the presence of institutional representatives of the Regional Parliaments, who have the right to speak at the Committee's debates, and through the acknowledgement of their initiative to submit draft resolutions, approved by Regional Parliaments, on issues dealt with in the European parliamentary groups. CALRE approves the continuation of this dialogue which will allow increased institutional collaboration on a European level.

Committee of the Regions

CALRE is pleased at the Programme of work in common agreed on for the period 2003-2004 with the Committee of the Regions on the subject of institutional reforms and the reinforcement of regional democracy in Europe, and confirms its undertaking to deploy its best efforts in these sectors.

European Commission

CALRE welcomes with particular favour the initiative of the European Commission with which the Regional Legislative Assemblies will be involved in the preliminary phases of the procedure of legislative elaboration and in discussion of the Commission's annual working programme. This initiative by the Commission - inspired by the White Paper on Governance and in line with art. I-46 of the proposed Constitutional Treaty - is especially welcome in view of the fact that the Regional Parliaments are often required to approve regional legislative regulations implementing EC regulations. CALRE points out that it is necessary for the European Commission to more fully appreciate the territorial, constitutional and cultural diversity of the European Regions and their individual specificities, which are still not adequately represented in the European regional institutions.

4. Enlargement

4.1 "Charter of the Regions" and partnership initiatives.

In application of the Declaration of Madeira, CALRE intends to contribute to the reinforcement of regional democracy in Europe, in respect of the diversity of organisation of the States and in the sharing of certain basic principles. To this end a draft "*Charter of the Regions*" has been drawn up, thereafter submitted for signature in the course of a meeting of the European Regional Assemblies which took place in Florence on 19 September 2003, with the participation of about one hundred Presidents. Bearing this in mind, CALRE intends to carry out the job of Observer entrusted to it on 20 May 2003 by the Council of Regional and Local authorities of the Council Europe, with which it has embarked on an ongoing co-operation.

Also in collaboration with the Assembly of the European Regions and with the Congress of Regional and Local Authorities of the Council of Europe (CPLRE), CALRE in the course of various Regional Legislative Assemblies aims at extending inter-institutional and administrative partnerships and twinnings with Regional Assemblies of countries about to become members and of other third countries. CALRE confirms its own political position with regard to the historic importance of the transformation of the European Union by enlargement to the new countries, reiterating the will to contribute to its consolidation, with particular reference to reinforcement of the principles of representation, democratic legitimacy and political responsibility, of participation and transparency. CALRE intends to follow with attention all the processes following on enlargement, and to participate in them on the basis of its own competencies, including from the point of view of economic, social and territorial cohesion and all related questions.

4.2 "New neighbours"

The enlargement of the Union opens up new frontiers and offers new possibilities of collaboration with the neighbouring countries. For this reason, CALRE supports the initiatives of the European Parliament and of the

European Commission to set up a circle of friends with the bordering States, from Russia to Morocco, for the purpose of consolidating relations with such countries both on the basis of solidarity and of a common sense of justice, as also for the European interest in the reinforcement of security, democracy and development of such countries. In particular CALRE aims at a closer collaboration with the countries of the Mediterranean Basin, in view of the urgent need for ratification of the trade agreements already negotiated in order to advance in the building of the Euro-Mediterranean free exchange area.

5 Dialogue with other legislative assemblies and with non-legislative regional Assemblies

CALRE intends to consolidate the dialogue started up in the framework of the initiatives of the Italian Presidency with the Parliaments of American States, on the basis of the experiences and contacts already established with the European Regional Legislative Assemblies, setting up a channel of communication, as a contribution of the Assemblies to a better transatlantic understanding and dialogue

By re-affirming its original intention to set up a specific scope for the European Regional Assemblies with legislative powers, CALRE is very much in favour of a dialogue with the Regional Assemblies and with the Senate of the French Republic, in the framework of the initiatives of the Italian Presidency, with appreciable results in terms of respect of the constitutional structures of the member States and their internal organisation, relative repercussions on EC life, and on the sharing of certain principles in common, in particular regarding regional democracy in the new enlarged Europe.

6 Diversity in Europe

CALRE congratulates the Presidents of the Legislative Assemblies of the island and extreme peripheral regions at the results of the meeting in Cagliari on 2 May 2003, as likewise the Legislative Assemblies of the City Regions who are members of CALRE for their declaration of Berlin dated 25 February 2003. CALRE underlines its determination to contribute to the safeguarding and revaluation of the geographical, linguistic, cultural, constitutional and social diversity of the European Regions, as recognised also in the proposed Constitutional Treaty, while respecting the internal organisation of every member state.

7 On joint work with other regional organisations

CALRE confirms its determination and willingness to co-operate with regional organisations in the various ambits to which it belongs, considering that there are areas of activity in common which could lead to joint actions marked by greater efficacy and considerable savings in energies and resources.

In particular CALRE is pleased to note the excellent level of co-operation achieved by the Conference of Presidents of the Regions having legislative capacities (REG LEG).

8. Reinforcement of CALRE

The Presidents of the European Regional Legislative Assemblies note with satisfaction that the greater activity of CALRE over the past year has led to the achievement of a number of significant results, for example in the framework of inter-parliamentary co-operation and of COSAC. The Presidents thank the President of CALRE, Riccardo Nencini for the activity carried out by CALRE, as well as all the Members of the Standing Committee, which has met five times: at Florence on 9 December 2002, at Strasbourg on 12 March 2003, at Venice on 16 June 2003, at Florence on 19 September 2003 and at Reggio Calabria on 26 October 2003. In confirming its own nature of a Conference between all European Regional Legislative Assemblies, CALRE considers that it has the duty of consolidating the results achieved and of reinforcing certain activities with particular reference to co-operation and the setting up of a Network between the Commissions on European questions, already singled out among the objectives contained in the Declaration of Oviedo. For this purpose, a document attached hereto re-states the underlying principles of CALRE and identifies the main lines of the activities to be developed, assigning to the forthcoming Presidencies and to the Standing Committee the task of seeing to their implementation, with the widest possible involvement of the Assemblies participating in CALRE.

Documents attached:

- A. Strategies of CALRE and working programme
- B. Declaration of the Presidents of the Legislative Assemblies of the City Regions
- C. Declaration of the Presidents of the Legislative Assemblies of the Island Regions
- D. Programme of activity and network on *e-democracy*