



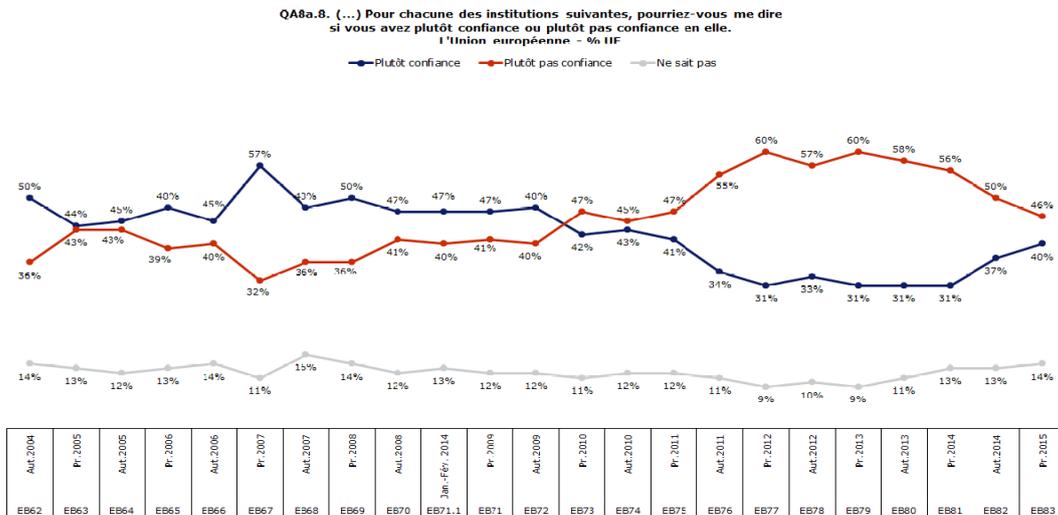
Conference of the Regional Legislative Assemblies of the European Union

CALRE's 2016 Working Program

Introduction

The scenario in which CALRE's 2016 Program has to be developed is characterized by complex internal and external challenges that need strong and forward-looking political choices. The Union in 2015 was crossed by powerful economic, humanitarian and security crisis. The Brexit, the Greek crisis, the attacks of Brussels and Paris are some aspects of the boundary within which the Union has to develop its internal policies, knowing that they will have to be ambitious and sustainable. Major choices, in one sense or another, can no longer be deferred, because the many urgencies make the option of immobility certainly more dangerous than any choice.

Moreover, in drawing up CALRE's Working program it seems necessary and appropriate to consider little reassuring data about the degree of confidence of European citizens in the European institutions over the last 12 years.



This data should stimulate us to rethink what kind of idea of Europe we want to develop and what political and administrative content we have to give to our action, both as Association of European Regional Legislative Assemblies, as Presidents of our individual regional legislative assemblies.

We must, therefore, start from what was signed in the Milan Declaration *"The EU institutions are unavoidably more distant than the real life of European citizens and, at times, unable to fully understand the problems that emerge in the territories and unable to propose effective solutions. In this scenario, characterized by a feeling of disaffection with politics, regional assemblies, as institutional representatives closest to the people, must take the initiative, not only because of their legislative power, but especially as public virtue models, able to restore the interest and especially the trust of citizens. In this regard, as already implemented in most parliaments and assemblies members of the CALRE, the principles of transparency and participation, through the resources made available by the e-Democracy instrument, must feature permanently in the daily work of the Assemblies . The Presidents of the Parliaments of the CALRE, endorsing the words of the President of the European Commission Mr. Juncker, during the 2015 State of the Union speech - "There is not enough Europe in this Union. And there is not enough Union in this Union. "- added:" There are not enough regions and Parliaments in this Union. " The Europeist project cannot ignore the involvement of Parliaments at each level, European, national and regional. "*

In his speech on the 2015 State of the Union, President Juncker presented the general conditions of the EU from a social, economical and political point of view, the agenda of the present Government and the future plans and priorities.

The State of the Union also marks the beginning of the inter-institutional process that leads to the establishment of the following year's working program of the European Commission, which is somehow the script to transform political priorities into concrete action, in order to ensure the protection of safety, employment, social and environmental sustainability of Europeans and in order to the shape and timely and correct apply, in which Regions and Regional Assemblies have the duty to participate in the role given to them by the Treaties and by state and regional laws.

Under the many European legislative proposals that affect areas of regional interest and, inevitably political and legislative interventions of Regions, is highly desirable that each Regional Assembly will exercise its political filter to identify, sector by sector, the priorities on which it must strengthen the link between the different administrative levels and the government, and play an active part in

the European decision-making process, protecting the interests of the territories and limiting the production of constraints, too burdensome to them.

In Europe, **the direct dialogue with the Committee of the Regions**, in which the Regional Assemblies are directly represented with a delegation of members that covers the entire area of activities, allows both the comparison with the positions of the different territories of the Union, and a close dialogue with the European Commission, through the approval of opinions and resolutions that, although not binding, have seen their relative significance strengthened over time.

Even then, the definition, in the Conference, of common priorities on the European agenda and their subsequent policy and subsidiarity analysis allow us to offer to the representatives on the Committee important information on the positions of the territories.

Regional Assemblies, therefore, in this context call for a greater involvement of the parliaments at various levels of *governance* and for a strengthening of the European project through the gradual creation of institutions and federal policies that will allow the overcoming of the present perception of the democratic deficit of the Union.

In 2016, the presidency of the CALRE that, for the first time, is renewed for a second term, considers it essential to focus its agenda on the European scene. The CALRE, in fact, aims to become a stable partner of European institutions, carrying out a collective work **with both the Committee of the Regions**, and **with the other Associations** representing the **European regionalism**.

Despite the undeniable progress in the acquisition of a more prominent role of regional authorities in the European institutions, there is still a strong need to strengthen the role played by each local identity, with the objective of strengthening the sense of belonging of all citizens to Europe and its institutions. The creation of a network between European regions is therefore an essential element to give strength to the voice of local authorities at European level.

Specifically, the CALRE must **increase its representativeness and authority** playing the role of "megaphone" of the European Regional Legislative Assemblies more strongly and increasing even more its capacity of representation within the European institutional sphere. In fact, the strength of an Association is the ability to represent as much as possible the needs of the regional legislative Assemblies and, therefore, those of the territories, of local self-governments and intermediate Bodies. It's, therefore, necessary to continue along the path already mapped out in order to build a

common platform to work together in order to share a strong position on the contents and methods of production of the Community measures.

The lines of action will be the following:

1. Practical implementation of the relationship with the Committee of Regions

In order to focus the attention on Europe and to elevate the position of the CALRE within the Community context it is absolutely necessary **to put into practice the relationship with the Committee of the Regions**. The aim of strengthening the dialogue with the Committee of the Regions has been enshrined in the collaboration agreement signed on the last 9, July in Brussels. The signing of such document confirms and formalizes the privileged and intense relationship that has long tied the CALRE and the Committee of the Regions and, in this view, it should be seen as a revival of the understanding with the aim of achieving a more effectively cooperation, on an ongoing basis. For this reason:

- all members of the CALRE will be periodically kept updated on the activities of the CoR and, during the Plenary of the CoR and during the meetings of the Committees **they will be involved in the presentation of amendments or assessments** on the Opinions under discussion in order to bring CALRE's own position, thanks to the contributions of those who are both members of the CALRE and of the Committee of Regions.
- the CALRE will have the opportunity to present **its own annual working program during the next meeting of the Bureau of the CoR at the beginning of June**.
- **the members of the CoR and the members of the technical structure of the CoR will be invited** to the Standing Committee and to the CALRE's Plenary Assembly, in order to inform about the priority issues of regional impact so that the CALRE can best define its own positions.

2. Closer relations with European Institutions and with the Associations of the European regionalism

The CALRE wants to create a common course that can hold together the various trends within European regional representation. This goal will be deepened on two fronts. On the one hand we have to make the "European regionalist soul" very widely known within the European Institutions

and towards major European stakeholders. On the other hand, in 2016 it will be crucial **to intensify relations with other associations of the European regionalism**, elaborating concrete actions that can fully implement the objectives outlined in the protocols signed with the CALRE. This result may be pursued:

- by a **direct comparison** of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions during the meetings of the CALRE in order to learn about the working agendas of the respective entities and the working priorities of strong regional impact.
- by the possibility to submit the opinions of the CALRE (see paragraph 4) to the Commissioner **Cretu**, to the President of the Commission REGI **Mihaylova** and to the President of the Committee of the Regions **Markkula**.
- through a **direct comparison with the Presidents and secretariats of European regional Associations** in order to organize a **meeting on "European regionalism"** during which synergies and more effective forms of institutional collaboration, more consistent with the actual needs of Regions and European local authorities, may be introduced as urgent themes.

This latter is a key point of the 2016 activity.

The open dialogue with European regional Associations (with which protocols of cooperation are under way), must be maintained and must be put into operation so that together we will strengthen the capacity of each Association to give voice to regional and local ownership.

It is necessary to build a common course with these subjects, making effectively operational the cooperation protocols.

This fruitful path of recent years must be made explicit with the inclusion in the 2016 agenda of a meeting aimed at deepening and investigating the role of the Associations in a context of renewed European Regionalism.

Only through a network, which formally shares also objectives and purposes, it will be possible to effectively express the representation of the territories we represent.

3. **The strengthening of the interparliamentary dialogue**

The strengthening of the cooperation with their national parliaments is a vital component of democratic legitimacy and of the process of the drafting of the European legislation. A structured

interparliamentary comparison enables national parliaments not only to have a greater harmony of lines of action undertaken with the specific needs of the territories - improving their effectiveness, their understanding and their sharing among the citizens - but also to bring the contribution of regional Assemblies directly to the attention of the European institutions. The goal of activating a real parliamentary system should be pursued vigorously by each Regional Assembly and by the CALRE, also through their participation in the meetings of COSAC.

4. Analyzing the content of the working program of the European Commission

The result of an increased presence of the CALRE on the European scenario also means a strengthening of the ordinary activities that the Conference carries out since its foundation. Specifically, it is of paramount importance that **we analyze and go into the substance of the 2016 working program of the European Commission** in order to identify the most significant dossiers on which to exercise control of subsidiarity and substance. The greater the capacity of the CALRE to ensure a significant, qualitatively higher contribution of merit on the Community policies will be and the greater the possibility of embarking on a path of confrontation and cooperation with the European Commission, especially in the pre-legislative phase. For this reason **it is appropriate** at the outset:

- to approve during the First Standing Committee a **Resolution on the European Commission's 2016 Work Program**, in which to highlight precisely the priorities of the European Regional Assemblies;
- that **the members of the Standing Committee, representing the various national parliamentary delegations and in particular the individual working groups**, choose some political and/or European topics, on which to express an unified position, arising both from the political priorities of the 2016 Work Program of the European Commission, and from the main European strategic lines of action of great impact and in line with regional interest. For this purpose, to CALRE members will be delivered a Document prepared by CALRE Secretariat in collaboration with Italian Conference, and the Document of the Committee of the Regions about the 2016 policy priorities;
- to draw up a final working document, which takes into account all the opinions and expressed views, to be submitted and discussed at the annual Plenary Assembly with the

representatives of the European Commission, of the European Parliament and of the Committee of the Regions, who will be invited to the work;

In the political presentation of the program, in substantial continuity with 2015, the Commission emphasizes that the underlying spirit is that of *better regulation*: we must be constantly vigilant to ensure that the legislation and the spending programs of the Union will be effective and will continue over time to meet their purpose, we have to verify that rules will be adapted to ambitions, reviewing the areas of the current legislation in order to produce results and to repeal the legislation no longer relevant and not in line with the purposes.

Starting from what has been previously described, through its working groups and its members CALRE will be able to draw up working documents, resolution proposals, opinions on those areas of activity that will be able to experience important developments for the European regional context in 2016, and that are considered important to follow, for instance:

- **'Juncker's Plan'**. Announced last year as the main project of the European Commission to boost investment in Europe, during 2015 the Plan has embarked on a virtuous path that has led to the establishment of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (FEIS) and has already undertaken some projects. The CALRE will have to assess the possible impact of such resources on regions and, if necessary, provide information on the areas of interest to which the future projects are to be allocated.
- **TTIP**. The Treaty for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment, come to its 11th round of negotiations, aims to create a trade agreement between the United States and the European Union. The agreement, as well as having the aim of lowering customs duties to encourage exchanges, also aims to redefine the standards of regulation of goods and products. The potential consequences will affect areas that directly concern the life of territories: agriculture, small and medium enterprises, services (to name but a few). The CALRE may therefore not be unprepared and must carefully monitor the future developments of the negotiation.
- **New Cohesion policy**. The CALRE will provide its contribution in view of the forthcoming programming period. Regional parliaments in this respect, are in a particularly privileged

position as institutional entities closer to the territories and thus better able to observe how the available funds are invested and what are the related challenges.

- **Circular Economy.** The Commission's objective is to address economic and environmental problems, maximizing efficiency in the use of resources by covering the entire value chain and promoting innovation. This innovative and transversal approach aims to contribute to the development of new markets and new business models with important consequences both environmentally and socially and in terms of jobs. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that European Regional Legislative Assemblies bring their contribution to such an ambitious project.
- **Macro-regional strategies.** In addition to the strategies of the Baltic, the Danube and the Adriatic-Ionic, in recent months also the Alpine strategy has become operational. The CALRE will have to carefully monitor the developments of these strategies as they represent an innovative tool for the promotion of diversity in Europe and to give new impetus to the cross-border cooperation.
- **Cross-border cooperation.** The development of cross-border projects at regional and local levels has always been a long and complex process, which has often required the negotiation of bilateral treaties by national governments. The European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) were introduced in 2007 to promote inter-regional work. In this sense, the CALRE can be an important dialogue tool for the development of joint projects between regions that are part of it, intended to guarantee their cooperation, whether cross-border or inter-regional.

On these issues **the working groups** will play surely a valuable relevant work. The CALRE working groups active in the current year are as follows:

- **Subsidiarity** – Coordinator Reinhold Bocklet, Vice President of the Landtag of Baviera.
- **E-Democracy and new technologies** – Coordinator André Antoine, President of the Walloon Parliament.
- **Immigration, social policy and human rights** – Coordinator Vincenzo Cotugno, President of the Regional Council of Molise.
- **Cohesion Policy** – Coordinator Roberto Ciambetti, President of the Regional Council of Veneto.

- **Gender Equality** – Coordinator Blanca Martín Delgado, President of the Parliament of Estremadura .
- **Better regulation and better evaluation** – Coordinator the President of the Regional Council of Umbria.

5. Working Platform and Exchange of good practice

In 2016, the CALRE wants to promote a more intensive exchange of ideas and best practices among the members of the Conference. In fact, the issues and the problems that European sub-national legislators are facing, while taking into account the differences between the different state actors in Europe, are often similar. This is all the more reason why the CALRE has to become a place of debate and dialogue, being able to analyze difficulties on their merits but also managing to propose potential solutions worthy of support and able to act as a stimulus for the activities of European regional assemblies. The possible lines of action are:

- to encourage the sharing of a '**catalog**' of **best practices** through the development of an **Online Platform** to be included on the website of the CALRE, on which bring together the experiences, best practices, problems and questions of sub state legislators. This mode is intended to facilitate the flow of ideas and allow a more effective channelling of those experiences that could be useful in approaching issues of the same nature;
- to realize a closer coordination and to keep up to date the members of the CALRE on the ongoing activities and on the most important issues of interest. A newsletter will be realized, that will constantly monitor the activities of the European institutions and of the European regional associations not only at a legislative level but also at level of guidelines and policy initiatives as well as seminars, conferences and relationships of regional interest;
- to establish the "**CALRE's Award**" for the best European examples of initiatives able to concretely improve an aspect or an area of the economic, cultural and social life of territories and communities in the 2014-2015 biennium, making visible the 'positive impact of European Institutions in the life of the regions.

6. International relationships

The CALRE will always keep focused at European level, however, its activities on a global scale with non-European associations will definitely not be neglected. In fact, in 2015, the CALRE played a particularly active role **at international level** through the participation in important events in the USA and in Taiwan. In particular with the NCSL (National Conference of State Legislatures) it has established a strong and lasting relationship, formalized by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two conferences.

This area of activity has experienced one of its most important moments during the first **World Forum** of regional and sub-national legislative Assemblies, held in Milan on October, 23th and 24th. This was an opportunity to talk at international level to the representatives of regional parliaments on issues that are at the heart of the activity of the CALRE: representation and sovereignty. So, the international activities of 2015 and, among these, the event of the Forum, laid the foundations for a constructive dialogue on problems, solutions and issues that concern the sub national legislators and their territories at all latitudes.

For this reason, some events have already been scheduled to run during the year, in order not to lose the heritage of knowledge and relationships; a significant presence of CALRE members is expected to characterize these events.

In particular, CALRE has been invited for the first time to UNALE General Assembly, which will be held on June, 1st to 3rd in Aracuja (Brazil). Moreover, CALRE is expected to attend the annual Legislative Summit of NCSL (National Conference of State Legislatures), which will take place in Chicago (US) from August, 8th to 11th. The PCL Summit (Philippine Councilors League) will be held in Manila (Philippines) in December.

Furthermore, the launch of the platform of sharing of experiences and best practices will certainly be a useful tool to animate discussion and give rise to interesting ideas of reflections on themes of regional interest, implementing the commitments made with the sharing of the manifesto of Milan.

2016 CALRE's ACTIVITIES TIMETABLE

DATE	CITY	CALRE's BODY
20th, April	Brussels	First Standing Committee
14th, July	Brussels	Second Standing Committee
27th, October	Lombardia	Third Standing Committee
28th, October	Lombardia	Plenary Session

2016 CALRE's INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

DATE	CITY	ORGANIZATION
1st – 3rd June	Brazil	UNALE's Conference
8th – 11th August	Chicago - Illinois	NCSL's Legislative Summit
About 8th December	Manila - Philippines	PCLS's Summit - Philippine Councilors League