



Presidency of CALRE 2018

“Reflection about the future of CALRE”

I. Context

In 2013, a work of reflection about CALRE began, having been stated in the 2013 Brussels Declaration that “CALRE should guaranty that the works produce effective results at a European level. Thus, CALRE started a reflection work in order to redefine its goals and the organisation of its work”, as well as “it is necessary, particularly, to lower the costs inherent to its functioning, accelerate the works and increase the diffusion of the results obtained, and concentrate part of its meetings in Brussels, headquarter of the European institutions”, being that in the same declaration was acknowledged that such approach would take time.

In the last 4 years some important steps were taken in the sense of the explained above, like the adoption of a new regulation that, among other changes, provided that the first two standing committees occur in Brussels, as well as the gradual affirmation of CALRE and the actions of approaching the different European institutions.

Notwithstanding the work already developed, the need that CALRE has to adapt to new challenges continues, as well as to solve some problems that still encounters. It was in this regard, in the Plenary Assembly held in Seville, in November 2017, that a reflection that “... establishes the base of CALRE objectives and action strategies for the next 20 years” was started.



In the speech on the occasion of the election as President of CALRE, made in Seville, on 10th November 2017, the President of the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of the Azores, Ana Luís, highlighted the *“recently established Working Groups that will carry out a reflection about the new goals of CARLE, after 20 years of its constitution”* and pointed out *“the importance of the Working Groups in the scope of the Activity Plan”* of the Conference for 2018.

Therefore, it is in the light of these challenges faced by the regions that are part of CALRE and, besides, by the European Union itself – such as the case of the Brexit, the increase of populisms and nationalisms or the distancing of the citizens regarding the political institutions in general, among others – that this reflection was made. Furthermore, in a year in which the negotiations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework began and, specially, about EU’s Cohesion Policy for 2021-2027, it was important to rethink the role of CALRE, its structuring and action model, in order to reinforce its affirmation via the proactivity and differentiation regarding the other organisations.

This was, in sum, a document motivated by the necessity that we have to keep CALRE alive and dynamic, with an active, determined and present voice, and adapted to the political and institutional current moment, where is even more important the active participation of the members of CALRE, the dynamic of its Working Groups and the deepening of protocols and the partnership with organizations with which we share essential values and principles.



II. Developed activities

In this respect, the Presidency of CALRE developed throughout 2018 various activities in order to get a reflection about the new goals of CALRE, 20 years after its constitution, and that, in a brief manner, were:

22 March	Presentation, in CALRE's 1 st Standing Committee meeting, of the goals of the work to be done and approval of the questionnaire to be sent to all the members of CALRE.
April	Submission of the questionnaire to all the members of CALRE.
May and June	Reception of the replies to the questionnaire and the respective analysis.
28th June	Presentation, in CALRE's 2 nd Standing Committee meeting, of the questionnaire results, of the first conclusions resulting of it and the work proposal to discuss important matters and not totally clarified by the answers to the questionnaire.
August	Sending out the document, to gather contributions, with important matters still under debate, that were not clarified by the answers to the questionnaire, and with the proposal of the new rules (already with the proposals resulting from the questionnaire).
9th October	Organisation of the workshop "Regional Legislative Parliaments: what role in EU's Cohesion Policy



	beyond 2020?” in the scope of the European Week of Regions and Cities, in Brussels, that gathered important contributions to what should be the role of CALRE in the future.
October	Analysis and compilation of the contributions to the document and rules sent in August and elaboration of the proposals of final version of the document “Reflection about the future of CALRE” and the new “CALRE Rules”, to be both present in the Standing Committee and Plenary Assembly of November.

III. The future of CALRE - main conclusions

Not invalidating the reading of the support document to this reflection, it is now presented, in a nutshell, the main conclusions regarding the reflection on the future of CALRE:

1. Institutional Model

1.1 Legal Nature

One of the issues with the biggest prospective of impact in the structure and action of CALRE had to do with the possibility of modify its configuration as legal entity of the associative type. Specially, it was considered the possibility of the formalisation of CALRE while association with national law, regulated not by the International Law, but rather by the legal order of a State. As a



consequence, CALRE would start to have legal capacity and personality, corporate body and legal obligations. It would represent, equally, a leap regarding the bonds of the members, in the way that it would start to be established the payment of a fee to support the expenses and responsibility of such entity, for example, at the level of a stable staff, consequently with greater political visibility and, it is presumed, better technical quality of its action.

Although the possible advantages of CALRE becoming a legal entity, the majority of the parliaments believes that CALRE should continue to be a body of political and informal nature of cooperation among European regions with legislative powers, a forum for inter-regional discussion, without legal existence, nor in terms of International Law, nor of National Law, with a structure and functioning defined by an internal Regulation, approved unanimously, with a duration extended in time.

It was chosen, therefore, a model of existence and functioning very connected to the own dynamic and proactivity of the members of CALRE. That is, whether the political visibility and presence, or the technical quality of the support work to the decision, it depends on the provision of means on the part of the members, specially the presidency, of the standing committee and working groups. It has as clear advantages the fact of being an already known model, which has been working, being informal and easily adaptable to new possible needs of CALRE.

1.2. Structure

Following the above mentioned, CALRE should continue to be a body depending exclusively of the dynamic of the participation of its members, particularly of the parliament that has the presidency, as well as of the working groups.



1.3 Members

The future of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland participation in CALRE, in the context of the exit of the United Kingdom off the European Union, is, naturally, a matter of special importance, and it should be found the better regulatory perspective and solution to keep its inclusion in CALRE.

The challenge to CALRE, in this context, is to guarantee the continuity of the presence and contribution of those members, assuming that CALRE would be clearly weakened in the case of the withdrawal of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, from a quantitative perspective, seeing the number of its members reduced and, in a significant way, the total populational weight of CALRE, and from a qualitative point of view, the lost of the contribution and proactivity of those members.

The members of CALRE welcome the stay of the United Kingdom regions after the Brexit as members of full right and through an exception to the rule that the members of CALRE should be from Member-States of the European Union, although they understand that the matter should be approached only after the exit of the United Kingdom and taking into account the content of its agreement, in the way that only then will be possible to have a clear and extensive view of the future relation, in general, of the United Kingdom with the EU and, particularly, in the scope of the regional and territorial cooperation.

2. Functioning and Rules

Regarding the functioning of CALRE, we highlight here the main issues that were reflected upon, the conclusions, as well as, when applicable, the necessary amendments to the Rules. The debate and the approval of the amendments to the



Rules, which will occur in the Plenary Assembly, aim at complying it with the several proposals received, as well as think about improvements, deepen or streamline practical issues to its functioning identified by the Presidency of CALRE.

2.1 President

The possibility of increasing the mandate of the presidency of CALRE had as possible positive point, allowing a better work planning, giving greater stability and favouring, equally, the institutional representation of the organisation, although these objectives were not, in itself, distanced by the maintenance of the current rules.

Therefore, CALRE should keep the election of its President by majority, with a one-year mandate, renewable for another year. This model allows a better compatibility with the electoral calendars of the members, general rule with elections every 4 years, not rendering unfeasible, however, a mandate of two years, allowing therefore to establish wider goals and calendars for the presidency, give more stability and predictability to the works, not requiring therefore the Rules to have any amendment.

2.2 Mandate

Even not having any severe changes to its functioning, it has been an objective and a permanent worrying of the members to proceed to adjustments that would allow to optimise resources and improve CALRE's action and its dynamic.

Therefore, the streamlining of the beginning of the Presidents new mandate, and consequently its annual activities, the President should take office after the



election, at the end of the annual Plenary Assembly, although the mandate only begins officially at 1st January of the following year, and the realisation of the first Standing Committee meeting should be carried out preferably in January.

This way, keeping the essential of the elective model and the duration of the mandate of the presidency, an adjustment is made “indeed” to its period, making it match with the calendar year, that is, from January to December of each year, while, from the legitimacy point of view, it seems to be logical to implement the taking office after the election, having a better efficiency and a better resources management.

This amendment is reflected on the writing proposal to the article 9 of the Rules.

2.3 Voting

In this reflection and debate process, it was understood that, in an organisation that has as main objectives to deepen the democratic and participative principle and defend the values and principles of the regional democracy, it should be incorporated those same values and principles in the internal structuring. Notwithstanding, the consensus approval reinforces the internal unity and reflects an effort of dialogue and coordination that should be reinforced.

CALRE should, therefore, keep the most important voting by consensus, namely the CALRE statements, the annex's and the alterations to the rules, allowing, as a way of avoiding deadlocks, that the abstentions do not affect the consensus and the simple majority is used for the remaining amendments.

This issue is reflected on the writing proposal to the articles 16 and 21 of the Rules.



2.4 Communication

In what concerns the Internal Communication, CALRE should make efforts that go towards the establishment of a new internal communication collaborative platform among the members, highlighting the feature that, every time an event or activity is registered, the members of CALRE receive an alert. The members understand, equally, that this innovation would be carried out always on the assumption that the establishment of a new platform represents, effectively, an efficiency benefit and allows a better and easier access to the documents, aiming also at the resource's optimisation and not its waste.

This platform will allow also the streamlining of the internal search of members available to represent CALRE in events of interest to the Conference or to some region in particular.

From the External Communication point of view, CALRE should keep the current platforms of external communication, that are enough and efficient, namely the site, Facebook and Twitter.

3. CALRE's role

Since its foundation in 1997, the CALRE mission is to go in depth in the democratic and participative principles within the framework of the European Union, to defend the values and principles of regional democracy, and to reinforce bonds among Regional Legislative Assemblies.

These goals are, therefore, intrinsically linked to the European project, both in terms of the great values proclaimed by the Council of Europe, and the economic and political project of the European Union, thus bringing CALRE closer to



bodies such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the Committee of the Regions, having as distinctive feature the goal of "strengthening the ties between the Regional Legislative Assemblies".

It is therefore within the scope of this triple dimension, enshrined in CALRE's Rules - Participation in EU / Regional Democracy / Regional Legislative Assemblies -, that members must develop and set the political priorities of CALRE, with repercussion on the technical work to be developed by the presidency, standing committee and working groups.

In this context, CALRE should maintain and, whenever possible, deepen its relationship with the organisations with which it has protocols, always with the goal of protecting subsidiarity and proportionality and focusing essentially on Europe.

CALRE should, as a way of affirmation and projection, use in a more efficient way the opportunity to, when invited, participate in the structured dialogues of the European Committee of the Regions with European territorial associations, or other events organised by this body. It should promote, whenever possible, the organisation of European events, such as the European Week of Regions and Cities, co-organised by the European Committee of the Regions, and to strengthen its cooperation with the European Parliament, specifically aiming at, in the context of multilevel governance, contributing with its opinions to the studies that the European Parliament carries out to support the legislative decision.

CALRE's distinction and projection in the European interregional context must also be based on what distinguishes it from the other European regional cooperation bodies: it brings together political representatives from regions with similarities or proximity to the level of political statutes and inherent competences, not being, thus, a conglomerate of regions with certain territorial



characteristics. On the other hand, as a distinctive feature of many other similar institutions, where the regions are represented by their executive bodies, CALRE brings together regional parliaments with legislative powers.

The adoption of a multi-annual working programme and political priorities, followed by other institutions, should be looked at as an example of good practices, possibly to be transferred into CALRE's work.

CALRE's political priorities, where naturally, in the current phase of EU legislative proposals for the period after 2020, the issue of the future of policies with particular relevance and impact in the regions, in particular Cohesion Policy, should be considered as priorities, along with the following areas:

- Decentralisation and Subsidiarity
- Territorial Cooperation and exchange of good practices
- Regional democracy and multilevel governance
- Economic, Social and Regional Cohesion
- Citizenship and political participation
- Regional Economic Development
- Depopulation and Ageing
- Matters related to the EU in general
- Gender Equality
- Sustainable Transportation and Mobility
- Energy, Climate Changes, Nature
- International Cooperation
- UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In short, CALRE is all its regions. Its existence, dynamics and action depend on the willingness, participation, tasks and intervention of its members. CALRE,



because of its distinguishing features, a voice and position in the European Union, should be a “player” with the capacity to influence and anticipate community decisions concerning their territories and the key matters and principles that inspire its action, such as democracy, decentralisation and regionalism.

In fact, these aspects were well emphasized by all speakers at the workshop organised in October by CALRE at the European Week of Regions and Cities - an event that was purposefully integrated into this exercise of reflection and debate, and appropriately entitled "Regional Legislative Parliaments: What role in EU's Cohesion Policy beyond 2020? ".

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the European Committee of the Regions, and Mercedes Bresso, Member of the European Parliament, along with Ana Luís, President of CALRE, and Roberto Ciambetti, coordinator of CALRE Working Group on Cohesion Policy, stated that regions with regional parliaments have not only more skills, but also increased responsibilities in structuring and implementing European policies, and in particular Cohesion Policy.

Similarly, the regional legislative powers play a key role in establishing the European Social Pillar in the fight against inequalities, policies which are fundamental to European territories and their citizens. As Ana Luís summed up, the existence of CALRE and the action of its members reinforce the need for the European institutions to place citizens at the heart of the EU policies and thus the importance of local and regional authorities in the European legislative process, considering them to be the institutions better aware of the needs, concerns and expectations of European citizens.

Azores, Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of the Azores, 21 November 2018