

## CALRE's 2016 DECLARATION | Presentation

Miguel Ángel Santalices Vieira  
Vice-president of CALRE 2016  
President of the Galician Parliament

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Good afternoon and thank you very much for inviting me to take part, as CALRE's Vice-president, to present the Declaration of the CALRE 2016.

In a period of change and renewal, like the one we are going through, we are here to contribute to a good governance development, which address the main challenges faced by Local and Regional Authorities in Europe, aiming to meet citizens' needs across EU territories.

To this extent, Regional entities, like the ones we represent, are the institutions directly legitimized to meet these challenges, given our proximity to citizens. We are therefore obliged to promote *European regionalism* aiming to get citizens' commitment as a symbol of the quality of democratic processes and thus, obtain real results in our territories.

Main challenges we are facing today and which are reflected in the first part of the CALRE 2016, are the issue of Brexit, the arrival of a massive flow of immigrants at our borders, as well as terrorism, which affects the security of our space and attacks the main values on which our coexistence is based on.

In this context, our territories should focus on the creation of inclusive societies and on the promotion of intercultural dialogue, aiming to achieve equality and social rights of all citizens in order to avoid hate speech and fight against radicalization and extremist violence.

Under the title, **CALRE and the state of Union, between present and future**, the Declaration is focused on basic principles at regional level, key principles for our Assemblies, which the European Commission cannot forget in its work program.

Firstly, it is crucial to ensure the *subsidiarity principle* – that we must not be tired of claiming it- to apply an integrated and multilevel approach which will allow achieving good governance in Europe.

At this point, it is crucial to reiterate the essence of the *cohesion policy*, a pillar of EU integration, because it is the voice of a real European solidarity. The Cohesion policy is addressed to guarantee an equitable development of all EU territories and makes a significant

contribution for the Union's strengthening as a whole. In any case, from the CALRE we must strive for a greater dissemination of its policy, in order to raise citizens' awareness about the true scope of cohesion policy and what this implies for the development of our territories and for the improvement of citizens' quality of life.

The future of Cohesion policy is linked to the future of the EU. Therefore, the regional and local authorities can act as engines of growth and sustainable development on the basis of cohesion's tools. Regional and Local authorities –we are-, are players which act –we act- on the ground and, thus, can identify concrete challenges European Union territories are facing to reach long term targets and known by all: “A smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” of the EU as a whole.

Cohesion policy, which has undoubtedly succeeded in boosting local and regional growth, is a key tool that should continue to provide support to all European regions, creating real effects, to achieve a true balanced development in our territories.

As you all know, regional and local authorities manage most of public investment in the EU. In 2013, sub-national entities implemented 55% of European public investment, representing about 200 billion euros. Nevertheless, since 2000 local and regional authorities investments has decreased in some member States, notably in Greece, Cyprus, Portugal and Spain, due to

the consolidation measures implemented in the EU as a result of the economic and financial crisis.

With a budget of 454 billion euros for the period 2014-2020, the European structural and investment funds (ESIFs) are the main tool of policy investment which aims to promote job creation, investment and growth in Europe. It is therefore crucial simplify and rationalize their procedures to maximize the impact of ESI funds in our territories.

The European Union cannot forget the new demographic challenges facing our territories –and it is said by someone who knows well this problem, coming from a Community like Galicia, which suffers from a deep demographic crisis that demands answers, also at European level. Challenges we are obliged to turn into new development opportunities for our regions.

In view of this scenario, it is clear that in the next financial programming period not only the regional GDP should be taken into account to measure regions development, but also it is needed to take into account other important indicators such regional social progress indicator.

The main goal is to achieve a connected Europe which improves all regions and cities access to transport, energy and digital media.

It is needed to strength our common purpose, work in a network and show a greater European leadership at all government levels, notably, in a period -like the current one-, in which the European project is under question.

In this context, becomes a key factor next 25<sup>th</sup> March 2017, day of the 60 anniversary of the Rome Treaty, the founding Treaty of the space we now know today as the European Union. A date we should and could take to strengthen our shared project addressing European regionalism, reflecting on building an actual European Union and stablishing a strong future strategy.

Under the title, **Intensification of relations with the main associations of European regionalism**, CALRE 2016 Declaration is focused in the key role regions and cities play at European level.

Territories should be placed at the heart of the European policy to encourage shared dialogue, allowing convergent positions on matters of regional and local common interest, and on all matters which may affect represented regions and territories.

Also it is worth to highlight, at international level, the role regions and cities play on interregional policy learning and in the transfer of best practices, including the capacity of public administration and civil society.

Regional and Local authorities are key players in the European space development, a space of peace and convergence of European people, as it was acknowledged by Jacques Delors in 1989

*“As the Community develops, and as our governments insist on the need to also build the People’s Europe, is it really a sacrilege to wish for each European to have the feeling of belonging to a Community?”*

In brief, CLARE as a network of regional parliaments with legislative capacities cannot forget at anytime the essential role it plays in the democratic strengthening of the European integration project.

Thank you very much for your attention.

