



Presidency of CALRE 2017

Twenty years since the Oviedo Declaration The Regionalism in Europe today

Activity Programme

“The Regions will participate in the formation of the position of the States in the Community Institutions within the scope of their authority or when the issues to be dealt with could directly affect their interests, the States ensuring to the Regions rapid and broad information mechanisms concerning the community projects, as well as fast and effective sectorial concertation”

Article 25 of the Community Charter on Regionalisation
European Parliament Resolution of 18 November 1988

Introduction

On 25 March 1957, in Rome, the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands signed the two treaties that would establish the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), the origin of today's European Union.



In 2017, the European Union will celebrate the 60th anniversary of its constitution with a common European project currently comprising 28 States, which has survived, evolved and prospered over six decades, witnessing historical events which have defined the history of the world and, especially, of our continent, by strengthening the values of democracy, liberty and the defence of Human Rights that make up the *raison d'être* of the joint project.

Sixty years later, the European Union is facing new challenges and must respond to a new political, economic and social landscape where the world economic crisis, the shortfalls facing the welfare state, the model of coexistence, international terrorism or, more recently, the humanitarian crisis of the refugees and Brexit, have marked the national, European and international agendas.

It is a turning point for the future of the European common project, as reflected in the European Commission's Work Program for 2017, and especially in the White Paper on the future of Europe presented by the President of the European Commission Jean -Claude Juncker on March 1st, 2017, which presents five scenarios for the future where the European Union could be headed.

In this context, the European Regions, in view of their proximity to the citizens, have a decisive role to play through their institutions, the regional and local authorities, and also the citizens, to provide valuable contributions and to meet the current and future needs of the common European project.

Thus, in the **2016 Varese Declaration**, the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) calls on the regions to play a decisive role in addressing the challenges that the European Union faces today, and in the definition of the new European Project.



"The European project is going through difficult times, but CALRE believes in its fundamental values and is convinced that the time has come to move forward, to strengthen our common objective, to work together and show strong European leadership at all levels of government. A key step in that process is the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which will be celebrated in Rome on 25 March 2017. The occasion could represent an interesting and challenging opportunity for CALRE to seriously address the issue of European regionalism as a strategic factor to reactivate the construction of a European perspective.

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"The participation of the regions where the people are rooted and where they find their identity will bring the citizens closer to the European Union"

Article 3 of the Oviedo Declaration

Coinciding with the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, 2017 is also the 20th anniversary of the founding declaration of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), enshrined in the Oviedo Declaration on 7 October 1997.

The commemoration of this event is presented as a unique opportunity to open a forum for reflection on regionalism in Europe and around the work of CALRE, in the past and the present, in order to lay the foundations of a project of future with a commemorative Declaration to be read at the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the CALRE, that will be held in Oviedo by the end of July.

On this basis, the CALRE Presidency, through its organisational structure, allowing a special role to the Working Groups, the Standing Committee and the Plenary Assembly, and through its representative work, will focus in 2017 on the **defence of the role of the regions in the challenges faced by the European Union**, both during the working sessions and the institutional meetings held by the Presidency.



In this regard, CALRE will pay special attention to the European Commission's Work Program for 2017, focusing on those issues in which the regions have and should have a voice and a leading role in responding to the needs and demands of citizenry, as they have been doing so far.

Among the policy priorities of the European Commission for 2017, the CALRE highlights those initiatives linked to investment and job creation policies, migration policies, actions to combat climate change and EU strategies as a global player beyond our borders.

During 2017 the CALRE will address issues of the regional, national, European and international political agenda, which have already focused the debate among its members in 2016 and are called to maintain their leading role during 2017.

This includes topics inherent in European regions such as the principle of subsidiarity and cohesion policy; as well as the need to respond to the economic and social crisis from the regions as guarantors of compliance with the principles of the welfare state. Without forgetting the decisive role of our assemblies and parliaments in the recovery of the confidence of the citizenry in the institutions. Especially in the European institutions, facing the growing populist movements that promote anti-Europeanism and Euroscepticism.

On the other hand, the new scenario opened with Brexit, and the announced activation of Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon by the United Kingdom on 29 March 2017, will require a joint response by the assemblies of the CALRE, as it was already expressed in the Resolution on Brexit adopted at the Plenary Assembly in Varese.

The humanitarian crisis of refugees, in which the regions play a key role as recipients of the thousands of people arriving in the European Union, deserve special attention. A situation which, coupled with the challenges of migration, requires urgent measures that combine, on the one hand, the respect for and application of international treaties, as well as the defense of the Human Rights; and, on the other, concrete actions in



aspects of social care, financial support to the receiving regions and security strategies.

Lastly, and after the events of recent years, with particular harshness in 2015 and 2016, the regions must remain alert to the threat of international terrorism that challenges our model of common coexistence.

Objectives

When defending the role of the regions in the challenges facing the European Union, in 2017 the CALRE Presidency will maintain the lines of work followed since its foundation and continued by all the presidencies with the final purpose of strengthening the role of CALRE and that of the regions in the common European project.

In this regard, the following objectives have been set:

1. **To strengthen the links between the members of CALRE** by means of meetings and institutional events, as well as internal coordination through the Office of the CALRE Presidency.
2. To maintain and broaden **the relationship between CALRE and the European institutions**, as well as with other regional associations.
3. To maintain the agenda for relationships with other regional institutions which are not members of CALRE, both at the European and international level.
4. To contribute to the **development of the common European project** through its presence in the European institutions, and through the contributions of CALRE assemblies and parliaments and the work carried out by the Presidency, the Standing Committee, the Working Groups, and the Plenary Assembly. As well as participating in the initiative of the Committee of the Regions



"Reflecting on Europe", and with its own contribution to the reflections set out in the White Paper on the future of Europe.

5. To further develop the mechanisms for promoting **public participation in parliamentary institutions**, as a means to restore citizens' confidence in institutions and to contribute to the dissemination of the values and principles of the European common project.

Lines of action

Besides the usual lines of action of the CALRE Presidency, focused on the work of the Standing Committee, Working Groups, and Plenary Assembly, the working plan for the 2017 Presidency includes the following distinctive lines of action, in which the 20th Anniversary of the Oviedo Declaration will play a prominent role.

→ **Strengthen the ties between the assemblies and parliaments members of the CALRE.** The defense of the role of the regions in the construction of the European common project requires, at the outset, a coordination between the member assemblies and parliaments. In this sense, some of the actions developed by past presidencies will be maintained, to which new initiatives will be added:

- Informative action. Update of the contents related to the works and actions of the CALRE through its website and CALRE News.
- CALRE Award "Stars of Europe". Call for the second edition of the CALRE "Stars of Europe" Award. The event will be convened after the First Standing Committee of CALRE and the projects will be presented coinciding with the Second Standing Committee.



- CALRE database and communication protocol. Through the Office of the Presidency, a questionnaire sheet will be sent to CALRE members to update CALRE's list of contacts, including the services of the assemblies and parliaments involved in the work of CALRE (Presidency, Protocol, Office of the Press, General Secretary, Documentation, etc.). Likewise, a presentation of each of the assemblies and parliaments of the CALRE will be published, with informative details of the Chambers, which will be included in the web (in the assembly language and in English). Finally, a protocol of communication and relations will be created to facilitate contact and coordination between the assemblies of the CALRE.

→ **Maintain and strengthen relationship with the Committee of the Regions.** The lines of action developed by previous presidencies and the collaboration agreement signed in Brussels in July 2015 will be maintained. The members of the CALRE will be regularly informed of the activities of the Committee of the Regions and may table amendments and proposals for Plenary sessions of the Committee of the Regions, all with the aim of taking the common position of the CALRE to the issues discussed in the plenary. The Committee of the Regions will also have a prominent place in the CALRE activity as a guest at the meetings of the Standing Committee and the Plenary Assembly.

The "**Reflecting on Europe**" programme will have a prominent place in the understanding between CALRE and the Committee of the Regions. This initiative launched by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) aims to provide a space for citizens to present their ideas, thoughts and opinions on what the European Union should be. In this context, regional and local authorities are invited to engage in dialogue with their citizens and to collect information on their concerns, reflections, proposals and ideas on the future of the EU.



CALRE joins the CoR initiative and in the First Standing Committee it will reaffirm through a Memorandum its commitment to collaborate, participate and disseminate the initiative among its member assemblies and parliaments, promoting the development of "Reflecting on Europe" activities throughout 2017.

- **Strengthen relationships with other European institutions, European regional associations and international regional associations.** The spirit of previous CALRE presidencies in relation to other European regional associations will be maintained, as set out in the resolution adopted in Varese.
- **Celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.** The Presidency of the CALRE will join the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome encouraging member assemblies and parliaments to illuminate the facades of their buildings with the image of the European flag or the blue colour of it, during the nights of 24 and/or 25 March.
- **Europe Day, May 9, 2017.** Coinciding with the celebration of Europe Day, a joint declaration of CALRE will be adopted, which will be discussed in the First Standing Committee. Once approved, it is proposed that members of CALRE read the communiqué in their assemblies and parliaments in an institutional act to be held on May 9.
- **20th Anniversary of the Oviedo Declaration.** Coinciding with the anniversary of the founding declaration of CALRE, it is proposed to hold an institutional ceremony in Oviedo, in collaboration with the General Counsel of the Principality of Asturias, with the attendance of CALRE presidents and parliaments and representatives of the main European institutions. During the meeting, to be held by the end of July, there will be a commemorative statement and a seminar of experts.



- **Contribution to the White Paper on the future of Europe.** The CALRE will produce a document with the contributions of the member assemblies and parliaments to the debate on the White Paper on the future of Europe.

- **Activity Reports of the Working Groups.** A digital publication will be published with the conclusions of the CALRE Working Groups, which will be sent to the European institutions.



Activities Calendar

The following schedule of activities is proposed, subject to change.

60th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome	March 24-25
First Standing Committee	April 6
Europe Day	May 9
Second Standing Committee	June 29
20th Anniversary of the Oviedo Declaration	July 24-26
Third Standing Committee	November 22
Plenary Assembly	November 22 – 24