



## *Presidency of CALRE 2018*

### **To build Europe through the Regions**

#### Work and Activity Programme

#### ***Introduction***

This document reflects a natural continuity of the work of the previous CALRE presidents, based both on the journey of the Conference during the last 20 years and on the journey of Europe during the last 60 years.

Thus, the Work and Activity Programme of 2018 CALRE Presidency considers the challenges we encounter nowadays, which we understand can only be faced and overcome by all assemblies and parliaments of the Conference together, as well as between the former and the European institutions, citizens and public representatives. Europe needs a coordinated response with one voice, which should count on the thoughts and actions of the regions with legislative powers, based on the values behind the creation of the European Union: democracy, peace, solidarity, equality, dignity and freedom.

As stated by the president of the Committee of the Regions, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, in his inaugural speech: *“No institution alone (...) can respond to the multiple crises to which the EU must respond.(...) We need to work together”*.

In this context, we intend to maintain, in a coordinated manner, the work with European institutions, particularly with the European Parliament and European Commission and, naturally, a privileged partnership with the advisory body that represents our interests, the Committee of the Regions. The Council of Europe,



through their Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, as well as our national parliaments are also object of this joint work, always with the goal of reinforcing, divulging and affirming the essential role of the regional assemblies with legislative powers in the building of Europe, in particular in the decision-making process and in the legislative process. Thus, the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon in what concerns the principle of Subsidiarity, ensuring the principle of interparliamentary cooperation and taking advantage of the benefits of a multilevel governance, will be consolidated.

Only the effective contribution of the regions for the making of European law and for the outlining of the great political options, in particular by the assemblies and parliaments with legislative powers, since they are the local and regional authorities that better know their region, their people, thus corresponding to their concerns and fears, will be able to place their territories at the center of Community policy.

Besides an institutional relationship with the European bodies, we will continue cooperating with institutions outside Europe, sharing good practices and learning with solutions and policies adopted by subnational entities from other parts of the world.

It will also be considered that CALRE established, in the 2017 Seville Declaration, as strategic challenges demanding a joint response:

- ❖ Job creation.
- ❖ Economic growth based on encouraging innovative and sustainable industries that will take advantage of regional endogenous resources to promote sustainable and inclusive growth in all territories, including rural areas.
- ❖ Promote strategic public investments.
- ❖ Fight against depopulation and ageing, poverty and exclusion.



- ❖ Equal rights and opportunities.
- ❖ Gender equality, education, research, development and innovation.
- ❖ Fight against climate changes, as well as coordination of actions to respond to natural disasters.
- ❖ Security policies and fight against terrorism.
- ❖ Global response to the humanitarian crisis of refugees and migratory movements.

Notwithstanding the numberless and relevant challenges, we think this is a time of hope and optimism, and we should face the near future as a generator of opportunities. For this reason, it is time to call for respect and union and refuse demagogic and populist speeches, reminding, as many times as needed, the values that were the embryos of the European construction.

As stated by the president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Union needs us to be proud of such an unprecedented project, a role model, in what concerns, for example, respect for the rule of law and for the openness to others.

In 2018, the European Cohesion Policy will celebrate 30 years, an essential policy that followed the evolution of European Union itself. CALRE reaffirms, against the current scenario, the need to maintain a strong and effective cohesion policy across all regions, after 2020, guarantying its full funding, which will ensure their investment capacity, job creation and the reduction of territorial disparities in Europe, together with the firm maintenance of the principle of solid and balanced public finances.

In this context, CALRE strongly opposes the reduction for Cohesion Policies in the Community funding, namely due to Brexit, one of the major financial contributors for the budget of the Union. It is crucial Member States to reinforce community budgets, thus obviating the reduction of the envelopes of emblematic



policies, such as cohesion's, since this is a condition for a harmonious and prosperous development, as well as for new opportunities for all regions.

Besides strengthening our action, and considering that regions are one of the levels of governance closer to populations, it is imposed on us the responsibility of acting in what concerns the growing dissatisfaction and alienation of citizens towards politics, a growing phenomenon not only regarding European institutions, but also their national, regional and local bodies of governance.

Thus, we must have the capability of restoring peoples' trust in political institutions through, for example, greater transparency in the exercise of political representative bodies' functions, demonstration of good governance results, the use of new technologies, the so-called interactive democracy or *e*-democracy, or studies about the political impact in their lives, thereby bringing together the citizens and the decision-making centres and increasing their involvement in political life, also raising their awareness for the benefits of being part of the European Union.

We will also place at the centre of the debate regional, national, European and international matters that have attracted worldwide attention in the past and on which it is of utmost importance to focus our attention, to contribute to a Europe which is more and more aware, social and sustainable. For example: security, border control, migrations and refugees; separatist trends; climate changes, which are often ignored, but have a tremendous impact in all aspects of our life; gender issues and what we still need to conquer so that all of us, men and women, are treated as equals, with equal opportunities, assessed by our skills and no longer by our gender.

Last but not least, we want to strengthen further the relationships between our regions by understanding what distinguishes us and boosting the joint work on those issues of common interest and reciprocal appreciation. The richness of this



28-member Europe goes through multiculturalism, different languages, geographic and territorial diversity, which cannot be a constraint to development but rather an asset, where each European citizen has the same economic, social and environmental rights, regardless his/ her place of residence. The goals are to construct a common European culture and to reinforce a real sense of belonging to a common European area.

Thus, we share the opinion expressed by the president of the Committee of the Regions, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, who stressed out that European diversity and richness are an “asset for the Union and not an argument to separate territories and return to outdated nationalisms, which will not make it possible to tackle the challenges” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe.

### ***Goals***

We will maintain the lines of action of previous presidencies, followed since CALRE’s foundation, with the final purpose of strengthening the Conference’s position on the European institutions scene, for its specific and fundamental role as representative of regions with legislative powers, and affirming its importance with the construction of the European project.

Thus, the following goals have been set:

- Strengthen the **relationship with the several European institutions**, participating and contributing to the construction of the common European project, through the Standing Committee, the Plenary Assembly, the Working Groups or through the representation of CALRE itself.
- **Reinforce institutional relationship** with European and international institutions similar to CALRE.



- Contribute to the consolidation of the **principle of Subsidiarity** by stimulating the use of REGPEX by all the CALRE members, as well as by requesting the European institutions to analyse the creation of a “green card” procedure, under the terms defined in the 2017 Seville Declaration.
- **Combat the alienation of citizens** towards local, regional, national and European institutions, promoting an active citizenship that accepts the European project and encourages free participation of citizens in the debate on the present and future of Europe.
- Strive, to the European institutions, for a strong and adequately funded **Cohesion Policy** covering all European regions and that allows for a harmonious and prosperous development, as well as for new opportunities for all our regions.
- Increase knowledge and strengthen the **relationship between CALRE’s regions** through the organisation of meetings, events and questionnaires, internally coordinated by the Secretary General of CALRE.
- **Promote** CALRE as a recognised organisation that represents regions with assemblies and parliaments with legislative powers within the European institutions panorama, whether for the strengthening of institutional relationships or for the active dissemination of its specific and direct activity, as well as of all its members in what, direct or indirectly, CALRE’s goals and missions are related to and valued for.
- Maintain an open debate on **important themes to the European Union or cross-cutting to all regions**, through campaigns of awareness or communiqués.



### *Activities/Lines of action*

Besides the three meetings of the Standing Committee and the Plenary Assembly, established by the CALRE's Rules as mandatory, our intention is to follow a line of action, as well as to organise occasional activities, which we believe will meet the goals set up by the Presidency for 2018.

### **Strengthen the relationship with the Committee of the Regions**

Continuing the lines of action of the previous Presidencies, as well as the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2015, the goal is to improve and strengthen the relationship and the communication channel between CALRE and the Committee of the Regions, specifically:

- Keeping the Committee of the Regions updated on the common positions discussed in the CALRE's Plenary.
- Presenting to the Committee of the Regions the CALRE's strategical priorities, according to the working programme.
- Reviewing the logistical support given by the Committee of the Regions to the meetings of CALRE's Standing Committee.
- Cooperating in matters related to subsidiarity, whether CALRE's subsidiarity Working Group, whether by the Inter-Regional Group of Regions with legislative powers or by the experts Group in Subsidiarity, both of the Committee of the Regions.
- Inviting the Committee of the Regions to actively participate in the Standing Committees and in the CALRE's Plenary Assembly.



### **Strengthen the relationship with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

Considering the agreement on strengthening cooperation of 2008, the goal is to improve the relationship between CALRE and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, specifically:

- Establishing official and institutional relationships, as well as communication channels between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and CALRE.
- Keeping the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe updated on the common position discussed in CALRE's Plenary, according to the working programme.
- Identifying matters of common interest for joint activities.
- Cooperating and coordinating similar activities in order to avoid duplicate efforts.
- Inviting the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to CALRE's Plenary Assembly.

### **Strengthen the relationship with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe**

Continuing the lines of action of the previous Presidencies, as well as the co-operation agreement signed in 2010, the goal is to improve the relationship between CALRE and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, specifically:

- Keeping the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe updated on the common positions discussed in CALRE's Plenary,



as well as CALRE's strategical priorities, according to the working programme.

- Encouraging the committees and working groups to identify and cooperate in common matters of interest.
- Promoting the participation of the European regions, with legislative powers, in the national and European legislative process.

### **Strengthen the relationship with other similar Associations**

Continuing the lines of action of the previous Presidencies, the goal is to continue with what was established in the 2016 Varese Declaration concerning this matter.

### **Reinforce and promote CALRE**

In order to affirm and raise awareness of CALRE, highlight the regions of which it is composed and enliven the mass media of CALRE, all the assemblies and parliaments are challenged to promote their local initiatives, which can complement and enrich CALRE's activity, if they so wish, as follows:

- Send to CALRE's Secretary General the link of the initiatives in their websites.
- Use, when possible, the hashtags #calrenet #cohesionalliance in all the posts of their social media.
- Invite their followers on the local social media to follow CALRE.
- Send the list of the local Press, to release CALRE's news.
- Send their mailing lists to release CALRE's Newsletter.



### **Matters of common interest**

Continuing the lines of action of the previous Presidencies, the goal is to analyse the Working Programme of the European Commission, especially speaking about files in which the regions must be heard, especially in the context of the proposals for the budget and policies of the EU for the post 2020.

### **Increase the knowledge and draw closer the relationship between our regions**

At an internal level, the exchange, the sharing of good practices and the tightening of the relations among the members of CALRE will be a priority, wherefore, the 2018 CALRE presidency will:

- Continue CALRE “Stars of Europe” Award, an opportunity for us to meet interesting and innovating projects promoted by the assemblies and parliaments.
- Continue the Newsletter, as a way of being updated of CALRE’s activity.
- Keep the website and the social media updated.
- Update the presidents since 1997 on the website.
- Continue updating the data about the regions.
- Promote CALRE on Wikipedia, in all the languages of the Member-States.
- Explore a web conferencing channel for internal work meetings.
- Keep the effort of providing the scanned documents of all the CALRE’s Working Groups, as well as other relevant documentation.

### **CALRE’s Reflection Working Group**

The CALRE’s Reflection Working Group that will carry out a reflection about CALRE’s new goals, after 20 years of its foundation, should establish the grounds



of CALRE's action strategies and goals for the next 20 years, in accordance with the Declaration of Seville 2017.

### **Subsidiarity: REGPEX and "Green Card"**

Continuing the lines of action of the previous Presidencies, the goal is to continue to stimulate the use of the REGPEX, as well as an active participation, by the members of CALRE, in the subsidiarity compliance network of the Committee of the Regions, thus obtaining an active participation in the European legislative process. This meets CALRE's desire to create, with the European institutions, a "green card" procedure, that allows the presentation of the legislative proposals supported by a sufficient number of national and regional Parliaments.

### **World Forum of Regional and Sub-National Legislative Assemblies**

Included in CALRE's Plenary Assembly, having as base the "Global Forum", held by CALRE in 2015, the goal is to make a forum that focuses on the geographical area of the Atlantic, aiming at promoting cooperation within this area of strategic interest for the European Union. Since this is an urgent and present matter, namely, considering the Brexit and the TTIP failure, but also opportunities such as the CETA agreement, scientific and business cooperation, the forum will address several dimensions of transatlantic cooperation, taking into account the response of the sub-national entities, the federate states, provinces and regions, of both sides of the Atlantic, to reinforce the world cooperation in several matters, as the trade, the energy, the fight against climate changes, etc.



**European Cultural Heritage Year:** With the goal of promoting the cultural heritage of CALRE's regions, all parliaments, that may and want to join, are invited to promote initiatives related to this year's theme, as well as to send us photos or videos of iconic buildings, symbols or customs of their regions, so that we can post them on the CALRE's media and enrich the information about the regions on the website.

**Europe Day, 9 May:** Organise an event identical to the one held for the 60 Years of the Treaty of Rome in 2017, i.e., illumination of the façade of their buildings with blue colour. The initiative will be posted on the website, social media and CALRE's Newsletter. The presidents of the assemblies and parliaments are also invited to promote their own regional initiatives on CALRE's media.

**World Environment Day, 5 June:** The parliaments are invited to plant a tree in the gardens of their buildings with a plate of CALRE (containing a specific symbolism to be prepared and sent by the Secretary General to all assemblies and parliaments) or other environmental initiative they find relevant and more suitable to each region. Promotion of the initiative on the website, social media and CALRE's Newsletter.

**World Refugee Day, 20 June:** CALRE will write a statement, to be discussed and approved in the Second Standing Committee, and to be released on the website, social media and CALRE's Newsletter. All assemblies and parliaments are invited to join the initiative by posting the communiqué on the Internet and social media.



**30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cohesion Policy, 24 June:** CALRE will write a statement, to be discussed and approved in the Second Standing Committee, and to be released on the website, social media and CALRE's Newsletter. Besides being invited to join the initiative by posting the communiqué on the Internet and social media, we call all assemblies and parliaments to promote the #cohesionAlliance, in a general way, asking everyone to publish the video and the hashtag of the Cohesion Alliance on their networks, on that day, as a way of expressing the belief that a real cohesion policy must continue to exist to ensure the future of Europe.

**European Cooperation Day, 21 September:** CALRE will write a statement, to be discussed and approved in the Second Standing Committee, and to be released on the website, social media and CALRE's Newsletter. All assemblies and parliaments are invited to join the initiative by posting the communiqué on the Internet and social media.

**European Day of Languages, 26 September:** Release of a video of the presidents sending a short and strong message about European regions. The message will be translated into the 8 official languages of CALRE, as well as into other regional languages of the regions that wish to support the idea. The presidents will be invited to record a small video with a message in a language of their choice other than their own language. The initiative will be posted on the website, social media and CALRE's Newsletter.

**CALRE's Day, 7 October:** Establish this day as "CALRE's Day", producing a communiqué to be posted on the website, social media and CALRE's *newsletter*.



**OpenDays, 8-11 October:** Participation in the “European Week of Regions” with a seminar/workshop. Aiming at projecting CALRE, the seminar will have a panel with guest speakers focusing on regionalism issues and on the added value of the regions with legislative powers for the implementation of European regional policy, as well as approaching issues such as decentralization, autonomic powers, multilevel governance, subsidiarity and the European common project.

**European Social Charter Day, 18 October:** As established by 2017 Seville Declaration, CALRE’s members should encourage and celebrate this day as the European Social Charter Day, in order to stimulate the interest and understanding of citizens regarding one of our distinguishing features: European Social Model. Thus, CALRE will write a statement, to be discussed and approved in the Second Standing Committee, and to be released on our website, social media and CALRE’s Newsletter, as well as on the means at all CALRE’s assemblies and parliaments disposal.

**International Migrants Day, 18 December:** it is proposed the organisation of an “Intercultural Christmas”. Given the proximity to Christmas, as well as the cultural richness that the season provides by the diversity of migrants living in all regions, we suggest the parliaments, those who might and want, to join this day by organising a cultural event (a musical performance, an exhibition or other) in each parliament, aiming to show the richness of interculturality for the strengthening and enrichment of common European culture.

The event will be posted on the website, social media and on CALRE’s Newsletter.



### *Calendar of Activities*

<b>15 March</b>	First Standing Committee
<b>9 May</b>	Europe Day
<b>5 June</b>	World Environment Day
<b>20 June</b>	World Refugee Day
<b>24 June</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cohesion Policy
<b>28 June</b>	Second Standing Committee
<b>21 September</b>	European Cooperation Day
<b>26 September</b>	European Day of Languages
<b>7 October</b>	CALRE's Day
<b>8 - 11 October</b>	OpenDays - European Week of Regions and Cities
<b>18 October</b>	European Social Charter Day
<b>21 - 22 November</b>	Third Standing Committee Plenary Assembly Transatlantic Forum
<b>18 December</b>	International Migrants Day