



## CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES

### WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE YEAR 2022

#### **Focus no. 1: Deepening democratic and participatory principles in the European Union**

The principle of subsidiarity plays a fundamental role in regional democracy and participation within the European Union.

This principle has always been at the heart of CALRE's concerns, and Article 1 of its Organization Rules states that it "pledges to cherish the respect and consolidation of the subsidiarity principle in the European Union". Furthermore, the Oviedo Declaration stipulates that "it is a priority to set up the relations between the regional, national and European levels in order to better articulate the principle of subsidiarity".

It is important to recognise that while the contours of the subsidiarity principle have remained unchanged since 1997, its application has evolved. Indeed, under the impetus of European Commission President Juncker, a task force on "Subsidiarity, proportionality and doing less more efficiently" was created on 14 November 2017 with a view to formulating proposals to improve the application of the subsidiarity principle.

As a result of these proposals, the principle of "active subsidiarity" has been forged and is evolving into what could amount to a real political dialogue with the European institutions. This dialogue should enable regional authorities to contribute more effectively to the development of EU policies.

As CALRE is a body of no less than 72 regional assemblies in seven countries, its contributions in the framework of active subsidiarity can reinforce the regional contributions adopted in isolation.

The 2022 CALRE Presidency will capitalise on this new approach and proposes three priorities that will contribute to deepening democratic and participatory principles within the European Union:

#### **Priority no. 1: Better exploit the work carried out in the various working groups**

As far as possible, CALRE's messages should take the form of resolutions adopted in plenary session and focus on the major European issues. The actions of the European institutions could therefore be discussed in the various working groups according to their priorities in order to prepare a CALRE contribution in the framework of active subsidiarity.

In view of the future challenges facing the European Union in the year 2022, the working groups -whose fundamental role must be affirmed- could, in particular, take up initiatives in the areas

of social Europe, the Europe of environmental and digital transitions and the Europe of freedoms. The chairpersons of the working groups elected during the plenary assembly meeting on 26 November 2021 will thus be entrusted by the CALRE Presidency with the task of conducting debates with a view to proposing contributions that could lead to the adoption of resolutions for transmission to the European institutions.

Priority no. 2: Favour the widest and most dynamic participation possible within CALRE

CALRE brings together the presidents of the regional assemblies with legislative powers of the European Union and thus represents more citizens than the member assemblies alone. CALRE thus represents a major political force on the European scene that should be used to its full potential.

To maintain and strengthen this added value offered by CALRE, its contributions must receive the backing of as many assemblies as possible.

In the course of 2022, the CALRE Presidency will seek to revitalise the participation of a larger number of assemblies, with a special attention to those that may have been distanced from its work for some time.

Priority no. 3: Explore the possibility of integrating new members

Article 3 of the CALRE Organization Rules provides that regional assemblies with legislative powers belonging to one of the member states of the European Union may become members of the Conference.

The European Union is composed of 27 Member States, which in turn are composed of no fewer than 242 regions.

To further establish CALRE as a representative body of regional assemblies with legislative powers in Europe, and in view of the changing structure of some member states, the CALRE Presidency will explore the possibilities of inviting other regions to join the Conference.

**Focus no. 2: Defending the values and principles of regional democracy**

The Oviedo Declaration states that “to strengthen the democratic principle, the regions of the Member States with assemblies having legislative competence must have greater participation in the European integration process. They should be allowed, at national and European level, the right to intervene in European integration issues.”

During the first half of its mandate, the European Commission under the Presidency of Mrs von der Leyen focused on the design of legislation deemed essential for the transformation of society. In the second half, the focus will be on the implementation of these ambitions. The European Commission’s activity will therefore focus on the European Green Pact, Social Europe, Digital Europe, Health Europe and the new European democratic momentum.

Furthermore, the 2022 CALRE Presidency will be marked by the French and Czech presidencies of the Council of the European Union. While the Czech priorities are not yet

known, France should focus its action on Europe as a power, on the European post-pandemic recovery and on the European security and defence policy.

In this context, the CALRE Presidency should pay particular attention to the dossiers that will be examined at European level and ensure that these issues are effectively linked with the work carried out within CALRE.

To achieve this, the following six priorities are proposed:

Priority no. 1: Establish a direct dialogue with the presidencies of the European institutions

The 2022 Presidency intends to capitalise on its geographical proximity to the European institutions. In order to carry out its mission of promoting the values and principles of regional democracy within the European institutions, but also to ensure that the work carried out in the working groups is as closely aligned as possible with the European political agenda, CALRE should maintain regular contact with the presidencies of the European Commission, the Council of Ministers of the European Union and the European Parliament.

Thus, the CALRE Presidency 2022 undertakes to establish a direct dialogue with the different presidencies with the aim of exchanging information on the issues examined by these institutions and to expressing the concerns of the CALRE member regions regarding these issues.

Priority no. 2: Make CALRE's voice heard at the meetings of the European Committee of the Regions and the Alliance for Cohesion

On the basis of Article 10 of the CALRE Organization Rules, the CALRE president is responsible for attending the activities of the European Committee of the Regions and, in particular, the Interregional Group of Regions with Legislative Power.

In this context, the 2022 Presidency of CALRE shall ensure that CALRE is duly represented in the European Committee of the Regions.

Furthermore, CALRE should be fully represented in the Alliance for Cohesion and make its voice heard in particular in the process of implementing the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021-2027. In this context, the 2022 Presidency will advocate the creation of synergies between, on the one hand, the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+) and the REACT-EU support fund and, on the other hand, the historical means of the cohesion policy (ERDF, CF, ESF+) while ensuring the simplification of procedures. The 2022 Presidency will also advocate long-term solutions such as reforming the European budgetary framework or increasing the European Union's own resources.

Priority no. 3: Encourage dialogue with other interparliamentary bodies

There are many interparliamentary bodies on the European level, such as the Interregional Parliamentary Council (IPC), the Benelux Interparliamentary Assembly or the Nordic Council. The CALRE Presidency will encourage dialogue with such bodies in order to achieve common objectives.

In addition of that, convinced of the relevance of this type of dialogue at a greater level, the Parliament of Wallonia itself already maintains regular contacts with the US National Conference of States Legislatures, with which a programme of exchanges on energy matters is underway.

The CALRE presidency will explore the possibility of increasing CALRE's relations with other organizations around the world to identify innovative working methods.

Priority no. 4: Organise a World Forum of regional and sub-national assemblies

Following on from the first World Forum of Regional and Sub-national Assemblies held in 2015 on the initiative of the presidency held by the Lombardy Regional Council, the 2022 Presidency of CALRE will organise a second edition of the forum aimed at updating the conclusions of the work carried out previously and to reinforce collaborations.

Such a meeting could be held on 13 May 2022.

Priority no. 5: Follow up the work of the Conference on the Future of Europe

The spring of 2022 will see the conclusion of the Conference on the Future of Europe. This continent-wide exercise in participatory democracy is a unique opportunity for citizens from the various regions of the European Union to contribute to the future of European democracy. In this context, the Parliament of Wallonia has organised a hackathon on the 20 and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021.

CALRE Presidency should ensure that the regional contributions are duly taken into account by the European institutions and follow up on the conclusions that will be presented in this framework.

In this respect, a compendium of the contributions made by the member assemblies in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe will be published.

Priority no. 6: Promote and strengthen the role of the regions

The fight against the Covid-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the importance of Europe's regions as key political actors. They are also in direct contact with citizens, which makes them key players in multi-level governance.

Convinced of the relevance of the regions in European governance, CALRE must ensure the development and strengthening of this model. However, each Member State of the European Union has opted for a different institutional organisation. The CALRE member regions are the result of historical developments and are characterised by their heterogeneity.

Belgian federalism itself is characterised by the atypical functioning of its institutions, whose voice resonates particularly in European circles, as demonstrated by Wallonia's strong intervention in the debate on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) in 2016.

It therefore appears that an overview of the prerogative of the regional assemblies with legislative powers of CALRE could be drawn up with a view to promoting mutual

understanding and nourishing institutional reflection, while working to defend this model on the international scene.

**Focus no. 3: Strengthening the links between the regional legislative assemblies and contribute to the proper functioning of CALRE**

Article 1 of the CALRE Organization Rules stipulates that it must ensure that the links between its member assemblies are strengthened.

Furthermore, the Oviedo Declaration stipulates that “co-operative relations between parliamentary institutions promote good understanding between the different populations, the consolidation and strengthening of democracy through the enriching heritage created by the mutual exchange of each other’s experiences”.

Achieving this objective means, among other things, highlighting the good practices of member assemblies and exchanging information at the administrative level. To achieve this, the 2022 Presidency proposes three priorities:

Priority no. 1: Organise an official CALRE Awards - Stars of Europe ceremony

The 2016 CALRE Presidency, held by Lombardy, initiated the CALRE Awards - Stars of Europe ceremony. The aim of this operation is to reward good regional practices that highlight the added value of European Union decisions for citizens.

The operation will be repeated in 2022.

Priority no. 2: Ensure first-class support from the CALRE General Secretariat

According to Article 26 of the CALRE Organization Rules, the Standing Committee shall be assisted in the performance of its tasks by a General Secretariat, consisting of one representative appointed by each member of the Committee. In addition, the President shall appoint the Secretary General for the duration of their term of office.

If the 2022 CALRE Presidency reverts to the Parliament of Wallonia, it shall be the responsibility of its administration to ensure the General Secretariat of CALRE.

The Registry of the Parliament of Wallonia is the only parliamentary administration in the world to be certified simultaneously to three international standards, namely ISO 9001:2015 “Quality Management Systems”, ISO 14001:2015 “Environmental Management Systems” and ISO 27001:2013 “Information Security Management Systems”. To maintain its certifications, the Registry submits each of its business processes to several days of audits conducted by an independent body.

This means that the member assemblies will then be able to count on an administration which, within the framework of the powers that will fall to it under the 2022 presidency, will aim for excellence in the achievement of the objectives set.

In order to prepare on the best way the work carried out within CALRE during the year 2022, a meeting of the CALRE correspondents to prepare the year 2022 could be organised as early as 17 December 2021.

In addition, a particular attention will be paid to public communication about the activities of the Conference, in particular through a reorganisation of the website and its rigorous updating, paying particular attention to the promotion of so-called cold content.

Priority no. 3: Promote the exchange of good practice at administrative level

During the first weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was noted that the regional assemblies that are members of CALRE exchanged information effectively on the various measures put in place to continue their activities.

It is therefore necessary to promote the exchange of good practices at the administrative level between the secretariats of the member assemblies. The sharing of experience in the management of the parliaments' visitors' centres is an example of what can be implemented.