



Communiqué on the occasion of Europe Day

The journey began in Rome sixty years ago was the result of enlightened, bold, farsighted and supportive policy choices.

The Treaties of Rome marked the beginning of the process of European integration by providing the framework for the political and legislative action of the Community institutions. The 60th anniversary of this historic date is an occasion to highlight the achievements attained such as a lasting peace; a widespread respect of human rights; the free movement of people, services, goods, and capital; the euro, our common currency; the Erasmus program, supporting million students and allowing them to become and feel European citizens; cohesion policy, allowing the reduction and recover of development disparities and encouraging the economic growth of all regions. The 60th anniversary is also an opportunity to respond to the citizens' demands and deepen the role of the regions in the definition and design of the Europe of the 21st century.

We are also celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Founding Declaration of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), signed in Oviedo in 1997, making this year a special occasion to engage in an a deep reflection on the future of the Union.

Europe is currently going through uncertain times and must face new challenges in economic and social policy, security and fight against terrorism. It must tackle the continuing economic crisis; the rise of anti-EU movements and the recovery of trust in the institutions; the struggle against climate change and the sustainability of the planet's resources; the risks and effects of natural disasters; the consequences of Brexit and the serious refugee crisis at the gates of the European Union, just to mention some of the most pressing issues.

History places us once again, as it did 60 years ago, at a crucial moment for the definition of the role of Europe and we therefore have the obligation to represent faithfully the citizens, with unity and responsibility, guaranteeing the general principles of the Union law.

European identity is clearly and historically rooted in its regions, towns and villages, and the European regional parliaments represent a bridge between the citizens and Brussels. In this regard, CALRE has an essential role to play as interlocutor to achieve this objective and state its opinion when debating and passing laws affecting everyone in the European institutions since, according to our Treaties and the principle of subsidiarity, the decisions of the European Union must be taken at the closest practical level to the citizens. CALRE is committed to promoting a more democratic and transparent decision making process, in which regions have the necessary room for maneuver to protect and strengthen their innovation and growth potential.

In the face of the anti-European currents that challenge the work of governments and parliaments, proclaiming that Europe is the problem, we assert that Europe is the solution to the demands and concerns of the population, with the knowledge to consider jointly the economic and social dimension of EU citizens. To this end, we must promote European democracy, active citizenship and guarantee fundamental rights, equal opportunities and harmonious, sustainable development in line with our objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion, by considering the diversity of the territories of Europe and their different needs. Only then one can promote growth opportunities for all regions, regardless of their characteristics -island, archipelagic or mountainous regions-, and reduce the distance to decision-making centres, specifically the outermost regions, building a more just and solidary Union where all its citizens feel an integral part of the European project and are aware of its benefits.

It would be unrealistic, today, to state that citizens have a perception of the European Union as an entity close to their problems and to these problems' resolution. One of the reasons of this growing crisis of confidence and, even more, of democratic representation lies in the increasingly perceived distance between local and regional communities and European decision-making process.

The announced pivotal role of decentralized local Authorities, foreseen by the Treaty of Lisbon, has not been realized in a true perspective of subsidiarity and participation in the European legislative process. In this way local and regional Authorities continue to be almost always only the final recipients of EU policies, instead of being real protagonists of their elaboration, especially with reference to the legislative developments.

CALRE supports a Europe built within the relation between freedom and autonomy; this recalls the need to ensure autonomy to the various levels of government in which the exercise of power is divided both vertically and horizontally; it shall rely on people, and has confidence, at institutional level, in the wealth and energies that flow from institutional pluralism.

We have the obligation to listen to the voice of the citizens and act effectively. It is time for consensus and Politics with a capital P. It is time for more Europeanism and a better Europe, and to put people at the centre of decision-making process. Therefore, the European Union shall be able to address the unequal impact of globalisation on the life of our citizens, and to fight against unemployment, especially youth

unemployment, with appropriate governance instruments and adequate financial resources, to improve competitiveness and develop an economic policy aimed at achieving the common good to make social and territorial cohesion a reality. It shall communicate its policies in a decentralised manner, with clearer and more transparent political responsibilities, and strengthen the role of the Union as a key world actor, making the continent a safe place where freedom, security and justice are guaranteed for each and every citizen.

Today, on Europe Day, the parliaments of the Regions of Europe commit themselves to promoting these objectives and reasserting their central role as a vital link, together with the regional governments, between the citizens and the institutions of the European Union, so as to contribute to promoting a widespread sharing of the European project among the citizens, and turn our continent into a great democratic, cultural and economic power that guarantees the fundamental rights of the population and the values which laid the foundations of the European Union within its borders: peace, equality, justice, and others included in art. 2 of the Maastricht Treaty.

We, as regional representatives who are closest to the citizens, can make a valuable contribution to help turn the current scepticism into hope and consolidate our continent as a place where the citizens can see that their opinion has real value and where people feel safe. Sixty years ago, Europe carved out a space of peace and freedom after a period of wars and suffering by the population, and nothing prevents us now, all together, to strengthen the Union in order to make our continent truly a Europe of people.

**Presidency of the Conference of European
Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)**

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