



**"REGIONAL INSTITUTIONAL MODELS - REGIONAL DEMOCRACY"**

**WORK GROUP**

**REPORT**

**2013 WORK PLAN**

**CALRE PLENARY ASSEMBLY**

**Brussels, 21-22 October 2013**



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Continuity in the coordination of the “*Regional Institutional Models- Regional Democracy*” work group was assumed by the Parliament of Galicia in the CALRE plenary assembly held in L’Aquila in November 2012.

The members of the work group throughout 2013 have been:

-  Regional Council of Veneto
-  Parliament of the Basque Country
-  Parliament of Extremadura.
-  Parliament of Valencia
-  Parliament of Andalusia.
-  General Assembly of the Principality of Asturias
-  Regional Council of Sardinia
-  Regional Council of Abruzzo
-  Regional Council of Valle D’Aosta
-  Flemish Parliament
-  Parlament de la Communauté Française
-  Parliament of Galicia (coordinator)



## **2. WORK GUIDELINES**

The two lines of work considered in the 2013 Plan for the Group were the following:

### **A Comparative study of parliamentary models in the European Union**

In 2012, we embarked on the analysis and comparative study of parliamentary models in the European Union. It was precisely the work conducted to date which encouraged and motivated us to make further progress with this work group, the objective of which is to highlight the fundamental role of Regional Assemblies and Legislative Parliaments in the democratic process and decision making.

Thus, and with a view to lending continuity to the comparative study already under way, and with the aim of identifying those best practices which contribute to the institutional efficiency of our legislative chambers, on 5 March 2013, we asked the members of the work group to return the completed questionnaire, and in the event that they had already responded in 2012, to update the same.

On 8 May 2013, we remitted an invitation letter to all those regional legislative assemblies and parliaments which form part of CALRE to participate in our comparative study, in order to ensure that it was as extensive as possible.



Responses were received from the following Parliaments (we also include the Parliament of Galicia):

- Parliament of Extremadura.
- Parliament of Andalusia.
- Parliament of the Basque Country
- Flemish Parliament
- Regional Council of Valle D´Aosta
- Parlement de la Communauté Francaise de Belgique
- Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region
- Parliament of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation
- Parliament of the Balearic Islands
- Regional Council of Friuli Venezia Giulia
- Bremen
- Parliament of Galicia.

On 8 July 2013, in the Parliament of Galicia we held a technical symposium for the *“Regional Institutional Models- Regional Democracy”* Work Group. It was attended by leading figures from the legal world, such as Néstor Pedro Sagúes (Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Buenos Aires); Roberto Blanco Valdés (Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Santiago de Compostela); Ignacio Navarro Méndez (legal counsel in the Parliament of the Canary Islands); and Cristina Ares Castro-Conde (Professor in the Department of Political Science and Administration at the University of Santiago de Compostela).

This technical symposium was attended by Françoise Dupuis, President of the CALRE and Sergé Gouvert, Secretary General of the CALRE, as well as civil servants from the Parliament of Galicia, from the Government of Galicia,



along with other institutions, given that it was an open day for all those who are interested in attending.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

#### **3.1. Democratic quality, a constant aim**

There are a number of different models and formulas for the territorial distribution of power, both from the perspective of the form of the State as well as the form of the government itself. The dogmatic constructions regarding this matter and the practice of comparative law bear witness to this diversity. Thus, different institutional architectures take shape, along with techniques for relations between the also diverging and territorial powers.

Be that as it may, outside this diverse panorama, the basic axiological reference can be none other than that of democracy. Democracy is presented as the public system which best guarantees the liberty and freedom of individuals, owing to which it must be an essential point of reference in the organisation of the political community.

In order to enhance the institutional performance of territorial systems, and to keep the democratic idea alive and up to date, it is always advisable to undertake studies and quantitative analyses which provide the keys for exploration in the immediate future. The current moment in time requires constant analyses if we are to come up with solutions to problems posed by the new realities.

With regard to this conviction, at the CALRE “Regional Institutional Models and Regional Democracy” Work Group, we undertake these analyses with the aim of providing strengths and mitigating weaknesses in the role to be



played especially by the regional parliaments. We are particularly concerned with identifying and defining those best practices which have been shown to be useful in increasing the institutional efficiency of our legislative chambers. Comparative examination is, undoubtedly, a source for dealing with the characteristic problems of parliaments and for inspiring those reforms which may be considered necessary.

### **3.2. The parliament as a reference, the regional parliament as a need**

The parliamentary institution must continue to be a point of reference in the system's architecture, given that it is here where citizens see themselves represented in an objective manner. The Parliament, from modern constantly updated foundations, has proved to be the central body in controlling today's powerful executive bodies, and the qualified mouthpiece for public opinion, in both salient matters from the political agenda and those of general interest. Representation within the same is qualitative, due not only to the manner in which it is obtained, but also due to the objectives of general interest which are aimed for.

Regional parliaments must be set along the same lines; true chambers of democratic representation, nourished by the virtues thereof, and which provide essential solutions in today's multilevel governance.

Regional parliaments respond to the self-governance requirements of many European regions, from a democratic understanding of representation and functions. Thus, they assume the challenge of legislating for equality and the control of power, all at the service of general interest. In the European Union, we find very different regions, but all their parliaments respond to these same objectives. Their strengths would suggest the reinforcement of



regional assemblies, which must always be inspired by the deepest rooted democratic values.

The habitual scheme is usually based on a series of constitutional rulings on political decentralisation, which award autonomy, or the possibility of acceding to the same, to certain territories. On this basis, these territories institutionally endow themselves to exercise their competences, and to meet their duties. In this task, the legislative assembly is the essential body, as it symbolises the territory's autonomy insofar as it is capable of passing laws. The techniques for relations between the different bodies vary from one country to another, displaying a wide range of forms for coordination, cooperation and collaboration.

The constant updating of the regional chambers enables them to satisfy the new demands from citizens, which revolve around the prospects of action with greater expectations. Thus, these chambers acquire particular importance in the democratic quality of the public system as a whole, through their closeness to citizens and the high standards that they can establish in the exercising of the functions.

Moreover, regional parliaments play a powerful role in the overall balance, which transforms them into qualified instruments of the democratic principle at the service of participation and pluralism.

### **3.3. Decentralisation offers more strengths than weaknesses**

The territorial distribution of political power is a matter of the highest order in constitutional theory, with an extensive tradition and vigorous development. In response to this, a number of different forms of state have



been developed; these aim to serve the different needs of both territorial and central powers, in a balanced efficient manner.

In order to outline these matters, in the work symposium held on 8 July 2013 in the Parliament of Galicia, in Santiago Compostela, elements of both federal states and regional states were debated.

In this regard, according to Néstor Pedro Sagüés, the Argentinian specialist who participated in the aforementioned event, six principles which characterise the federal state can be discerned: political need, institutional flexibility; the legality of variety, the principle of operation, adaptation and federal loyalty.

This being so, it must be taken into account that the value of equality value is not the same in a unitary state, as it undergoes modulations. The quota of rights changes from one territory to another. Moreover, relationships between states may fluctuate, which shows this model's capacity for adaptation.

With regard to the aforementioned federal loyalty, it should be borne in mind that the federal state must safeguard the rights of its members, not erode them. The territories must also respect the federal state. The assignation of competences on an international level may usurp the competences of territories. One such example could be the "federal clause" in the US (on signing an international treaty, the Federation reserves the competences of the states).

A territorial power distribution system gives rise to multiple relations between the central State and the territorial bodies. Examples of coordination and cooperation abound. At times the relationships can be of interference or influence, in both directions. Thus, on occasion the territorial bodies participate in the constituent process, in the approval of the constitutional reform, in the Senate or, even, in the conclusion of treaties. From the perspective of central





immission, the example could be that of the federal intervention mechanism, which takes the concrete form of different products in comparative law.

Finally, the federal state appears as a multi-purpose category, which recently has even been opened up to regionalisation (Argentina since 1994). As a product of the political dynamics, it evolves and adapts to the new contexts. In this regard, in the aforementioned work symposium held in July, the constitutionalist Roberto Blanco Valdés indicated how federal systems, in spite of the multiple facets, have acted as a territorial balance of power and provide solutions for problems of coexistence.

Thus, territorial decentralisation has demonstrated more strengths than weaknesses for, on one hand, bringing public services closer to citizens, and, on the other, providing political satisfaction to different territorial aspirations, maintaining diversity in unity. From the perspective of rationality and the specification of the dimensions of administrations, with reforms if required, the present moment in time reinforces the benefits of decentralisation, at a time when the citizens are more aware than ever of their essential role in a democratic system, and legitimately demand answers to the problems from their vigorous, efficient public powers.



### 3.4. In search of best practices

Based on the responses, it has been possible to analyse a good number of best practices in the parliamentary setting. This involves conducting qualitative strategies which make it possible to detect, outline, encourage and disseminate these best practices.

#### a) Aspects which have enhanced the legislative capacity.

In recent years, regional parliaments have conducted reforms and introduced elements with the aim of enhancing their legislative function.

In this regard, we have seen actions which directly raise the efficiency of legislative activity:

- setting the duration of procedures:

Friuli Venezia Giulia

- rules for the drafting of statutory texts aimed at ensuring the quality thereof:

Brussels-Capital: acknowledgement of receipt of a legislative proposal in which the departments of the Chamber examine whether drafting of the document is of sufficiently high quality.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: regulations for drafting texts for the proper formulation of the draft bill.

- coherence control:

Brussels-Capital: acknowledgement of receipt of a legislative proposal in which the services of the Chamber examines whether the document is in line with its legislative competences and whether the remittances and references to other regulations are correct.



Flanders: a third of the members of parliament may oblige the President to request legal advice from the Council of State regarding a draft bill.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: examination of the design of a bill to verify its coherence with the constitutional principles, with those of the general legal system and with those of the sectoral legal systems of which it must form part.

- information on draft bills and laws:

Flanders: legislative discussion paper for all members of parliament, so that they may summarise the legislation on a matter and the problems thereof, presenting an outline of the new regulation may improve the previous one.

Galicia: the disclosure of governmental information on draft legislation on the Government of Galicia's website.

Balearic Islands: reports, documentation and evaluation of the preceding legislation and its effective impact. Also, compliance with environmental procedures.

Balearic Islands: publication in official bulletins and in the social media.

- formal corrections in different phases of the legislative procedure:

Friuli Venezia Giulia.

- focus on possible amendments, opinions and suggestions:

Andalusia: informative appearances by interested social agents and organisations before the parliament prior to the drafting of amendments by the groups.



Flanders: the legislative discussion paper is remitted to a commission whose members express their opinion on the matter; this may be taken into account by the MPs when making their legislative proposal.

Flanders: facilities to help MPs to oblige a commission to conduct a second reading of a draft bill.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: the submission of modifying amendments, there are more restrictions in the plenary sitting than in a commission.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: commissions can invite subjects interested in the matter which is the object of the legislative proposal.

Extremadura: every legislative initiative is the object of a general debate, guaranteeing that from its initial phase of processing, the parliamentary groups may make effective political judgements on the suitability or not of the draft bill or law.

Extremadura: new phase in the legislative procedure, the so-called informative period, through which groups may request the appearance of social agents, organisations and citizens.

Wallonia-Brussels Federation: all MPs can submit legislative proposals.

Galicia: empowerment of the chamber's website so that citizens can provide suggestions for legislative texts (specific program called *Lexisla con nós [legislate with us]*).

Balearic Islands: two-week period for parliamentary groups to gather views on the project or proposals.

- focus on task scheduling, communication and the organisation of debates:

Friuli Venezia Giulia: task scheduling method.



Galicia: the improvement of communication between the teams of the Government and the Parliament (joint training symposia with jurists and linguists).

- financial-economic control:

Flanders: obligation on the Government to prepare periodic reports on the principal projects which have a significant impact on the budget.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: express provision for examining the financial-economic control and scheduling instruments.

- different types of law:

Friuli Venezia Giulia: regional "EU" laws, with a procedure which aims to combine the temporal urgency of such laws with a suitable analysis by all the commissions involved in the Assembly.

- rationalisation of the committees and the work thereof:

Bremen: installation of digital platforms for commissions, enabling rapid, systematic access to documentation.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: numerical limit on internal bodies.

- monitoring of legislation:

Friuli Venezia Giulia: instruments for evaluating the results obtained by the regional laws. "Evaluation clauses" can be incorporated into the project, making it possible to examine how and when the effects, the results and the costs of their application arise.



Aside from the foregoing, on occasions there are actions of a general nature which seek to strengthen the democratic principle or the training and information of different agents, and which may also improve lawmaking:

- reinforcement of the role of minorities:

Flanders: a third of the members of parliament may oblige the President to request legal advice from the Council of State regarding a draft bill.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: recognition of the opposition's existence; regulations which protect the capacity to prepare alternative policies to those of the majority, such as reserving for the arguments of the opposition a time quota of not less than one quarter the total devoted in the plenary sitting to the discussion of the law in question; this ensures that the opposition is properly represented in the different bodies.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: tutelage of linguistic minorities.

- training of different agents who intervene in the legislative procedure:

Galicia: training of MPs through the publication of a parliamentary manual, which also focuses on the aspects of legislative technique.

Galicia: training of the chamber's jurists (e.g. through the symposia of the Spanish Association of Parliamentary Lawyers [AELPA]).

- information:

Flanders: green papers configured as discussion documents which aim to stimulate discussion on a specific matter. These are presented to interested parties, experts and also, in majority of cases, to the parliament, which may even adopt a formal stance regarding the green paper and adopt a resolution with recommendations aimed at the government.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: annual regional legislation report.



- citizen participation

Andalusia: draft law on citizen participation.

Andalusia: strengthening of the popular legislative initiative and from town/city councils

b) Aspects which have improved the Government's capacity to control and provide impetus through the Parliament.

Different aspects which improve the government's capacity to control and provide impetus through the parliament have been detected:

- increase in control times and the rationalisation thereof:

Bremen: The Government must inform on the drafting of laws, on the fundamental matters in the planning of the *Land* and on important projects.

Bremen: the Government must report as soon as possible on cooperation projects with the Federal State, the *Länder*, the European Union or other states, which may affect essential interests or which may have a significant financial impact.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: Establishment of a committee for legislation, control and evaluation, which enhances the parliamentary control functions.

Galicia: increase in these times in plenary sittings.

Balearic Islands: rationalisation of the general debate on political and government action.

Balearic Islands: extension of the period for submitting motions for resolutions.

Balearic Islands: limit on the number of motions for resolutions, with a maximum of 10 per group plus two per MP.



Basque country: plenary sittings exclusively for control.

Basque country: increase in the use of commissions of enquiry.

- increase in control modes:

Andalusia: “questions of maximum topicality”, which may be submitted up to 19:00 hours on the day before the commencement of a plenary sitting, also before commissions up until 10:00 hours on the penultimate working day prior to the commission.

Andalusia: questions from citizens' initiatives, which must be assumed by an MP for the substantiation thereof.

Bremen: if the Government of the *Land* differs from the Parliament in its vote in the *Bundesrat*, it must justify its decision before the Parliament.

Brussels-Capital: the Government must remit to the Parliament reports on the execution of certain legislative ordinances.

Flanders: annual obligation on the members of the Government to submit to Parliament a general policy charter and reports on the monitoring of the resolutions adopted by the Parliament and the recommendations of the Court of Auditors.

Flanders: in those cases relevant for the Flemish authorities, the Government may prepare reports on the monitoring of decisions by the Belgian Constitutional Court and the European Union Court of Justice.

Flanders: obligation on the Government to prepare periodic reports on the principal projects which have a significant impact on the budget. The Parliamentary questions on this matter will be grouped into one single debate to render the control more efficient.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: the Assembly discusses and approves the government agenda presented by the regional President, the annual





report on the state of the Region and the report on compliance with said agenda.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: the Assembly may issue guidelines to the President of the Region and to the Council regarding the government agenda.

Extremadura: questions to the president of the regional government have been incorporated into the second ordinary plenary sitting of each month.

Extremadura: provision for set-piece debates on matters of general interest for the autonomic community, with motions for resolutions.

Balearic Islands: specific plenary sitting for debating motions for resolutions referring to the general debate on political and government action.

- increase in governmental capabilities for responding to the requirements of parliament:

Galicia: increase in the government's capacity to respond to written initiatives originating from the Parliament.

- access to governmental and administrative information for parliamentarians, respecting data protection regulations
- appearances:

Extremadura: the appearance of bodies or persons other than the government is permitted.

Balearic Islands: if a member of the government fails to appear before a commission within a period of six months, the groups may request appearance before plenary sitting in the first session that is held.

- reinforcement of the role of commissions:



Andalusia: control mechanism for compliance with the motions approved through the corresponding commission.

Flanders: the most relevant reports from the Court of Audits are included in the agenda of commissions; these are debated with representatives from the aforesaid Court and from the Government.

Galicia: decentralisation of work in commissions.

### c) Aspects which have strengthened the transparency of parliament and its proximity to citizens

We find aspects which enhances the transparency of the parliamentary institution, bringing it closer to the citizens:

- increase in the information transmitted:

Andalusia: principles of transparency. Draft bill regulating transparency in public activity.

Andalusia: the Parliament's publication service disseminates the different aspects of Parliamentary activity in various formats.

Bremen: parliamentary commissions must inform interested citizens.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: reports on regional legislation and on other parliamentary activities.

Galicia: publication of the income and wealth of MPs.

Balearic Islands: publication of a declaration of assets and activities of MPs.

Balearic Islands: declaration of MPs tax returns on the Parliament's website.



Valle de Aosta: publication related with the budgets, registry, salaries of senior personnel, list of public and private beneficiaries of subsidies and benefits.

Publication of service charters of the parliamentary administration.

- opening up of the parliament:

Andalusia: scientific, cultural and social activities in the Parliament, giving rise to exhibitions, conferences and symposia held in the Parliament itself, or the sponsorship of events in educational institutions.

Andalusia: specific unit for visit guides. Open day activities.

Brussels-Capital: regular visits to the Parliament, adapted to requirements from the public. The MPs also organise visits themselves.

Brussels-Capital: two open days.

Wallonia-Brussels Federation: the Parliament has an open space for citizens. Regular visits.

Wallonia-Brussels Federation: the Parliament organises cultural events and makes its facilities available for different public events. There is a space for housing exhibitions. It encourages the promotion of cultural heritage.

Flanders: exhibitions, book presentations, literary and musical acts, live broadcasts, weekly television programme, organisation of the "Politics Festival".

Friuli Venezia Giulia: library open to the public..

Friuli Venezia Giulia: school visit program.

Extremadura: holding of cultural or social acts in the assembly.



Galicia: support for open days and citizens' visits to the Parliament. Programme of visits aimed at schoolchildren.

Valle de Aosta: the open day initiative gives rise to a schedule of guided tours, in which visitors participate in simulated debates and votes, and in debates with regional representatives.

- contact and acts with journalists:

Flanders

Galicia: training activities aimed at personnel from the communication media covering the parliament.

- promotion of digital instruments:

Andalusia: exhaustive information on the website, broadcasting of sittings and the storage thereof. Individual websites, with interactive elements for each MP, where their interventions are stored. Use of social networks. Library and open documentation databases.

Bremen

Brussels-Capital: computerisation of Parliamentary documents, updating of the website for enhanced accessibility.

Flanders

Friuli Venezia Giulia: databases, activity schedules, agendas, acts, documentation, broadcasting of sessions.

Extremadura: components of the Parliamentary website, where all the events taking place in the assembly appear in real time. Improved graphic design and interactivity of the website.

Extremadura: participation in the assembly's social networks.



Wallonia-Brussels Federation: website with extensive information, through which the plenary sittings can be heard.

Wallonia-Brussels Federation: the e-mail addresses of all members of Parliament are published. In addition, a common e-mail address to which citizens can write and independent e-mails for certain departments.

Galicia: Plenary Sittings and Commissions live through the website.

Balearic Islands

Basque Country: promoting citizen participation in the draft legislation through the new technologies.

- procurement:

Andalusia: procurement portal.

Extremadura: practical disappearance of direct procurement.

- existence of an ombudsman to serve the citizens:

Andalusia

Wallonia- Brussels Federation

Galicia

Basque Country

Valle de Aosta

d) Practices which have improved the operation of the administration at the service of the parliament.

- quality management models and administrative improvement studies



Wallonia-Brussels Federation: optimisation of human resource management. Proactive management

Flanders: project related with the efficiency of administrative processes.

Basque Country: work on the EFQM model (*European Foundation for Quality Management*).

Basque Country: service charter.

- extended timetables

Extremadura: extended hours for registering documents.

- speeding up of procedures and rationalisation of works:

Brussels-Capital: rationalisation of the transcription process for Commission debates, enabling the secretaries of commissions to concentrate on the legislative work of the Parliament.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: programming of activities, including agendas.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: office organisation regulations.

Extremadura: invoices are settled within a period of 20 days.

Galicia:

Basque Country: promotion of the Parliamentary Committee

- improvements to IT applications:

Andalusia: in the near future, new servers and centralisation of the data processing centre. Work is being conducted on the software for processing all the information.

Bremen: electronic remittance of documentation.

Flanders: refurbished Intranet, advanced digitalisation process.



Balearic Islands: strategic guidelines contained in the Parliamentary Information Systems Plan. Worthy of note among the software projects it contains is an application for the Edition and Submission of Parliamentary Initiatives (EPI) and a Parliamentary Processing Management application (GTPNet).

- training activities:

Andalusia: training activities for Parliament personnel.

Brussels-Capital: language courses (French, Dutch, English and German) for the personnel.

Wallonia-Brussels Federation

Galicia: training programmes for personnel in the service of the parliament.

Galicia: strengthening of grant programs for professional training in the Parliament.

- training of personnel of the administration:

Wallonia-Brussels Federation

Extremadura: creation of the employees portal.

Galicia: communication and permanent feedback with workers' representatives.

- Personnel evaluation system.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: personnel evaluation is based on examining compliance with objectives. Existence of an evaluation body.

- elimination of unnecessary expenditure

Flanders: internal audits.



Extremadura

Galicia



### 3.5. Future lines for increasing institutional performance

In the aforementioned questionnaire, prepared within the work group to obtain information on members to help in the analysis, a certain aspect was reflected which aimed to detect elements being implemented, or which are going to be implemented, for improving the institutional efficiency of the legislative assembly. This was to include the lines of action envisaged for institutional improvement currently under implementation.

- Encouragement of new information and communication technologies.

Use of popular digital platforms, where parliaments may have dynamic up-to-date accounts, and individual, institutional blogs.

Publication of information in open formats, in particular information pertaining to laws.

Brussels-Capital: implementation of an e-document flow system.

Flanders: ongoing process of updating the website, including the installation of RSS Feeds.

Flanders: creation of a digital archive.

Extremadura: forthcoming setting-up of a telematic registry.

Extremadura: elimination of paper in administrative proceedings.

Galicia: specific improvements to be undertaken in the parliament's technological platform.

- information strategies:





Flanders: possibility of downloading audio and video files of debates.

Extremadura: inclusion of all financial data on the website.

Galicia: Parliamentary information manual.

- internal dynamics:

Bremen: simplified system for voting procedures.

Galicia: mobility of civil servants.

Basque Country: redesigning of Parliamentary administration processes.

- comparative training and evaluation:

Friuli Venezia Giulia: CAPIRe project, to encourage policy evaluation. This initiative was sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of Legislative Assemblies of the Italian Autonomous Regions and Provinces.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: “Matera” Charter, a Decalogue of suggestions aimed at the Assembly in order to consolidate control and evaluation activity.

Friuli Venezia Giulia: convention between the Parliament and the University of Trieste to encourage cultural exchange and common research activities.

Galicia: planning of *stages* in other parliamentary institutions.

Basque Country: quality evaluations.

Basque Country: securing of the BIKAIN certificate of excellence in bilingualism.

- forthcoming regulatory reforms



Andalusia: draft laws in the setting of transparency and citizen participation. Various initiatives: modernisation of the legislation on party financing, disclosure of the income and activities of the partners of MPs and senior officials; endowing the Accounting Chamber of Andalusia with greater effectiveness; reform of the electoral law.

Brussels-Capital: re-examination of the division of labour between the commissions subsequent to the conclusion of the State reform process.

Extremadura: forthcoming reform of the regulations of the chamber and of the personnel statute.

These aspects, detected in the operation of regional parliaments, may give rise to suggestions for **possible pathways for reform**.

In recent decades, the parliament has been affected by a number of factors, such as the increasing role of political parties, the power of executives, the dynamics of the media, and the new participatory culture of citizens, who are now more active and seasoned in the new digital pathways.

Despite all this, the parliamentary institution is still an essential point of reference for the democratic system. According to Ignacio Navarro Méndez, a participant in the work symposium held on 8 July 2013, the virtues of parliament are based on its being a deliberative element and a space for negotiation and political transaction. The author noted a number of questions which need to be dealt with to improve the operation of the chambers.

The first of these is based on a readjustment between MP and Parliamentary group. The MP has been absorbed by the Parliamentary group. A readjustment of positions would seem to be expedient. MPs could be given a greater role with ITC's, thanks to which they can maintain an ongoing dialogue with their voters.



Accordingly, the Parliament must train its MPs in the use of the new technologies. In addition, the legal guarantees for MPs could be reinforced.

The second aspect refers to a change in the Parliamentary functions of legislation and control. The bulk of parliamentary activity lies the function of control, which serves, among other things, to enable the minorities to control the government. These mechanisms must be deployed swiftly, at the same time as the minority must be urged to exercise this control function responsibly. It is better to increase the quality of control than the quantity. This would also help Parliament to regain the centrality of its social debates. Along these lines, oral questions are preferable and the communication media must be supported to allow them to inform. The instruments of political orientation, as well as the motions, should be monitored through an *ex post* evaluation process. With regard to the legislative function, we should constantly aim to ensure a refined legislative technique. Legislative presentations have lost a great deal of usefulness. The excessive filtering of popular legislative initiatives would also need to be eliminated. Similarly, it would be useful to monitor the laws, in the sense of the aforementioned *ex post* evaluation.

Thirdly, in the current setting of a participative culture, we must focus on information and communication technologies, and their application to parliamentary life. These allow the monitoring of the political representative. Perhaps they will help to buck the current trend of political disaffection. ITC's can endow the chambers with transparency and closeness. We deal with a participative citizenship, which uses non-formalised mechanisms (chats, forums, websites, television, etc.). The Parliament 2.0 seeks formulas for interaction between parliaments and citizens. Websites need to be redesigned to improve access and use on-line participation platforms. We have seen different initiatives in this regard, such as the Basque Parliament's ADI (aporta, debate, influye [provide, debate, influence]) and the Galician Parliament's "Lexisla con nós". Nonetheless, levels of participation have been low, which forces us to reconsider certain aspects: we need to strike a balance between



the quantity and quality of participations; to suitably disseminate the participatory channel; to conduct the process of minimal training; the groups need to evaluate this participation mechanism *a posteriori*. The declaration of parliamentary transparency is a useful source in this task. Information on the Parliament belongs to the public domain. We need to make progress in a new communication policy using the Internet, with reciprocity and bilateralism. This information must be tempered with *informability*; i.e., the capacity to adapt to the interests of the public. We cannot wait for the people to come to the Parliament; we must go to the people.

A fourth idea on which we will need to focus is the need to work in networks with other parliaments. To seek synergies and share experiences.

And in fifth place, reinforcing the external action of Parliament would be positive. It is worthwhile continuing to focus on this regard, completing the work that regional executives conduct in this setting. The early warning system connected to the principle of subsidiarity is a mechanism whose performance needs to be improved. In this regard, Cristina Ares, a political scientist who took part in the work symposium in July, is a proponent of strengthening regional democracy to strengthen the democracy of the European Union at the same time. The new type of Parliamentary democracy which is opening up in Europe requires increasing the dynamism of the assemblies and of the pro-European perspective.

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By way of a corollary, we could say that regional parliaments must act prospectively on the basis of two criteria: a pragmatic one, which seeks institutional efficiency by promoting best practices; and an axiological one,



which aims to make progress in democratic quality. A permanent commitment to both aims would be a guarantee of success.