

VareseNews

The European regions meet in Varese. “We’ll be the ones who save the EU”

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“The Regions will save Europe, but only if they have the strength, political intelligence, and the ability to rebuild Europe from the bottom.”

This statement, by Raffaele Cattaneo, the Chairman of the Conference of European Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) and the President of Lombardy, is emblematic of the contents discussed during the first session of the 2016 CALRE Plenary Assembly.

In this first of two days of meetings, numerous delegates representing European regional councils, expressed their thoughts. Markku Markkula, the Chairman of the Region Committee, began with a speech about the need to make changes, and above all, to learn to cooperate. **“We have to use the best knowledge at our disposal,”** Markkula said, “and we have to start listening and working with the people, in order to meet their needs.”

The need to think from a different perspective was confirmed by Fabrizio Sala, the Vice President of Lombardy Region, who said that, in order to go beyond a Europe made up of a sum of states, we need **a Europe made of ideas, which will be achieved through talks among the European regions.**

The work done by President Cattaneo, in his role as the Chairman of the association, and the Europe Project, in general, are essential, not only for the economies, but for the union of culture, and to

overcome future challenges. It is no coincidence that, in his speech, he focused on the crisis which Europe is facing, starting with Brexit. Indeed, for the first time, a country is leaving the European Union (“which has guaranteed peace and unity for 70 years,” Cattaneo mentioned several times); **Brexit is in danger of being just the beginning of a process of disintegration in Europe**; the statistics are alarming, but unclear in relation to the sentiment of the people, who consider themselves far away, and not involved.

The modus operandi suggested by Cattaneo is to implement cohesion policies that invest in the territories. “Without fear, we have to start a job of construction that will require all of our efforts of patient cooperation to create new ways.” According to Cattaneo, European regionalism is the way to save the EU, but only if the regions have the strength to find the way to rebuild from below, and especially, if they manage to be **“united in their diversity, like an orchestra, where everyone plays a different instrument in a single piece of music.”**

di Translated by D’Andrea & Mane (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)