

Application form – CALRE Awards 2023

Submitting assembly* Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha (Spain)

Contact person*

First Name: María Teresa

Last Name: Luengo Rodríguez

Email: presidencia@cortesclm.es

Phone: 0034 648 58 62 41

Name of the initiative* "Parliament Goes to School"

Type of initiative* A Project to Promote Political Participation from Childhood

Start date of the initiative: January 1, 2023

End date of the initiative: December 31, 2023

Web page of the initiative: www.cortesclm.es

Short description of the initiative*

"Parliament Goes to School": A Project to Promote Political Participation from Childhood" is an initiative of the Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha designed to promote awareness among school-aged population about the work carried out by the Legislative Assembly of their region, with the aim of igniting interest and, consequently, future social and civic participation.

For many years, the Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha has regularly received visits from local associations, senior citizens' groups, women's organizations, and educational institutions, primarily high schools and universities. It is worthy of remark that the Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha is located in an historic building, a former Franciscan convent dating back to the 17th century surrounded by a beautiful natural setting, that has been designated as Cultural Heritage Site. These unique features contribute significantly to the high number of visits the building receives throughout the year.

After analysing the types of visits, their motivations, as well as the ages and origins of the visitors, from the Presidency of the Parliament, we believe it's necessary to encourage visits from children and young people. The goal is not only for them to learn about the historical and artistic value of the building that houses us but also to promote democracy, parliamentary work, and the values of dialogue and consensus, among other matters.

With this aim in mind, the program 'Parliament Goes to School' was created. It is an initiative that seeks to foster political and community participation from childhood, understanding that this is a good way to mitigate the effects of institutional disaffection that often occurs in youth and adulthood.

'Parliament Goes to School' is a comprehensive set of measures which has led to a significant increase of communication with educational institutions and to activities related to parliamentary and democratic processes carried out in classrooms, and has attracted more visitors from primary and secondary education levels. The different actions included in the initiative are:

- **Editing of the video 'Parliament goes to School'**, which simulates a visit to the parliament and provides child-friendly concepts about democracy, parliamentarism, and the activities of the Chamber. It follows the journey of two child characters, Lucia and Hugo, and includes an animation of our headquarters in the San Gil Convent building.
- **Establishment of communication channels with educational institutions in the region:** The video was sent for viewing to 764 primary schools in Castilla-La Mancha, both public (658) and private (106). Along with the video, we sent a series of materials with a didactic approach, acting as educational extensions in the classrooms.
- **Guided tours to the Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha**, which serve as a perfect complement to the prior work carried out in the classrooms through the video projection. During the visit, in addition to exploring the various spaces where parliamentary activities take place, they receive knowledge about democracy, parliamentary work, political representation, and more. With this phase, the cycle initiated with the video 'Parliament Goes to School' continues by bringing schoolers to Parliament. Every education centre in the region that wish to do so can arrange their visits to the parliament via email at puertasabiertas@cortesclm.es.
- **Edition of 'The Great Game of Castilla-La Mancha'**. This is a board game with 1,500 questions and answers about parliamentarism, geography, art, literature, history, or natural sciences that, in a trivia-style manner, helps to learn about the region and its regional parliament while playing. This game has been created by the Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha in collaboration with the regional University, coinciding with the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Autonomy Statute, and is given to those who visited during this year 2023.
- **Collaboration with the Regional Television in the program 'I am the one who knows the most about the region'**, a television program in which students from educational institutions in Castilla-La Mancha participate. One of the filming locations is the regional parliament, and the participants answer questions related to autonomy and the Parliament. They receive one of the board games created by the Parliament after their participation in the contest.
- **Organization of child parliaments in the Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha**, where students from schools in the region, with the collaboration of child-focused organizations like UNICEF, Aldeas Infantiles and the Platform of Child Organizations, present their ideas and proposals in the regional parliament to improve citizen participation and contribute to a more active role for children, adolescents, and young people in political decisions.

The implementation of this set of actions has resulted in a significant increase in the number of children visiting the regional institution, as well as an increase in the knowledge of parliamentary activities among primary school students in the region. Specifically, throughout the year 2023, including visits already conducted and those scheduled until the end of the year, approximately 1,500 students will have visited the headquarters of the regional Parliament after having worked with the materials sent to their respective educational centres.

Main features of the initiative*:

One of the main characteristics of 'Parliament goes to School' is that it is a project aimed at **strengthening and perfecting democracy and parliamentarism**, as it seeks to increase the participation of children in parliamentary activities and, at the same time, provide the participating boys and girls with the knowledge and strategies necessary to continue this participation throughout adulthood. Democracy becomes better and more complete the more people can participate in it. This is why current Presidency considers this project as a top priority.

It's also worth to remark that this initiative is characterized by its collaborative and participatory nature. **The project emerged and was developed in collaboration with the educational community in Castilla-La Mancha and with third-sector organizations working with children.** Without this collaboration and prior work, the implementation of this project would not have been possible. Much of the work takes place in the classrooms, also the visits are conducted during school hours. Thus, this initiative doesn't solely align with the goals of the Castilla-La Mancha Parliament, it's a shared objective with the educational centres. There is also regular communication that allows for feedback and mutual support.

Furthermore, **'Parliament Goes to School' is part of a broader strategy launched by the Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha called 'Open Parliament'**, which aims to promote public awareness and participation in parliamentary matters without discrimination and on equal terms. For this reason, ongoing efforts are being made to eliminate physical, sensory, and cognitive barriers in the Parliament to ensure the participation of individuals with disabilities, as well as older people or those with learning difficulties. Women's associations, neighbourhood groups, and university students are among the other sectors of the population with whom we work to promote political participation. However, school-aged children require specific strategies, which we are implementing through this project.

Another significant characteristic of the initiative is its **multiplier effect**. Each student who participates in the program will be able to share the information received with their family, either through recounting their experiences or by playing the 'Great Game of Castilla-La Mancha' together—a fun way to learn about parliamentarism, democracy, and the region's history. Additionally, teachers, with whom we work closely, play a crucial role as multipliers of the project.

Also, it's important to highlight that **this project is not limited to a single year but has a clear future projection** that will continue to materialize in the coming years with the aim of reaching as many people as possible.

In summary, this is a project that ensures the political participation of children in the present, lays the foundation for the knowledge and curiosity necessary for the participating children to continue this participation in adulthood, and thereby contributes to the strengthening of democracy and parliamentarism. This project is the result of collaboration between the Parliament, educational centres and social entities in the region. Its success allows us to foresee a very promising future, which is why we are presenting this project in Europe with the aim that it can be replicated in other parliaments as well.

Role of the assembly in the success of the initiative*

The Assembly of Castilla-La Mancha is the entity that created and promotes this initiative, and therefore, it is responsible for carrying out all the necessary actions for its implementation. This includes preliminary activities such as meetings with childhood-focused social organizations and educational institutions, the design and development of supplementary materials, the preparation of the content for guided visits and more.

To ensure that this entire process is successful and achieves the desired results, a system of ongoing evaluation has been established. This allows the Assembly of Castilla-La Mancha to continually assess which activities proposed in the project's development work best and the degree of satisfaction of the people who participate in them.

The Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha is a member of COPREPA (Conference of the Presidencies of Autonomous Parliaments of Spain), through which there is an opportunity to share ideas and materials with other parliaments, with the aim of replicating successful projects in other legislative assemblies. This is a way to ensure that the project spreads to other regions and advances the promotion of political participation from childhood.

European orientation of the initiative*

Europe has played a crucial role in establishing the rights of children and urging member states to adopt and integrate these rights into their national regulations. Child protection and their rights were initially outlined in the 1924 Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child and later in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly on November 20, 1959. This compilation of principles was further developed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which became law after being initially signed and accepted by 20 countries, including Spain.

Among the rights of children recognized in European regulations is the right to participation, which is not only a right but also a fundamental principle for the realization of all other rights. This implies that it is a necessary component to ensure progressive autonomy, protection, the best interests of the child, and all the other rights enshrined in the CRC. It cannot be achieved unless children and adolescents are effectively involved in matters that affect them directly.

This is the inspiring goal of the 'Parliament Go to School' project: to promote children's participation in decision-making that affects them and to lay the foundation for that participation initiated in childhood to continue into adulthood. The aim is to create an informed, involved, active, and participatory citizenry in political decision-making.

Therefore, the initiative we are submitting for these recognitions is aligned with the objectives embraced by Europe and Spain as a member of the Union. It has a Human Rights approach and seeks to advance in the practical development of strengthening and perfecting democracy and the parliamentary system. Just as with children's rights, Europe has historically and currently played a key role in defending democracy and strengthening it in member states.

'Parliament goes to School' is, in a way, a demonstration of the commitment of this institution with facilitating social transformation for children to fully exercise their rights and for a more participatory society engaged in political matters to be built on that basis.

The experience initiated in the Assembly of Castilla-La Mancha is perfectly replicable in other regions of Spain and Europe, and it is our desire that it be so.

Documentation

- Project Presentation Form.
- Summary Video of the Initiative. <https://we.tl/t-gkcli7sBNM>
- 'Parliament goes to School' video, a content-delivery tool to explain the parliamentary system and the work conducted in the institution to students.
<https://www.cortesclm.es/index.php/conoce?p=1>
- Press Kit.
- Photo Documentation Kit.