Dear Members,

In May 2022, we met together on the occasion of the AAC General Assembly in San Sebastián. It was an opportunity to celebrate the re-election of Basque Country President Iñigo Urkullu as President of the Atlantic Arc Commission, to assess our past achievements, and to agree on common priorities for the next two years, highlighted by the signature of a political declaration. We were also pleased to meet many of you again at the 50th CPMR General Assembly in October 2022, where we were able to follow up together on our shared objectives.

In light of this new mandate, the AAC Secretariat would like to thank all the regions for their cooperation and commitment to the success of our joint actions. We assure members of our total dedication to matching your ambitions for the organisation. In this Flash Info, you will find details of the AAC’s latest activities, and we also encourage you to have a look at the AAC Activity Report 2021-2022. Happy reading!

The CPMR Atlantic Arc Secretariat
Elise Wattrelot, AAC Executive Secretary
Delphine Kaczorowski, Project & Policy Officer
Catherine Petiau, Policy Assistant
Special focus: our 2022 General Assembly, a pivotal moment for the Atlantic macro-region proposal

Celebrating joint achievements and looking ahead to a mandate from the EU Council

After two challenging years during which the Atlantic Arc Commission was unable to celebrate its cooperation activities in person, representatives of the 14 Atlantic regional authorities were thrilled to see each other again at the 2022 General Assembly, hosted by the Basque Country government in San Sebastián on 24-25 May. The General Assembly re-elected President Urkullu as President of the Atlantic Arc Commission. He outlined his objectives for this new mandate, among which the achievement of an Atlantic macro-region remains a major priority. The macro-region proposal was discussed during a special session in the presence of Spanish and Portuguese government representatives Isabel Ferreira, Secretary of State of the Portuguese Government, María Lledo, Secretary General for the EU from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Spanish Government, and Eneko Goia Mayor of Donostia-San Sebastián and President of the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, who all confirmed their full support for the initiative. Throughout the discussions on the way forward, regions emphasised the potential benefits of a macro-region on connectivity, cooperation on innovation via RIS3s, and capacity to tackle challenges in fisheries and aquaculture. The perimeter of the macro-region and cooperation with the UK were also discussed. In cooperation with the regions, the AAC Secretariat produced a technical note on the added-value of the Atlantic Macro-Region.

Save the date! Welsh government to host the next Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly in Cardiff on 23-24 May 2023

Read the full article here!  
Read the Minutes of the GA
What’s happened since the General Assembly?

Timeline of the AAC’s latest actions on the macro-region proposal

Meeting of the Political Steering Group (PSG). At this first meeting of the new mandate, member regions further shaped the governance framework of the proposed AAC Atlantic macro-region. To pursue efforts on determining a governance model, it was decided to organise a series of hearings. Members also approved a work plan to nurture and finetune the political priorities of the macro-region. Read the minutes here.

CPMR High-Level Event on Macro-regional and Sea Basin Strategies. In light of the CPMR Political Position on Macro-regions, adopted at the last CPMR Political Bureau, this key event compared the experiences of the different macro-regional strategies, especially on the role of regions in their governance. In the presence of Younous Omarjee MEP and Normund Popens from DG REGIO, member regions learnt from the experience of the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-Region (EUSAIR) and Baltic Macro-Region (EUBSR). María Elorza, the Basque Country’s Secretary General for external action, presented the Atlantic proposal in a session on emerging strategies.

Meetings of the Atlantic Macro-Region Working Group. Following the conclusions of the PSG, member regions met to continue working on the proposal. On 19 October, they held a hearing of representatives from the Italian region of Veneto to learn from their experience as participants in both the EUSAIR and EUSALP macro-regions. Topics discussed included the preparatory phase of each strategy, their respective governance frameworks and the role of the regions, as well as implementation and benefits. The Atlantic regions benefited from the shared key advice and feedback from the Italian experience and were able to clarify their ambitions for the AAC proposal.

AAC Plenary Session, CPMR 2022 General Assembly. Member regions gathered for their annual plenary meeting in Crete, Greece, on the occasion of the CPMR 50th General Assembly. This provided an opportunity to discuss the proposal of Brittany Region to hold a political seminar for elected officials early in 2023 to determine cooperation priorities and the desired governance model for the future Atlantic macro-region.
Atlantic Cooperation Hub

**The AAC calls for better representation of regions in the governance of the Atlantic Strategy**

The AAC is an associated partner of the Atlantic Strategy Committee, and as such took part in the Committee’s meetings on 1 June, in Las Palmas, Spain, and 26 October, online. To fulfil its objective to clarify the governance of the Atlantic Strategy, the Spanish Presidency consulted ASC members on new Terms of Reference. The AAC submitted a series of amendments calling for stronger and clearer representation of the regions in decision-making and better coordination of the strategy. The final, updated version of the Terms of Reference will be approved at the next ASC meeting, on 30 November in Cadiz, Spain.

**An intergovernmental statement on transatlantic cooperation**

Earlier in September, the United States government published a joint statement signed by the US, Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cote d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Ireland, Mauritania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The signatories declared their intention to explore regional cooperation opportunities on maritime challenges, such as the sustainable ocean economy, climate change and environmental degradation, and maritime governance.

This statement echoes the AAC regions’ ambition to boost transatlantic relations and the objectives of the transatlantic pilot project, for which approval is pending. The AAC Secretariat will monitor the opportunities arising from the statement.

**The new Interreg Atlantic Area Programme 2021-2027 has been approved!**

![Interreg Atlantic Area](https://example.com)

The Managing Authority of the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme and the Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão, holding the Programme Presidency for 2022, organised the launch of the new Interreg Atlantic Area 2021-2027 in Viana do Castelo, Portugal, on 29 September. The main programme guidelines were presented, as well as information on the First Call for Projects, which opened on 14 October.

The budget for this call amounts to EUR 45 million, representing 45% of the programme’s overall budget. La Rioja region is newly eligible. The call covers three of the four priorities of the programme: Blue innovation and competitiveness (Smarter Europe), Blue and Green Environment (Greener Europe) and Blue sustainable tourism and culture (Social Europe). Project budgets for this call should preferably amount to a total of between EUR 1 and 3.5 million. Projects will be co-financed and reimbursed up to 75%. The indicative duration is up to 36 months. Projects must include at least one partner from each Member State of the cooperation area and must involve between 4 and 12 full partners. The deadline for submission is 17 February 2023 at 18.00 (Lisbon Time). An information webinar will be held on 21 November 2022 from 14.30 to 16.30 (Lisbon time).

You can find further information on the programme’s website, and the link to the webinar here. Please don’t hesitate to contact the AAC Secretariat for help in finding partners for your project idea!
On the occasion of the United Nations Ocean Conference, held in Lisbon in June 2022, the AAC was invited as one of the selected stakeholders in the Interactive Dialogue addressing marine pollution. The AAC organised an official side-event on interregional cooperation and EU leverages, hosted by António M. Cunha, President of Norte Region and Chair of the Atlantic Arc Commission Ocean Pollution Working Group. This event highlighted the pledge signed by the AAC at the 2022 General Assembly, comprising a series of ambitions to place regions at the forefront of prevention and reduction of ocean pollution. The pledge has been approved as an official UN Voluntary commitment to implement SDG 14. With a representative of DG MARE on the panel, participants also had the opportunity to discover the Horizon Europe Charter that aims to contribute to the successful implementation of the EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters and its lighthouses.

On the protection of marine ecosystems, the European Commission released a proposal, in June 2022, for a Nature Restoration Law, which provides specific targets for the restoration of coastal and marine ecosystems. The Commission sees EU regional policy as a valuable instrument for financing restoration projects. In the proposed Regulation, Member States will have to specify the type of funding instrument selected to finance national restoration plans.

In May 2022, the Commission presented the RePowerEU Plan to speed up roll-out of renewable energy in power generation, industry, buildings and transport, and boost the EU’s energy independence and green transition. Offshore wind has a role in diversifying EU supply, but needs stronger supply chains and a drastic acceleration of permitting. The AAC identified similar challenges for Offshore Renewable Energy in its political declaration (April 2022). CPMR also reacted to RePowerEU, warning measures allowing the transfer of cohesion policy funds to the RRF could undermine the partnership principle. See “Financing RePowerEU: regional perspective”, and “Shedding light on the REPowerEU plan”.

Implementing regulation on deep sea fishing

Rosa Quintana, Galicia’s Ministry of the Sea, and Daniel Cueff, Vice President of Brittany Region, chaired a meeting on 4 November in Brussels to seek Atlantic allies for a common front regarding the impact of the Implementing Regulation on deep sea fishing areas on regional fishing fleets. Rosa Quintana encouraged shipowners to take legal actions and said arguments on the Implementation Act collected by her government in recent weeks would be shared with other Atlantic regions in a search for possible alliances.
On 26 October, the Atlantic Arc Commission organised a seminar with representatives from other CPMR Geographical Commissions to share different perspectives on the future of ports as hubs of the blue economy. The meeting was chaired by Vice-Governor of Crete, Georges Alexakis, and featured a variety of speakers from different areas: Minas Papadakis, CEO of Heraklion Port (Greece), Mathieu Bergé, Regional Councillor in charge of Ports, Nouvelle Aquitaine Region (France), Sébastien Denaja, Regional Councillor, Occitanie Region (France), Xavier Ramis Director General, Maritime and Air Transport, Balearic Islands Government (Spain), Nils-Olov Lindfors, Regional Councillor, Norrbotten (Sweden), Julia Coppla, representative of Bilbao Port Lab (Spain), a hub for innovation and research, Ira Lardinois, Cluster Manager for POM West-Vlaanderen (Belgium), Maria Lekakou, professor at the University of the Aegean (North and South Aegean Regions). The AspBAN project, implemented with the support of the AAC, was presented by Ana Pinela (Senior Project Manager, Beta-I) and Ruben Eiras, Secretary General of Forum Oceano. Panellists were able to assess the extent to which the project can be beneficial/replicated in other sea basins.

AspBAN policy recommendations were endorsed the following day by CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission Members, who were agreed on the benefits of developing a "EU Flagship Programme for Blue Acceleration in Ports" to support ports’ transition to a sustainable blue economy.

On 26 October, the Atlantic Arc Commission met with Charlina Vitcheva, Director General of DG MARE, European Commission, for bilateral discussions on the future of Atlantic Ports. The aim is to boost their transition as hubs of the sustainable blue economy, in light of the achievements of the AspBAN project. The AAC delegation was composed of Mathieu Bergé, Councillor for Nouvelle Aquitaine Region in charge of ports & airports and cross-border & Euroregion portfolios, Marta Marin, Basque Country Government Delegate to the EU, Julia Coppla, representative of Bilbao Port Lab, Ruben Eiras, Secretary General of Forum Oceano, and Ana Pinela, Senior Project Leader for Beta-I and lead partner of the AspBAN project.

Charlina Vitcheva welcomed the significant contribution of the AspBAN project and provided insights into the financing of innovative blue economy activities, which will require substantial investment. The discussions highlighted the importance of a common strategic vision and cooperation between Atlantic ports. These were identified as crucial success factors for a healthy, efficient, and relevant transition of the role of ports in the future blue economy.

Read the full article HERE!
Transport: an improved TEN-T for the Atlantic Arc

The CPMR has been actively involved in the review of the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) since the Commission published its proposal in December 2021.

The Council and the European Parliament are preparing their positions for the start of the Trilogue in 2023, although the TRAN Committee’s agenda was deferred by some weeks in July 2022 when the Commission introduced new amendments to address the consequences of the war in Ukraine (new proposal for new railway lines to be only built in EU standard nominal track gauge of 1435 mm).

Co-rapporteurs Barbara Thaler MEP (EPP) and Dominique Riquet MEP (Renew) presented their draft report in the last week of October 2022. The Council is paving the way to adopting its general approach by the end of the Czech Presidency. It is worth noting that the Presidency already reached a compromise on Chapter III early in September.

Meanwhile, the CPMR adopted a policy position on the TEN-T during its Political Bureau in Helsingborg in June 2022. The Atlantic Arc Transport Working Group actively contributed to drafting and defining amendments to the draft regulation. These amendments need to be disseminated to TRAN MEPS before the 10 November deadline. The TRAN Committee will discuss them on 8 December and vote in January 2023. Regarding the maps, the co-rapporteurs will assess amendments with the assistance of the Commission, evaluate how the proposed changes fit into the methodology of the TEN-T and contact the Member States concerned.

Tourism: following up on CPMR’s pledge for the Transition Pathway

In the context of the 2021 Updated Industrial Strategy, highlighting the need to accelerate the green and digital transition of EU industry, the European Commission launched a co-creation process to create a Transition Pathway for Tourism, involving public and private stakeholders across sectors. The CPMR has actively contributed to a series of workshops and pledged to commit to a series of challenges, notably on digitalisation, statistics and indicators, pact for skills, collaborative governance, sustainable mobility, and visibility of funding, among 186 other published pledges (see the first summary report).

Pays de la Loire, Navarra and Andalucía presented their regional pledge and showcased their practices on circular economy tourism (creation of an Observatory in Navarra), sustainable mobility (Pays de la Loire aims to attain the target of 100% of destinations accessible by green transport by 2030) and collaborative local destination governance (Andalucía is a partner in the MITOMED+ project, developing local level indicators to evaluate tourism sustainability).

In the meantime, the Welsh Government launched a public consultation in September on proposals to give local authorities powers to introduce a visitor levy. Each local authority in Wales will have the power to decide if they want to introduce a visitor levy, and the money raised will be re-invested in local areas to support local tourism in keeping beaches, pavements and local parks clean.

The AAC will continue to defend its amendments to the maps of the TEN-T (link here). We invite you to contact your Member State to maximize the chance of success!
Conference on Atlantic Blue Economy. On 16 June, the FANBEST project organised a public event: “Supporting the Atlantic Blue Economy” in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The meeting was inaugurated by the General Technical Secretary of the Department of the Sea for Galicia, Silvia Cortiñas, who presented the development of a Blue Economy Strategy for Galicia Region, mapping all funding instruments. During this same event, the AAC presented its analysis of Atlantic RIS3s, seeking synergies and complementarities on Blue Priorities. Full article here!

Open Call Programme. Five companies from Portugal, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom were selected to participate in the Blue Internationalisation Programme offered by the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce. Activities to start soon – stay tuned!

What’s next? Based on the project’s outcomes, the AAC will make policy recommendations to boost the Atlantic Blue Economy. Keep an eye out for the Atlantic RIS3s analysis – it will be updated alongside the publication of the 2021-2027 strategies!

Results of the open call for pilots. Five organisations (3 from Spain, 2 from Portugal, 1 from France) operating in the seafood sector have been selected to implement Industry 4.0 technological solutions through the SAFER project – find out more about them here!

What’s next? Based on the project’s outcomes, the AAC will develop a regional policy toolkit on Atlantic RIS3s in the seafood sector. Stay tuned!

A transferability workshop with the CPMR Balkans and Black Sea Commission and CPMR North Sea Commission. As part of the CPMR Blue Acceleration Platform initiative, the AAC co-organised a workshop in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region, Georgia, linking with the current presidency of the Common Maritime Agenda of the Black Sea. Participants had the opportunity to find out more about AspBAN, reflect on potential transferability of the project to the wider Black Sea area, and identify funding and support opportunities. With the same intentions, the AAC presented the AspBAN updates to the North Sea Commission Working group on Marine Resources, held in Møre og Romsdal, Norway on 23 September.

Regional support database. The AAC is currently working on a database of regional support schemes for blue startups and SMEs. Contributions from your regions are welcome!

What’s next? A bootcamp for startups will be organised in Lisbon in mid-January 2023. Startups will be able to co-design AspBAN pilot proposals enabling Atlantic ports to become hubs of the blue economy, and showcase them to a series of Atlantic stakeholders.

A regional policy toolkit on marine litter. In addition to the pledge that was promoted at UNOC 2022, the AAC has been working on production of a policy toolkit to support Atlantic regions in their fight against marine litter, based on the Clean Atlantic project’s results and tools developed. Available soon!
New Atlantic Arc Commission Projects

The Atlantic Arc Commission is a partner in two new projects aligned with its political priorities

The “BlueMissionAA” proposal (HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-02-05) has been approved by the Horizon Europe programme. Aimed at coordinating the activities of the Ocean Mission Atlantic and Arctic lighthouse, the project will hold its kick-off on 23 November in Cork, as part of the high-level event Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”: an Atlantic-Arctic lighthouse, taking place in Cork on 24-25 November 2022 (information and registration here).

- **Budget**: EUR 3 000 000.
- **Objectives**: to structure and consolidate a broad community of relevant stakeholders across the Atlantic and Arctic Sea basins, capable of ensuring an effective governance structure for the achievement of the Mission's objectives.
- **Role of the AAC**: Task Leader of Task 4.3 "Towards the alignment of Smart Specialisation Strategies for the Mission OCEAN in the Atlantic and Arctic regions" (Contributors: AIR Centre, FRCT, PLOCAN, SPI, NIVA).
- **Benefit for AAC regions**: AAC Regions will be able to join the Ocean Mission process and stay informed of developments. They will be able to anticipate future Horizon Europe calls for projects on Ocean Restoration, in line with the AAC Pledge on Ocean Pollution (May 2022). They will be able to interrupt and exploit opportunities for interaction with project stakeholders and help shape the implementation of the mission on the ground.
- **AAC working group involved**: the Innovation Group (Nouvelle Aquitaine), the Ocean Pollution Group (Norte). CPMR is also involved in the Mission Ocean through the PREP4BLUE project, to prepare the foundations for a successful implementation of the first phase of the Mission (2022-2025).

The “FLORES” proposal (ERASMUS-EDU-2022-PI-FORWARD-LOT2) has been approved by the Erasmus+ programme. The project will enable the implementation of the Offshore Renewable Energy Pact for Skills.

- **Budget**: EUR 700 000.
- **Objectives**: Forward Looking at the Offshore Renewables (FLORES) will promote the core activity of the large-scale partnership launching the Pact for Skills in the Offshore Renewable Energies (ORE) sector. The AAC is a member of the partnership, which will promote the skilling process for anticipated new jobs in the sector, estimated to account for between 20,000 and 54,000 new workers in the following five years.
- **Role of the AAC**: the AAC will participate in WPS on Building durable partnerships to boost skills in the ORE sector. It will in particular support the building of a community of users & Pilot Actions (5.1) and overcoming barriers for the ORE partnerships (5.3). It will also participate in the project dissemination strategy.
- **Benefit for AAC Regions**: membership of a community of users for the materials developed by the project, access to the existing training materials and approaches on skills in ORE catering to the different needs of Europe’s sea basins, participation in the large-scale partnership launching the Pact for Skills in the ORE, and identification of barriers to the creation of durable partnerships and good practices to overcome them, in line with the AAC Policy Declaration on Offshore Renewable Energy (April 2022).
- **AAC working group involved**: Marine Renewable Energy Working Group (Basque Country).

The “AQUARIUM” proposal (ERASMUS-EDU-2022-PEX-COVE), developed in the framework of the AAC Innovation Working group, was submitted in September 2022. It aims at building a new generation of innovative and digital skills for VET training in Aquaculture. Stay tuned!
EU Calls Corner

**EMFAF calls: Blue Careers / Flagship initiatives**
Two EMFAF calls were published by CINEA on 13 October. For the Atlantic, the call on regional flagship projects for sustainable blue economy will promote the diversification of fisheries activities (EUR 2 million available, 80% funding rate). The “Blue Careers for a sustainable Blue Economy” call will aim to develop the next generation of blue skills and provide opportunities for attractive and sustainable maritime careers (EUR 7.5 million available, 80% funding rate).
Both calls will be presented at an Info Day on 24 November 2022 and share the same deadline for submission: 31 January 2023.

**2022 LIFE calls**
These are still open! This year, EUR 598 million is available for nature conservation, environmental protection, climate action, and clean energy transition projects. More information here.

**COSME call on sustainable tourism**
6 September saw the opening of a call aimed at equipping and empowering SMEs in their twin transition efforts in line with the Tourism Transition Pathway. The deadline for submissions is 30 November. To boost the sector’s green and digital transition, projects will benefit from EUR 2 million to EUR 4 million per project. More information here.

**EIT FOOD – Open Innovation Call 2023**
EIT Food's annual innovation call selects innovative projects that will create positive change in the food system, introducing new and improved commercial processes and services, and achieving 1) healthier lives through food; 2) a net zero food system; and 3) a fully transparent, fair and resilient food system within 6 focus areas. The deadline for submissions is 13 April 2023. More information here.

**2022 CEF Transport Call**
A call for proposals was launched on 13 September under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), making EUR 5.12 billion available for projects targeting new, upgraded and improved European transport infrastructure. It will support infrastructure projects on the Core and Comprehensive TEN-T networks in the following areas: railways, inland waterways, maritime and inland ports, road safety, rail-road terminals, multimodal logistics platforms, multimodal passenger hubs, smart and interoperable applications for transport, safe and secure mobility, and infrastructure resilience. More information here.

**CETPartnership Call 2022**
Co-funded through Horizon Europe, the CETP Joint Call 2022 will fund projects that develop applicative solutions and provide results for the clean energy transition. The call is organised as a 2-step procedure: submission of a pre-proposal followed by an invitation to submit a full proposal. The deadline for submitting a pre-proposal is 23 November 2022, 14:00 CET. More information here.

Interested in building a consortium? Contact the AAC Secretariat for contacts with potential partners!
### EXTERNAL EVENTS

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<td>Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Wider Atlantic</td>
<td>Azores, Portugal</td>
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<td>24 NOVEMBER 2022</td>
<td>EMFAF Info Day</td>
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<td>Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”: an Atlantic-Arctic lighthouse</td>
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<td>1-2 DECEMBER 2022</td>
<td>Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference, Cádiz, Spain</td>
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<td>InnovAzul, Cádiz, Spain</td>
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<td>24-25 MAY 2023</td>
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### CPMR/AAC EVENTS

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<td>15 NOVEMBER 2022</td>
<td>Transport: Information Aviation Group</td>
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<td>1 DECEMBER 2022</td>
<td>CPMR AAC Workshop on Smart Specialisation Strategies in the Atlantic</td>
<td>Co-organised with DG MARE as part of the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference Cádiz, Spain</td>
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<td>1 DECEMBER 2022</td>
<td>WORKSHOP on Boosting Blue SMEs: best practice, challenges and opportunities towards Atlantic Excellence - Featuring AspBAN, SAFER and FANBEST projects</td>
<td>Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference Cádiz, Spain</td>
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<td>FEBRUARY/MARCH 2023</td>
<td>AAC political working seminar exploring the Atlantic Macro-Region</td>
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