Introduction

The Atlantic Arc Commission member regions actively contributed to EU debates during this second semester 2023. This Flash Info compiles different initiatives led from August and October 2023, such as our contributions to high level discussions on the future of Atlantic cooperation, the implementation of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve or the greening of maritime transport.

Getting closer to the CPMR 50th anniversary in St Malo, the AAC maintains efforts and coordination activities to contribute efficiently to the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU, and prepare 2024.

We would like to thank you for your contributions and we wish you a pleasant reading!

The Atlantic Arc Secretariat,
Elise Wattrelot, AAC Executive Secretary
Mathilde Maure, Project & Policy Officer
Catherine Petiau, Policy Assistant
An ESPON Analysis on the Atlantic Macro-Region

In June 2023, the AAC led a partnership made of Atlantic organisations (Atlantic Cities, RTA, Ceser de l’Atlantique, etc) which successfully applied to the ESPON Targeted Analysis "Towards an Atlantic Macro-Region". Thanks to the ESPON programme, a consortium of researchers will be funded to provide an in-depth analysis on new territorial evidence for the strengthening of Atlantic cooperation and development of an Atlantic Macro-Region. An Atlas of the Atlantic will be considered as one of the deliverables.

More information to come soon.

A Summer School to explore the Atlantic Macro-Region

Cantabria Government organised together with the International University Menedez Pelayo (UIMP) a summer course in Santander, from 4-6 September, on the Atlantic Macro-Regional Strategy. This Summer Course, held in the framework of the Spanish Presidency of the Council, aimed at better understanding the various characteristics of existing Macro-Region and exploring the advantages for an Atlantic Macro-Region. President Almeida, President of CCDR-LVT and First Vice President of the AAC, as well as Secretary general Maria Lledo were among the panellists. More details here.

Analysing the implementation of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve

On 19 September, AAC and NSC Member Regions met to discuss under the umbrella of the CPMR the use of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR). It was also the occasion to exchange views with the DG REGIO and the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU. You can find the conclusions here.

Cooperation with the UK Regions beyond Brexit

On 27 September, the AAC took part in the Congress of French Regions (Congrès des Régions de France) in Saint-Malo. It was the occasion to discuss, with Mr Perrin Sarzier, Vice-President of Brittany Region, Mr Leca, Vice-President of Hauts de France Regions and with Ms Dominique Faure, Delegated Minister for Local Authorities, the use of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve and cooperation with UK Regions beyond Brexit. The creation of an Atlantic Macro-Region was also evoked as a tool to strengthen cooperation in the Atlantic area.

STAY UPDATED ON THESE TOPICS AS NEW INFORMATION MIGHT COME SOON!
AAC Pledge on Ocean Pollution included in the Ocean Mission

The EU Mission Ocean and Waters embedded the AAC Pledge on Ocean Pollution as a key action of its Charter. This recognises the efforts and the commitment of AAC Member Regions to tackle marine litter, in accordance with the EU legislations. In addition to this Pledge, the AAC also contributes to BlueMissionAA project which implements the Ocean Mission in the Atlantic and Arctic areas Read here.

The AAC Participates in the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Atlantic Strategy held its annual event in Oporto from 18 to 19 October, under the leadership of Portugal, chair of the Atlantic Strategy in 2023. The ASCP gathered not only pillar coordinators to present the advancement on the implementation of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0 but also enabled to reflect on its international dimension.

For the first time, a ministerial declaration was also voted by representatives of the four Atlantic Member States, restating the fundamental principles of the Atlantic Strategy and its vision.

Other events were held back to back to reflect on the alignment of funding with the priorities of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0: the INTERREG Atlantic Area Annual Event, Blue Synergies featuring different INTERREG programmes and the network of Managing Authorities.

Energy transition in Atlantic Regions discussed at the EU Regions Week

On 11 October, AAC Members CCDR de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo and Junta de Andalucía participated to a DG MARE Workshop on Coastal Cities and Regions at the forefront of the innovative energy transition of the blue economy. Both Regions presented their actions on energy transition and blue economy, as well as the barriers and ways forward the decarbonisation of their economy to contribute to the Green Deal objectives. More information on the EURWK Website.
The AAC at the EurOCEAN 2023 Conference to promote its work on Ocean Pollution

On 9 October, the AAC presented the state of international and European policies on plastic pollution during a side-event of EurOCEAN organised by the LabPlas project and the AIRCentre. It was the occasion to also display the results of the CleanAtlantic project, in particular the Regional Policy toolkit to fight marine pollution and the Pledge on Ocean Pollution.

As part of EurOCEAN conference, discussions on Coastal Resilience, Blue Carbon and Ports for Blue Economy were held (Living Ports and Ports Propres initiatives) and the Vigo Declaration was agreed (read here) gathering supports for a sustainable ocean. It is to be noted that in parallel, the ENVI Committee of the European Parliament agreed on the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation proposal on 25 October.

European Wind Power Package: what’s there for the Atlantic regions?

As announced by President Von Der Leyen in the State of the Union speech, the European Commission presented on 24 October a Wind Power Package composed of a Communication and an Action Plan. The Communication recalls EU Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) ambitions and provides support to existing regional cooperation. The Action Plan draws 6 pillar actions to accelerate the development of wind power through faster permitting; improved auction design; access to finance; creation of a fair and competitive international environment; skills; industry engagement & Member State commitments. Atlantic States have high ambitions on ORE. Floating offshore is a priority of development to unlock the energy production potential in deep waters. The Commission will support this endeavour with funding in particular under Horizon Europe in 2024. The role of regional MSP and ports in the ORE supply chain is also highlighted with the example of the North Sea mapping of ports capacity. Read more here.
On 17 October, Surfrider Foundation Europe organised the Green Marine Summit in Bilbao gathering ports authorities, regional and national authorities and shipping companies to discuss the decarbonation of the maritime transport. The CPMR recently joined the Green Marine Europe as an associated member, in line with its political orientation to work for a greener maritime transport. This certification aims at accompanying shipbuilders in their transition for a more sustainable modes of transports. The Basque Region, that holds the Presidency of the AAC, represented the CPMR in the Summit and shared its perspectives on the new horizon to come for decarbonation at the regional level. The implementation of AFIR and FuelEU Maritime, voted earlier in 2023 will be key to reduce CO2 emissions in maritime transport.

**Green Marine Europe Summit**

**Update from TRAN Committee: Maritime Safety and Intermodal Connectivity**

On 1 June 2023, the European Commission presented a legislative package to modernise and reinforce maritime rules on safety and pollution prevention. The proposal includes notably requirements for flag State inspections, port state control, and ship source pollution. The related Directives are currently discussed at the European Parliament (TRAN leads). Concrete proposals are:

- To cover additional polluting substances during the vessels controls: illegal discharge of oil and noxious liquid substances, inclusion of the Convention on ballast water and sediments and removal of wrecks, illegal discharge of sewage, garbage and discharge waters and residues.
- To extend the scope of the Port State control to fishing vessels measuring over 24 metres;
- To establish a strengthened legal framework for penalties and their application, enabling national authorities to take adequate action in case of illegal discharge and impose penalties

On modal shift, the TRAN Committee organised, on 25 October, a workshop on Combined Transport. The European Court of Audits presented intermodality as a way to decarbonise transports, that represents still 1/4 of the total GHG emissions in the EU. However, the participants of the workshop stressed that the European objectives to increase the use of rail transport by 2050 are ambitious and doubted that they were adapted to the new realities of e-commerce and fast shipping.
Growing concerns with the use of Cohesion Policy to compensate for the lack of funding in other areas of the EU Budget.

The insufficient speed of absorption of the CP funds, partly due to the priority given to the RRF implementation.

Lack of specific provisions for the maritime sectors, islands or outermost regions.

Complexity and lack of clarity in regards to the reallocation of funds to STEP priorities (Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform).

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On 5 October, CPMR Energy Working Group met in Bilbao, Spain, to discuss the Net Zero Industry Act and the Green Deal Industrial Plan. MEP Izaskun Bilbao Barandica stressed out the importance of innovation and technological solutions for a better life. CPMR regions recalled the important role of the regions to lead the energy transition. The energy transition must also contribute to the maritime industries that are keys for the development of the territories. Participants also had the opportunity to visit the Bilbao Port, and learn more about its initiatives towards a green energy transition.

TEN-T Negotiations are ongoing, with a remaining chapter to negotiate: chapter III on governance. In parallel, the CPMR addressed to the EU institutions a letter co-signed with the European Sea Port Association (ESPO) to promote the role of ports as geostrategic platforms and hubs for energy. Besides, the CPMR Transport WG meeting on 27 October in Zaragoza, reuniting Member Regions, MEP Isabel García Muñoz and EC representative Eddy Liegeois, highlighted the need to promote soft modes of transport at the cross-border level. Basque Country, as AAC Presidency and leader of the AAC Transport Working Group participated to share the AAC political messages for a true Blue and Green Atlantic Arc of Transport (see AAC Declaration).
**UPDATE ON AAC PROJECTS**

**BlueMissionAA.** The AAC is going on with its activities and pushed forward the application of the project to the *Atlantic Project Award 2023*. It received the award in the Healthy Oceans and Resilient Coasts category. The project was presented during the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference on 19 October in Porto. [Read more.](#)

**FLORES** has been identified as the key initiative of the recently published Wind Power Package. Within FLORES, the AAC has worked to deepen the community of stakeholders engaged in the development of the Offshore Renewable Energy Pact For Skills via two initiatives: 1) Collaboration with Nantes University to prepare the upcoming [OCEANEXT Conference](#) from 12 to 14 June 2024; 2) Contacts with Atlantic stakeholders in ORE skills such as the [University of Basque Country](#) and [ENSTA](#).

The University of the Basque Country, launched with other universities from Spain, Norway, Ireland and France, [REPLUS - an Eramus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Renewable Energy in the Marine Environment](#). It will provide the students with skills on marine energies technologies, safety standards, maintenance design and marine environment preservation.

**A new Pilot Project on Transatlantic Cooperation**

The AAC submitted a joint proposal for a *Pilot Project on Transatlantic Cooperation* on 13 October to the European Commission. The pilot project gathers the CPMR AAC, CEIMAR and [Forum Oceano](#). It will aim at testing the potential of transatlantic cooperation from the regional perspective. The proposal is currently being reviewed by the European Commission.

Internationalisation of SMEs and University cooperation will be at the heart of the project which will organise workshops and study visits to share solutions for the *Green and Blue Recovery of the Atlantic area*. If validated by the Commission, the project is expected to start at the end of 2023. [More information will come.](#)

**The AAC joins a hydrogen consortium**

The AAC becomes associated partner to [AdvancedH2Valley](#). This project, led by Lhyfe, has been selected by the Commission to increase the development of hydrogen in the French Atlantic area. As associated partner, the AAC will take stock of the result of this “small scale” Hydrogen Valley and will help Member Regions to anticipate and contribute to the *preparation of an Atlantic Large Scale Hydrogen Valley*. 

Full list of AAC projects available [here](#)
Welcome Québec!

AAC Flash Info aims at giving the floor to its Member Regions, to express on their priority topics in the framework of the CPMR.

This month, we interviewed Québec Representative, Ms Geneviève Brisson, who took up her position as Delegate General of Québec in Brussels on 17 January 2022. Over the course of her career, Ms Brisson has occupied a number of strategic positions in government and institutional relations, as well as in business development in the energy, maritime and environment sectors and in Indigenous affairs. Thanks to this background, she can therefore promote Québec as a key player in the Atlantic Arc development. Québec recently joined the CPMR and its Atlantic Arc Commission as Associated Member, in May 2023, on the occasion of the Cardiff General Assembly.

It is the first time that a non-European region joins the Atlantic Arc Commission. For this reason, we would like Québec to share with us some of the priorities of collaboration with the AAC Members.

Could you please tell us what motivated Québec to become an Associated Member?

Québec has been outward-looking for many decades and is quite active internationally. We greatly value our partnerships and the links that we have developed over the years with different regions of the world; in fact, Québec is by far the most present and visible Canadian province on the global stage – we have 37 representation offices across the world.

It seemed only natural to join CPMR and the Atlantic Arc Commission, as this will be a very useful forum to connect and exchange with like-minded partners on key topics that feature among Québec’s priorities linked to the maritime sector.

Furthermore, Québec has a resolutely maritime dimension, with over 3000 km of coastline!

Could you please explain which topics do you retain most important for your collaboration with the AAC and its Member Regions? Which added-value will the AAC bring you to you develop these topics?

Québec shares many of the same challenges and priorities as European regions; these are articulated by the government in its maritime strategy, “Advantage St-Lawrence” (released in 2021), referring to our main navigable waterway, the St-Lawrence River, which links the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes region.
Among these important topics are of course the modernization of our ports and shipping industry, protecting biodiversity, and promoting the development of a sustainable blue economy for the benefit of local communities.

We are confident that the AAC will enable cross-linkages between the various actors of the maritime sector in Québec and their European counterparts to share expertise, technology, and best practices. It will be interesting to compare different approaches in Europe and North America and see how these exchanges can help us improve how we do things on both sides of the Atlantic.

What do you expect from the Transatlantic Cooperation Pilot Project? How can it contribute to Québec’s policies and objectives for the sustainable development of the Atlantic?

We are thrilled to join this very promising project, and we are excited to see how it can help foster collaboration and innovative approaches to develop a sustainable blue economy and a more modern port industry, that is an integral part of the green transition.

Québec will be delighted to receive a delegation of AAC partners to showcase its expertise and groundbreaking solutions. Québec boasts a top-notch research institute on maritime science in Rimouski, as well as two very active clusters doing wonderful work to bring together researchers (Réseau Québec Maritime) or businesses and innovators (Technopole maritime du Québec).

Increasing connections with European partners will certainly be a great value to these actors – in a way, you could say we are contributing to building a virtual bridge over the Atlantic.
As Québec delegate to the EU, could you please tell us more about the key European legislations which are important for Québec to follow at the moment?

First and foremost, it is important to know that Québec is a trading nation; an important part of our GDP depends on our exports, and we are constantly looking for opportunities to diversify our markets. With the EU, we are fortunate enough to have a free trade agreement in place, called CETA. We are particularly interested in any legislation which may have an impact (positive or negative) on our trading relations with Europe, such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, as well the regulation on deforestation-free products.

We are of course also interested in the many legislative pieces part of the “Fit for 55” package as Québec shares similar ambitions to the EU when it comes to fighting climate change. Finally, we are also looking at the forward-looking legislation being adopted to build the economy of the future and ensure an “open strategic autonomy”, as Québec considers itself as a natural and reliable partner for Europe. For example, this includes the Chips Act, the Artificial Intelligence Act, the Critical Raw Materials Act and the New Batteries Regulation.

Thank you Ms Brisson for your answers and welcome again to the Atlantic Arc Commission!
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CPMR/ AAC EVENTS

15-17 November, Saint-Malo, France. CPMR General Assembly

- 15 November. Seminar on Marine Renewables Energies
- 16 November. AAC Plenary Session (& other Geographical Commissions meetings)
- 16-17 November. General Assembly and Political Bureau

31 January - 1 February 2024, Brussels, Belgium. AAC Working Groups Hub Meetings

20-21 March 2024, Sines, Portugal. AAC General Assembly

EXTERNAL EVENTS

7 November, online. Atlantic Strategy Webinar on "Fostering the Atlantic's blue economy: Skills for Marine renewable energy"

28 November, Brussels, Belgium. Workshop of the Energy Transition Partnership in EU fisheries and aquaculture

28-29 November, Barcelona, Spain. S3 Forum 2023

29-30 November, Cascais, Portugal. BlueMissionAA Annual Meeting

14-15 December, Brussels, Belgium. EU Summit

18-19 March 2024, Mons, Belgium, EU Regions and Cities Summit

20-22 March 2024, Bilbao, Spain. WindEurope Conference

2-5 April 2024, Brussels, Belgium. Connecting Europe Days

30-31 May 2024, Svendborg, Denmark. European Maritime Day

6-9 June 2024, European Parliament elections

12-14 June 2024, Nantes, France. OCEANEXT 2024 Conference

3-7 July 2024, Bajo Guadania, Portugal. Atlantic Games 2024
Sept territoires celtiques ont signé la « Déclaration de Rennes »
13/08/23, Ouest France

La creación de la macrorregión atlántica en el seno de la Unión Europea, a debate en la UIMP
04/09/2023, UIMP Prensa

Agüeros apuesta por la creación de una macrorregión atlántica para "ganar influencia política ante las instituciones europeas" y lograr mejor financiación
04/09/2023, Postureo Cántabro

Cantabria apuesta por crear una macrorregión atlántica formada por regiones de España, Francia, Irlanda y Portugal
04/09/2023, El Diario Cantabria

Un nouvel espace entre l’Europe et le Royaume-Uni
20/09/23, Sauvons l’Europe

Toute l’Europe au Congrès des Régions de France
27/09/2023, Toute l’Europe

Brexit : quelle coopération entre régions françaises et britanniques depuis le retrait du Royaume-Uni ?
02/10/2023, Toute l’Europe

Urkullu espera que Sánchez plantee el proyecto de Macrorregión Atlántica en la cumbre europea que se celebra en Granada
06/10/2023, Onda Vasca

El Lehendakari ha destacado en el Parlamento la relevancia de la Comisión Arco Atlántico de la Conferencia de Regiones Periféricas Marítimas, y ha expuesto 6 líneas de trabajo que impulsa Euskadi de cara al escenario crítico que vive la UE
09/10/2023, Euskadi.Eus