The CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission will be celebrating its 2023 General Assembly in Cardiff, Wales on 23 of May. This meeting has a high-symbolic value and strategic importance to celebrate the Atlantic territorial unity and pave the way forward.

About the CPMR

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) brings together 150 Regions from 24 States from the European Union and beyond. Representing about 200 million people, the CPMR campaigns in favour of a more balanced development of the European territory. It operates both as a think tank and as a lobby for Regions.

Through its extensive network of contacts within the EU institutions and national governments the CPMR has, since its creation in 1973, been targeting its action towards ensuring that the needs and interests of its Member Regions are taken into account in policies with a high territorial impact.

The CPMR currently focuses its work around six policy areas of major interest to its membership: Cohesion policy, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Transport, Climate, Energy and Migration policies. It produces policy positions based on input from its member regions in these areas, as well as numerous studies, analyses and technical papers to support them.

About the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission

The Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC) is one of the six Geographical Commissions of the CPMR, gathering Regions around the Atlantic sea basin, from Andalucía to Ireland. It also includes non-EU regions such as Wales which is an historical member of the CPMR, and Quebec who recently joined as associated member. As such, the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission assures the specific interests and promotion of the Atlantic Regions, focusing on the major common challenges in the basin and creating synergies in the area. The Atlantic Arc Commission also has the task of promoting regional interests to EU bodies and Member States and has asserted itself as a leader in a wide-ranging initiative aimed at promoting the sustainable development of the Atlantic territory.

The presidency of the Atlantic Arc Commission is currently held by the Basque Government (Spain) and the First Vice-Presidency by the CCDR de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo (Portugal).
Wales in the Atlantic Arc Commission

Wales has been a member of the CPMR since 1975 and Member of the Atlantic Arc Commission since its creation in 1989. Wales is the chair of the Working Group ‘Cooperation with non EU Regions’. In this framework, it has led a work of comparison on third country participation in EU programmes and has worked to promote the creation of a transatlantic cooperation pilot project, supported by the European Parliament. Wales was also recently invited to the European Parliament REGI Committee to share its perspectives on cooperation with EU Regions beyond Brexit.

Common Assets and Challenges

The Atlantic regions share an attractive coastline that is the guardian of a high quality of life which offers opportunities for sectors of high potential such as maritime transport, maritime energies, marine research and innovation, and even shipbuilding and sailing. Yet this asset is also an environmental, social and economic challenge for Atlantic Regions.

In the same way, if the peripheral situation of the Atlantic regions is a vector for a strong identity and anchor for cultural heritage, it is also a major issue in terms of spatial planning and economic development.

The CPMR and its Atlantic Arc Commission believe that such challenges are better tackled by cooperating together, creating synergies and reducing overlaps, and thus speaking with a strong joint voice. Indeed, problems related to accessibility, climate change, energy or maritime safety go beyond the scope of regional and national borders and justify trans-national cooperation.

The Atlantic Arc Commission created a dynamic cooperation in the area by means of Active working groups on policy areas such as transport, fisheries, marine renewable energies, cooperation with non-EU Regions, innovation, tourism, ocean pollution. It is also an associated member of the Atlantic Sea-basin Strategy. The AAC Secretariat represents its members to the Atlantic Member States in this framework. The AAC has also launched an important political campaign to explore the benefit of evolving from an Atlantic Sea-Basin Strategy to an Atlantic Macro-Region, to allow a more structured cooperation on Atlantic in-land challenges. Via its participation in collaborative projects, it ensures close partnerships with Atlantic stakeholders.

The event in brief

What? General Assembly meeting of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission
When? Tuesday 23 May 2023
Where? The Pierhead – Cardiff (Wales)
Programme on Tuesday 23 May 2023 includes:

Opening Session with:

- **Vaughan Gething**, Minister for the Economy of the Welsh Government
- **Younous Omarjee**, Member of the European Parliament, Chair of the REGI Committee
- **Cees Loggen**, President of the CPMR
- **María Ángeles Elorza Zubiría**, Secretary General for the EU & External Actions - Basque Government – Presidency of the Atlantic Arc Commission

Thematic Sessions on:

- Cooperation between EU and non-EU Regions for a cohesive Atlantic
- Fostering cooperation on Offshore Renewable Energies in the Atlantic
- Boosting skills for a green future of the Atlantic area

Keynote speech by **Mark Drakeford**, Wales First Minister

Check the full agenda here: [Programme – Atlantic Arc Commission 2023 General Assembly – CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission (cpmr-atlantic.org)](http://cpmr-atlantic.org)

**Political Declaration 2023**

During the General Assembly the 2023 Political Declaration will be submitted to vote to all members of the Atlantic Arc Commission. This year’s declaration underlines the unprecedented geopolitical challenges that the Atlantic Area is facing following the War in Ukraine, the Covid Crisis and the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, which add on to persistent challenges related to the green and digital transitions and socio-demographic changes; and therefore calls upon the Atlantic States and EU institutions to acknowledge these concerns and ensure EU policies and funding instruments support innovation capacity, sustainable growth and the strong Atlantic partnerships necessary to address these complex issues.

A strong emphasis is also put in the pathway towards an Atlantic Macro-Region, including chapters on recommendations in terms of scope, governance, geography, and funding.

*A copy of the draft declaration can be shared upon request, and the final declaration will be published after adoption.*

The Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration on an Atlantic Macro-Region adopted in December 2020 can be consulted here: [Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration on an Atlantic Macro-Region – CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission (cpmr-atlantic.org)](http://cpmr-atlantic.org)
The Thematic Sessions in Brief

Session 1: Cooperation between EU and non-EU Regions for a Cohesive Atlantic

In the context of Brexit, regional cooperation has changed tremendously in the Atlantic area. The withdrawal of the UK from cooperation programmes such as INTERREG, Erasmus and other EU funded programmes, has forced UK nations and regions to rethink their cooperation strategy with EU regions. Additionally, war in Ukraine has shifted international relationships, making the European Commission rethink its international trade and cooperation agreements. These developments provide the Atlantic Arc Commission with a challenge and opportunity to be at the forefront of new approaches to transatlantic cooperations that benefit regional economies and societies. Driven by the Basque Presidency and Welsh leadership of the task force “Cooperation with non-EU regions” CPMR has adopted a step-by-step approach to proposing a pilot project on transatlantic cooperation, supported by MEP Younous Omarjee, expected to lay the foundations for a precursor scheme for cooperation at transatlantic level in the longer term.

Session 2: Fostering Cooperation on Offshore Renewable Energy in the Atlantic

In the past few years, the European Commission has promoted the acceleration of the deployment of renewable energies. In the EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy, the European Commission especially underlined the Atlantic’s high natural potential for both bottom-fixed and floating offshore wind energy and good natural potential for wave and tidal energy. In this high-potential context for the Atlantic, a common reflection on the current state, opportunities and bottlenecks, and coherence between growing targets and funding and technical resources may be sought during this session.

Session 3: Boosting skills for a green future of the Atlantic area

Building upon the experience of existing initiatives and projects in the Atlantic and examples of structured cooperation elsewhere, the AAC regions have a role to play in the definition of an ambitious Atlantic Green Skills strategy. The AAC Political Declaration of 2019 on an Atlantic skills Alliance already gave a clear idea on regional perspectives over their deployment. At a time when the current roadmap on Skills and Ocean Literacy is being developed under the framework of the Atlantic Strategy, Atlantic regions are well placed to give their insights on what we could do further. Debates could assess how the current Atlantic Strategy, or the future Macro-Region could develop to better address skills shortage, talent attraction and cooperation among training institutions.

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