



Atlantic Arc Commission

Minutes of the Atlantic Strategy Working Group and Brexit Task Force

27 September 2017 - Brussels

ATLANTIC STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

Sophie Cochard, Director of Pays de la Loire representation in Brussels, welcomed the participants and thanked **Sveto Stoyanov, Policy Officer at DG MARE, European Commission (EC)**, for his participation in this meeting to present the European Commission's work on the Mid Term review of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan. She recalled the aim of the meeting to develop the Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC)'s contribution to the public consultation launched by the European Commission on this issue.

1. Presentation of the Mid-term review of the Atlantic Action plan by DG MARE

Svetoslav Stoyanov, Policy Officer at DG MARE, Unit A3-Sea-basin Strategies, Maritime Regional Cooperation and Maritime Security, gave the group an update on the [public consultation](#). It is open from 29 June 2017 until 29 September 2017 and should contribute to the EC's staff working document to be released by the end of this year/beginning of 2018. It will outline the future of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan.

Galicia has already uploaded its position. The Committee of the Regions has also adopted a draft opinion to which the Atlantic Arc Commission Secretariat contributed.

- ***Ernst and Young (EY) evaluation mission***

This public consultation goes alongside the work led by the consulting company Ernst & Young (EY) whose tasks are to:

- Evaluate the alignment between the national and regional maritime strategies, the operational programmes and the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan,
- Map projects in line with the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan,
- Conduct interviews in 5 Atlantic regions and gather lessons from their experience,
- Lead an extrapolation exercise to understand the context in which the Atlantic strategy has been deployed/or not, in order to draw predictions by 2020.

- ***Assistance Mechanism (Kantor-Qwentes)***

The Atlantic Action Plan Assistance Mechanism's main mission is to disseminate information on the Atlantic Action Plan. They are in charge of organising the 4th Stakeholder Platform Conference held this year in **Glasgow (UK) on 8 November 2017** ([see agenda](#)). The Assistance Mechanism is also carrying out a mapping exercise which complements that of EY. Their contract ends in December 2017 but the EC plans a new call for tender to be issued in 2018.

- ***Next steps***

An interservice group has been set up within the European Commission to prepare a staff working document (around 20 pages). It will be an assessment and not a forward-looking document.

- 1st report by EY should be available at the end of October
- EC staff working document should be published by January/February 2018

He called for CPMR's ideas to shape the future action plan.

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2. Sum up of the debate with regions on the midterm review

- The Assistance Mechanism contract ends in December 2017, the EC is preparing new terms of reference for a new call in 2018.
- [INTERACT programme](#) could be better mobilised in the future (suggestion from the Atlantic Arc Commission Secretariat)
- Regarding [EMFF Work Programme](#):
 - **2017:**
 - € 1.5 Million for wave and tidal,
 - € 4.5 Million for demonstration projects in emerging blue economy sectors action grant for the blue economy (demonstration for new technology)
 - **2018:**
 - € 18.4 Million for Blue Careers, Blue Labs
 - Action Grants for MSP in the Black Sea and in the Atlantic
- [An Info Day on the 2018 Blue Calls will be organised on November 9, 2017](#)

3. Presentation of the Atlantic Arc Commission's contribution to the EC's consultation

Pauline Caumont presented the Atlantic Arc Commission's draft contribution to the EC's consultation on the mid-term review of the Action Plan. The objective is to send the EC qualitative comments regarding implementation in the Regions as well as proposals for the future.

The contribution is expected to be developed in 3 steps:

"I. Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and added value of the Atlantic Action Plan", as asked by the EC

"II. Context related to maritime strategies in regions": how Regions took advantage of the Atlantic Strategy to develop their own blue growth strategies

"III. Political messages: proposals for the future": based on the political messages expressed in the Final Declaration of Les Sables d'Olonne with additional elements concerning Brexit and the future of the Atlantic Area Interreg Programme.

⇒ **This contribution will be circulated to all member Regions before being sent to DG MARE**

II – BREXIT TASK FORCE

1. Introduction

Ana Ramos, Head of the Delegation of Galicia to the EU, thanked all the participants. She recalled that the aim of the meeting was to validate at a technical level the Atlantic Arc Commission Brexit declaration and comments on the CPMR's Brexit Declaration. These two complementary documents will be discussed politically during the CPMR's next General Assembly in Helsinki. The CPMR declaration will officially be signed in Cardiff next 16 November.

Ruben Rivas de Roca García for the Delegation of Galicia to the EU presented a brief update on the Brexit talks: May delivered her speech on Brexit in Florence on 22 September 2017 asking the EU for a 2-year transition period. The speech calling for a pause to full exit until 2021 was described as 'constructive' by Michel Barnier, the bloc's chief negotiator.

Theresa May also indicated that the UK could make extra financial contributions on top of continuing to pay into the EU budget until 2020. She said Britain would "cover its fair share of the costs" to participate in "specific policies and programmes... such as science, education and culture – and mutual security."

2. Sum up of the debate on the CPMR's Brexit Declaration

Gregg Jones, CPMR Director for Finance and Programmes, introduced the CPMR's Brexit Declaration and the different amendments already proposed by the North Sea Commission. The rationale of this declaration is to reach a consensus between UK and non-UK CPMR member regions. It deliberately mixes messages related to Brexit negotiations with comments on how CPMR's regions see the future cooperation with the UK.

- Reference to the right of cross-border workers should be added (as already mentioned in the Atlantic Arc Commission Brexit declaration)
- Question concerning Gibraltar or "campo de Gibraltar" should not be mentioned in any CPMR documents: there is an agreement between the Council and the European Parliament stating that Spain must agree Gibraltar's post-Brexit status.
- Atlantic Arc Commission Members asked for important other issues for the Atlantic Arc Commission to be included in the CPMR Declaration:
 - Fisheries and/or maritime sector: a major issue during the negotiation, in particular for maritime Regions;
 - Reference to the Future of European Territorial Cooperation policy post 2020;
 - Reference to a financial mechanism to compensate territories/sectors most impacted by Brexit (at EU-27 level).

3. Finalisation of the Atlantic Arc Commission's Declaration on Brexit

Pauline Caumont presented the latest version of the Atlantic Arc Commission Brexit Declaration. The declaration will be sent to Members one week before the General Assembly and remain open for further amendments until 18 October 2017 at 2 pm.

- Clarify and shorten Point 4. second paragraph on the UK's financial commitment to the 2014-2020 EU Budget
- Financial mechanism proposed in the Declaration which would be addressed to Regions of EU27.

Nia Lewis, Head of Office of the Welsh Government Delegation to the EU, introduced **Piers Bossin**, Director of the EU transition team at the Welsh Government.

Piers Bossin summarized the Welsh government's position on Brexit and restated the Region's interests to continue to engage with CPMR despite the new political context. The cabinet was strongly in favour of the "remain" vote during the referendum and sees the single market, EU programmes and ESI Funds as valuable. Nonetheless they accept the outcome of the referendum and will internally defend the replacement of ESIF and the preservation of devolved competences which were previously guaranteed by the EU framework.

Two positive elements of the British government's position on Brexit were underlined: the request for a transition period of two years after the exit of the UK from the EU in March 2019 and the reassurance that the UK will honour its financial commitments for the 2014-2020 Multi-Annual Financial Framework. Nevertheless, central Government is still unclear on concrete elements of implementation.

4. Future Steps

The Atlantic Arc Commission declaration will be sent out to members for a last round of amendments. **Deadline for amendments is fixed on 18 October 2017 at 14.00.** Due to a very tight agenda of the Atlantic Arc Commission plenary in Helsinki, it will not be possible to present oral amendments. Only written amendments received before the deadline will be considered. The Secretariat thanks you for your understanding!

Once voted, the Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration will be presented by the President of Pays de la Loire & President of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, to Michel Barnier, the EU's Chief Brexit Negotiator, in November 2017 during a high-level meeting in Brussels.