



# Minutes of the Atlantic Arc Commission Hubs Meetings

19-20 June 2017- Brussels

## MONDAY 19 JUNE 2017: ACCESSIBILITY/ATTRACTIVENESS HUB

### Transport Working Group

**Inma Valencia for the Cantabria Region** thanks all the participants and excuses the new Director General for Transports in Cantabria, Chair of this working group, who couldn't participate. Since March, the AAC has worked to identify amendments to the Annex 1 of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) that Regions could propose. These amendments were presented during the [CPMR Transport Inter-Commissions Working Group last June 6, 2017](#). Inma Valencia recalled that these amendments do not bring substantive changes to the corridor routes.

**Pauline Caumont**, AAC Executive Secretary, welcomed the participants, recalling the new working groups' organisation in "Hubs" and presented the agenda of the day.

She briefly summed up the European legislative framework on transport. There are two different legislations:

- the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) regulation which details the maps of the core and comprehensive networks;
- the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) regulation which extracts 9 core network Corridors and priority projects in its Annex 1, officially to "facilitate the coordinated implementation of the core network".

Since the beginning of the programming period, these Corridors have received 95% of the funding available. The TEN-T regulation will not be reviewed before 2023. However, a mid-term review is planned for the CEF regulation. In this regards, the CPMR Inter-Commission Transport Working Group asked the Geographical Commissions to contribute to this mid-term review by identifying portions of the Corridors and priority projects that could be amended.

**Pauline Caumont** presented the AAC contribution to this review. She mentioned that regions which are not crossed by the core network are unfortunately not eligible to propose amendments to the Annexe 1. This is the case for Cantabria and Brittany in the Atlantic.

➔ For more information, see [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

A general review of the CEF regulation principles was tackled during the Inter-Commission Working Group on Transport. A political position was adopted during the CPMR Political Bureau on March 2017 in Gozo. The amendments provided by all the CPMR Geographical Commissions were adopted during the CPMR Political Bureau in Stavanger on June 2017.

➔ For more information, see the [CPMR political position on Transport of March 2017](#)

➔ For more information, see the [technical note of June 2017 on the CEF amendments](#)

Concerning the **TEN-T regulation**: its review is planned for 2023 to start being implemented in 2028. A first proposal from the European Commission should be **published in 2019**. The AAC will prepare a contribution before this deadline, especially for Regions not crossed by a Corridor.

**Panos Coronayakis**, consultant for CRPM, presents a [CIVITAS project](#) called “Destinations” on sustainable mobility in touristic areas. The objective of this project is to create tools to improve the sustainability of urban transport in six touristic islands and broadcast them among the CPMR member regions.

➔ For more information, see the [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

The session continued with a round table to identify regions’ priorities in terms of transport.

**Navarra** prioritizes the TEN-T review and wishes to organise an AAC conference on the matter in Pamplona, at the beginning of 2018. Navarra proposed a project to the Ministry of Transport that is eligible for the CEF but it was rejected three times. This project implementation remains an objective for the Region.

**Galicia’s** priority is also on the TEN-T review. It mentions that the EPP group in the Committee of the Regions adopted a declaration stating that the TEN-T policy should ensure accessibility and connectivity for all the regions and that the corridors layout should be improved.

➔ For more information, see the [press article](#) and the [declaration](#)

**The Basque Country** aims to improve connections between the cities of Victoria, San Sebastian, Bilbao and its port. The Region wishes also to connect the airport of Bilbao with the metro line.

**Brittany** focuses on the TEN-T review as it is not part of the core network. The Region has difficulties to get Motorways of the Seas funding, Brest being a port of the comprehensive network. The impact of Brexit on Transports and the issue of state aids for ports and airports are also of interest for the regional authority.

**Andalusia** will consult the regional administration and will send information to the AAC Secretariat.

**Pays de la Loire** priority concerns a review of the Atlantic corridor to connect the port of St Nazaire. The objective for the Port is to become a Major Maritime Port with an improved rail connectivity. The Region is concerned about the fact that maritime transport is not competitive enough compared to road transport. Pays de la Loire wants to develop a Motorway of the Sea between Nantes and Gijon.

For **Nouvelle Aquitaine**, priorities are: the follow-up of the high-speed line between Bordeaux and Spain, the incorporation of the La Rochelle port in the core network, the improvement of the pre and post port railway functioning, state aids as well as the creation of a regional airport strategy. Nouvelle Aquitaine mentioned that Motorways of the seas are not well developed in the Region.

**Cantabria’s** objective is to be incorporated to the TEN-T core network. Inma Valencia suggested to elaborate **an AAC political declaration on principles that could guide the TEN-T review and thus go beyond the identification of sections. This declaration could restate the Regions’ disappointment regarding the corridors’ maps, a position on Motorways of the Seas in the Atlantic as well as on State Aids etc. An event in 2018 could be organised on these issues.**

#### Decisions taken:

- Regions are invited to send to the AAC Secretariat their regional strategic documents on Transport.

- A meeting will be held the second semester of 2017 (as part of the bi-annual Hubs meetings) to prepare an Atlantic political position on the TEN-T regulation review and discuss about a high level event in 2018 as suggested by Cantabria.

➔ Useful links : [Atlantic corridor map](#) and [North Sea-Mediterranean corridor](#)

## Tourism and Culture Working Group

**Remedios Bordiu for Asturias**, coordinator of this working group, thanked the participants and recalled the objectives of the AAC Tourism/Culture working group:

- share best practices in tourism/culture sectors to reinforce the profile of the Atlantic Arc as a tourist destination
- start working on a joint tourism and culture strategy and/or an Interreg project.

Three main areas have been identified: Culture; Natural resources / biosphere reserves; Culinary heritage.

**Felix Leinemann from DG MARE** summed up the European Commission's work on coastal and nautical tourism. The legislative framework is dense in this area: The Sustainable Development Goals, the 2012 European Blue Growth Strategy, the 2014 Strategy for more jobs and growth in the Coastal Tourism sector, and other staff working document which tackles specific areas of tourism (cruise industry, etc.).

The staff working document [on nautical tourism](#) (2017) focused in 4 key areas:

1. Skippers licence recognition
2. Safety equipment
3. Help marinas become more innovative (digitalisation)
4. Circular boating economy

In terms of funding, there are a few available via EMFF, in particular via the Community Local Led Development Initiatives ([CLLD](#)).

**Anne Grady from DG EAC** then explained the “European Year of Cultural Heritage” initiative.

2018 will see activities and initiatives all around Europe to get people interested and involved in cultural heritage.

The EC wants to put the emphasis on the following points:

5. how it builds stronger societies
6. how it creates jobs and prosperity
7. its importance for our relations with the rest of the world
8. what can be done to protect it

➔ Cf [PowerPoint presentation](#) and more information on the [European cultural year heritage](#) website

**Camila De Epalza** from the **Basque Country** delegation in Brussels asked if the European capitals of culture, like San Sebastian, will be involved in such initiatives. She underlined the strong link between tourism and cultural heritage in the Atlantic tourism sector.

**Anne Grady** confirmed that many initiatives are planned all over Europe and advised regions to contact the national coordinators to be part of the events.

➔ Member Regions can ask the list of national coordinators to the AAC Secretariat

**Pauline Caumont** asked DG MARE about its intentions to organise an event related to nautical tourism in the Atlantic. She mentioned the existence of the '[the Atlantic Watersports Games](#)' organised this year in St Nazaire from 26 to 31 August.

**DG MARE** did not know about the event but took note to think about possible connections.

**Anne Grady** announced that a call for projects as part of the "[Creative Europe Programme](#)" on the EU Year of Culture is planned for the last quarter of 2017. Around 250 000 € will be granted per projects. The consortia should at least involve 3 Member States.

**Panos Coronayakis** took the floor to explain the Civitas project "Destinations" which aims at ensuring sustainable public transport in areas of growing tourist population.

➔ See [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

**Pauline Caumont** asked the regions to share their priorities in terms of tourism and culture.

**Inma Valencia** from the **Cantabria EU office** mentioned an INTERREG Atlantic Area project which develops protected areas for surf. A network entitled "reserves for Surf" has been set up. This sector is identified in the regional smart specialisation strategy. This project could fit in the nautical routes calls but no more call is expected this year according to DG MARE.

**Sarah Holden** representing **Northern, Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) in Ireland** mentioned a very successful project which develops 2 000 km of touristic routes between Donegal and Cork as an integrated tourism product: "[the wild Atlantic way](#)".

She also mentioned two Interreg projects:

- The "**CAPITEN**" project, led by with Brittany Region on nautical sport. It was selected under the first call for proposals of the Interreg Atlantic Area programme under Britany's leadership (with a total of 20 partners) and deals with nautism. It should start before the end of 2017.
- "**Atlantic on bike**" led by a County Council in Nouvelle Aquitaine (Pyrénées-Atlantiques) with partners in Portugal (Algarve), Spain (Navarra, Andalucía), France, Ireland (Donegal, Sligo) and the UK (university of Lancashire).

**Federico Sgarbi** from **Brittany EU office** underlined that Nautism is a very important sector in the region, where investment have been made in infrastructures in particular. The regional strategy aims at linking tourism to maritime industry on the one hand and tourism to cultural heritage on the other hand. Short term green tourism is encouraged (using train, bikes, etc.) to preserve and promote the coasts. A specific regional budget is allocated to projects developing new tools in this area.

**Camila de Epalza** added that **the Basque country** focuses on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the tourism sector to attract new tourists. Maritime tourism has a clear cultural dimension for the Basque tourism industry. She suggested to gather information on regional projects corresponding to the WG's priorities to show the dynamism of the tourism sector in the Atlantic.

To conclude **Felix Leinemann** from **DG MARE** mentioned that one of the five sectors identified as part of the [Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills](#) focuses on matching skills to needs in the tourism sector.

See Asturias' [PowerPoint presentation](#).

➔ See the AAC Tourism/Culture Working group [framework document](#)

**In conclusion**, in relation with the Group's leading Region, Asturias, the Secretariat will circulate documents for each region to identify projects aligned with the group's priorities. The objective would be to highlight the dynamism of Regions in this area.

## TUESDAY 20 JUNE 2017: MARITIME HUB AND ATLANTIC STRATEGY WORKING GROUP & Tasks Forces

### Marine Renewable Energy Working Group

**Olatz Ajuria, for the Basque Energy Entity (EVE)** opened the meeting recalling that the Basque country became coordinator of this working group during the last AAC General Assembly in Les Sables d'Olonne (2-3 March 2017). She introduced the meeting highlighting characteristics of the Marine Renewable energy sector in the Basque country and main challenges for this group. Although there is a huge potential in the Atlantic to create growth and jobs in this sector, a few obstacles still need to be addressed:

- High cost of demonstrators
- Difficulty in deployment
- Complex licencing procedures

**Pauline Caumont** thanked the participants and welcomed guest speakers from Ocean Energy Europe (OEE) and DG ENER for participating in this working group. She summed up the work of the Secretariat since the AAC General Assembly in March 2017. One of the focus was the organisation of an on-site visit of an offshore wind farm in the North Sea.

She mentioned that the AAC Secretariat is in contact with OEE in order to organise an event during the next OEE Conference in Nantes, to be held on 25-26 October 2017.

→ See [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Regions are invited to send their preference in terms of localisation (Scotland or Amsterdam) and thematic issues they would like to tackle during this on-site visit which should happen in November 2017. 1<sup>st</sup> contacts have been established with the Netherlands in connection with the [Wind Europe Conference](#) (28-30 November 2017) taking place in Amsterdam as it might be a more convenient location to travel to.

**The Secretariat would like also the Regions to:**

- check the [AAC's map on MRE projects in the Atlantic](#) in order to update it,
- Send existing studies on potentialities (with maps) for MRE development at regional level.

**Jacopo Moccia** from **Ocean Energy Europe** thanked the AAC for the invitation and took the floor to present the three challenges industries are facing to roll-up this sector:

- 1) Financing in a risky business (in particular for demonstrators)
- 2) Permits: in some countries, there is no permitting system (e.g. Italy) nor definition of impact assessments required to develop MRE.
- 3) Skills: there is a lack of synergies between other sectors (wind energy, oil industries etc.) to share workforce and reskill workers. Moreover, there is a need to attract students in this domain, which can appear as quite hard, given it takes place on sea.

Regions can play a role to support the MRE industries. They can foster public acceptance and adopt regional plans including training schemes for MRE. They can also influence their Member States to take more ambitious measures to develop the sector.

**Xavier Guillou**, responsible for MRE in **DG Mare** mentioned a call for proposals on "Environmental monitoring of tidal arrays" to be published during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2017 (cf. [DG Mare 2017 Work programme, page 2, point 1.2.1.1](#)). This call is aligned with the Atlantic Maritime Strategy. He underlined that this is a new sector needing political will and vision, as well as some adaptation from an administrative

point of view. DG Mare is convinced that there is a huge potential in the Atlantic for jobs, technology, export and investment in the MRE sector.

**Brendan Devlin from DG ENER** agreed on the role of Regions and added that the Paris Agreement on climate change is a good tool to galvanize Member States. He explained that Ministries might have some difficulties to understand the emergence of decentralised system of energy distribution. He mentioned the [North Seas Declaration](#) as a good example to get commitment from Member States at sea basin level. Regarding the Atlantic, **Bredan Devlin** advised us to take several parameters into account:

- 1) Regions should build upon the oil and gas industrial sectors. This is a vivid sector from which skills could be transferred to the MRE sector.
- 2) Interconnectors are needed to export energy and to counter regional imbalanced (need for a better EU grid)
- 3) The Atlantic Strategy is a tool to foster MRE
- 4) The development of the rare-earth metal extraction in the Arctic enables to build windmills. Many countries are interested in this resources and the Atlantic Ocean is the sole access point.
- 5) There is no recognition by the EU institutions of the Atlantic Ocean potential in terms of offshore wind in comparison with the North Sea. Regions should make it visible.

Regarding the field visit between the North Sea and the Atlantic Arc, he insisted on the necessity to choose a spot which would be an identifiable hub of innovation and world leader in the sector.

**Pauline Caumont** reacted on these points adding that skills transferability could also happen from the Atlantic shipbuilding industry to the Atlantic MRE sector. She mentioned the Atlantic Power Cluster Project (ended in 2014) whose results should be used to build a AAC political declaration.

**Yvan Guitton** stated that **Brittany** Region is in contact with the French central government to further develop a tidal energy site. The region might be a bit late in the development of fixed offshore wind energy, nevertheless it plans to have two commercial areas (1 GW each) for floating offshore wind.

**Ronan Gingles from NWRA**, underlined that **Ireland** has a capacity close to 5 GW. Floating offshore is under consideration in the East where waters are more stable. The potential would be 20 times bigger, i.e. 500 tera watts. Concerning tidal energy, there are currently 3 tests sites (around 100 m depth) to validate devices. Many Interreg, H2020 and Era Net projects are developed in this area.

**Nouvelle Aquitaine** has tested a turbine in the Gironde estuary with very promising results. There are a lot of private actors in the Region that need to gather in a Cluster. A wave energy device is tested around Biarritz.

For **Pays de la Loire**, MRE is a strong focus of the economic strategy in relation with blue growth. The North West Europe [FORESEA project](#) allows access to a network of test center (eg. Sem Rev test site). In addition, the Interreg Europe [CLIPPER project](#) aims at creating a leadership for maritime industries in Europe. Floating offshore is under scrutiny for further development.

The **Basque country** indicated that the Region is working in close cooperation with the industry via the Wave Energy Basque Cluster and the Wind Energy Basque Cluster. There are two test sites: Mutriku and Bimep (wave). On the Financial side, the Basque Energy Agency has a subsidy programme to test devices with a budget of 2.5 Million €, open to all companies.

#### Decisions taken:

the AAC Regions agreed to prepare a common political declaration to ask for high EU and National ambitions and commitments in terms of Renewable Energy (Marine and offshore wind) in the Atlantic. With concrete figures, it could help put pressure on Member States in an area where the European Commission would support us.

## Innovation Working Group

**Laurence Harribey, elected official for the Nouvelle Aquitaine Region** welcomed the participants and recalled the objectives of the working group. It aims at mobilising the Atlantic regions on innovation in emerging and traditional sectors of the blue economy. The group focuses on 4 areas: biotechnologies, ships of the future, security and sea-bed minerals. She mentioned that the [BBMBC projects](#) led by the University of La Rochelle, which fits into this objective.

**Haitze Siemers from DG MARE** updated Regions on the European Commission's work on blue investments. He mentioned different financing opportunities: Blue Tech, Blue Lab and Blue Careers calls funded by EMFF but also the Juncker Plan, the ERDF and H2020. The investment in the blue economy is facing different challenges:

- 1) Get projects to market: finding the right investors
- 2) Get the right type of instrument: how to combine ERDF with private funding
- 3) An institutional framework that needs to match with investments strategies

These challenges can be overcome. Oceans are now highlighted as such in the European and International agenda, as shows the SDG 14 "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". He added that with 2.5 times the size of the aeronautics market, the Marine economy should be more visible.

He was clear on the fact that Regions can make changes happen in this sector.

**Pauline Caumont** made a presentation on the project "A Blue Biotechnology Master for a Blue Career" (BBMBC). The objective is to create a master's degree in Applied Blue Biotechnologies which will start in September 2017 at the University of La Rochelle. Students can apply online for the Master shortly on a [dedicated website](#). A summer school will be organised in 2018, opened to all students from the partner universities. A campaign of awareness raising towards high school students will be undertaken as well. The AAC oversees the communication activities and will participate in the capitalisation work package of the project.

➔ See [PowerPoint presentation](#)

**Sarai Blanc from SeaEurope** explained that SeaEurope is working a lot on skills gap. Building on a report they prepared on EU Skills for Maritime Technologies, SeaEurope decided to apply to the EU call for proposals to create a platform of experts to reflect on the future of the EU policies in this field. The CPMR is member of the consortium. The funding decision will be released by the European Commission in September or October 2018 and actions should start by beginning of 2018. Regions will have the chance to be involved through CPMR.

➔ See [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

**As a conclusion** on education, **Laurence Harribey** proposed to create a map of all the blue training schemes (high schools, Master's, etc.) available in the Atlantic Regions. This list could help set up a joint strategy for the Atlantic. She mentioned the possibility to set up an international Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in blue careers

### Decisions taken:

**Regions are invited to send the Secretariat the list of identified maritime training schemes existing at regional level and give feedbacks on the possibility to create a MOOC.**



## Environment

The session continued with a specific debate on environment. During the last AAC General Assembly, the President of the AAC and of the Pays de la Loire Region, Bruno Retailleau expressed his will to create an “Atlantic Charter” in favour of the protection of the environment. On this basis, the Italian Region Emilia Romagna was invited to present a similar initiative already launched in the Mediterranean: [the Bologna Charter](#).

**Aki Ishiwa for the Emilia Romagna Region** presented the characteristics and first results of the Bologna Charter. She developed the process that should be followed by the AAC to duplicate such a charter:

- 1) Identify key players
- 2) Identify fields of common interest
- 3) Elaborate a joint action plan
- 4) Promote it
- 5) Keep the process open and inclusive
- 6) Work as a community

➔ See [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

**Brittany region** presented the **CPMR Task Force on Climate**, which can nurture the Atlantic Charter. It is composed of 23 CPMR Regions and focuses on mitigation and adaptation to climate change. First meeting took place in March 2017 and the second on 28 June 2017. The Task Forces focuses on the preparation of a contribution to the public consultation on the Evaluation of the [EU Adaptation Strategy](#) (September 2017) as well as on the New [Clean Energy Package](#).

➔ See [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

**Christine Claus Auby** President of [EUCC Atlantic](#) presented the structure in relations with the project CORIMAT. It aims at gathering data on coastal risk management in the Atlantic area. She underlined that this initiative is totally in line with the AAC 2017 Final Declaration, she called on to the region to capitalise on this project to create synergies.

➔ See [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

**Lucas Bosser from CPMR** briefly presented the CPMR’s project [SIMNORAT](#) which also contributes to protect the environment in the Atlantic. It is an EMMF funded project whose objective is to implement the Maritime Spatial Planning directive. The CPMR leads a specific analysis on the land-sea interactions, notably through a questionnaire sent to Regions, whose results should be useful for the AAC’s work.

➔ See [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

**Pauline Caumont** closed this dense session thanking all guest speakers for their brilliant inputs. The AAC will keep its strong focus on Innovation thanks to the BBMBC project.

Special actions will be undertaken in relationships with Atlantic environment, building on experiences existing in the Mediterranean and previous projects in the Atlantic.

## Fisheries and Aquaculture Working Group

**Agnès Trarieux from Pays de la Loire** thanks all the participants and the invited speaker Vincent Guerre, assistant to MEP Alain Cadec, member of the European Parliament and chair of the Fisheries Committee.



Before leaving the floor to Vincent Guerre, she recalled the thematic areas tackled by the AAC Fisheries Working Group:

- The implementation of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF);
- Share of best practices and lobbying concerning the fishing sector's difficulties to implement the new measures introduced in the Common Fishery Policy (in particular the Discard Ban).

**Vincent Guerre** presented the current agenda of the European Parliament Fisheries Committee. Even though the notion of Maximum Sustainable Yield is determined by clear scientific data, the discard ban and landing obligation measures that derive from it cause a certain number of problems with the fishermen community.

The regionalisation of the EMFF and the set of Multi Annual Management Plans for fish stocks are other topics high on the Committee's agenda. The latest have been implemented in the Baltic for one year but no evaluation has been led for now. **The European Commission should propose a Multi Annual Management Plan for the Atlantic at the beginning of 2018.** An impact assessment is currently carried out.

In this respect, a single regulation which set key principles that apply to all sea-basins is in the European Commission's pipelines.

Concerning the EMFF Mid-Term review, the European Commission should come up with a legislative proposal in 2018. Due to Brexit, we still do not have an idea of the future EMFF budget. One thing is certain, Fisheries will not be a specific sector during the negotiation, it will be part of the global deal.

#### Discussions:

**Galicia** expressed its worries on the single regulation which might hinder a flexible implementation. **Brittany and Nouvelle Aquitaine** outlined their priorities in the fishery area: Brexit, the EMFF payments and the future of EMFF. **The Basque country** agreed on these priorities, adding that Spanish Regions would like to become managing authority of the EMFF.

**Lucas Bosser from CPMR** presented the CPMR's analysis on the EMFF implementation in the CPMR Regions. To prepare this analysis, a questionnaire was sent to CPMR Regions to gather their experiences on the implementation of the EMFF. The final analysis should be presented during the Tallin conference next 12-13 October. He invited the regions to start thinking on their participation in the different workshops. More information on the [PowerPoint Presentation](#).

**Vincent Guerre** reacted on one specific measure: the engine replacement. He asked region to lobby their MEPs to obtain subsidies for fleets.

**Galicia** then presented an update on the organisation of [a Seminar on the Discard Ban and Landing Obligation measures](#), organised on 26 and 27 June in Vigo. Different visits have been organised: the port and fish auction facilities as well as a fish processing plants and a shipyard. A dinner with fish species with low commercial value should give the participants ideas to cope with the discard ban measure.

**For Conclusions and further actions to be taken, please consult the "[Minutes](#)" of Vigo Seminar.**

## Atlantic Strategy Working Group and Task Forces

### [Atlantic Strategy Working Group](#)

**Pauline Caumont** welcomed the participants and the invited speakers.

**James How**, Fisheries and Maritime Attaché at the UK Permanent Representation and Chair of the Atlantic Strategy Steering Group (ASG) presented the ASG current work. Three meetings were held in 2017. They focused mainly on the midterm review of the Atlantic Action Plan, the organisation of the annual Stakeholder Platform and the future of the assistance mechanism.

The European Commission has commissioned Ernst&Young to evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan. A public consultation will shortly follow. This work will lead to a European Commission staff working document at the end of this 2017 year.

The [Stakeholder Platform Conference will be held in Glasgow next 8 November](#). The theme chosen is “regeneration across generation, socially inclusive sustainable development of the European Atlantic seaboard”. A call for workshops and awards has been launched with July 10, 2017 as the deadline for submitting applications. The regions are invited to participate.

**Pauline Caumont** added that she was interviewed by Ernst&Young regarding the Atlantic Action Plan Mid term review. The Final Declaration from Les Sables D’Olonne served as a basis for discussion, as well as the [CPMR Position Paper on Macro-Regions](#), adopted by the CPMR Political Bureau in Gozo in March. She outlined the initiative of DG RTD which clearly earmarked funding for the implementation of the Atlantic Strategy. Other DGs should follow this good example.

**Sarah Holden for the Irish Region** mentioned that the Committee of the Region is currently working on the Atlantic Plan Mid-Term review and called upon the regions to get involved.

**James How** added that national events will be organised this year by the Atlantic Strategy contact points ([list in the Atlantic Strategy website](#)). He concluded restating that the mid-term review is a milestone for regions to contribute to the improvement of the Atlantic Action Plan.

#### Decisions taken:

**A future meeting of the Atlantic Strategy Group is planned for next September 6 in Brussels. The Secretariat will prepare a draft AAC contribution to the [online consultation](#) on the Atlantic Action Plan Mid Term review to be discussed during next meeting. Deadline for contribution is fixed on September 22.**

#### [Transatlantic Cooperation Task Force](#)

**Mikel Anton for the Basque Country** presented the work that has been done in one year by the Task Force. He presented a document compiling all the cooperation agreements existing between Atlantic regions from both sides of the Ocean. Some of them corresponds to the thematic areas of the Atlantic Strategy, but they are limited to cooperation agreements signed between Spanish and Latin American regions.

➔ See [PowerPoint presentation](#)

**Pauline Caumont** mentioned that the CPMR is currently discussing with Quebec to establish a specific partnership. Encounter between Vasco Cordeiro, CPMR President and the Quebec Minister in Charge of the Maritime Strategy, M. Jean D’amour has been organised in Poole during the European Maritime days.

**Svetoslav Stoyanov from DG RTD** underlined the existence of the “Galway Statement”, a cooperation agreement signed in 2013 between the EU, the USA and Canada on research issues. This Agreement was followed by specific calls under the H2020 program. He highlighted the next event taking place on 12-14 July in Lisbon “[a New Era of Blue Enlightenment](#)” which will be the occasion for the European Union to sign a similar agreement with Brazil and South Africa on Atlantic Research and Innovation Cooperation.

## Brexit Task Force

**Tania Gesto from Galicia** recalled the last developments concerning Brexit since the triggering of the Article 50 in March 29. One of the key moment was the last general elections in the United Kingdom. Indeed, Theresa May's government lost its absolute majority in the Chamber. It opens the possibility of a Brexit softer than first expected.

Galicia outlined the lack of transparency of the negotiations process from the UK side. The United Kingdom does not communicate on its positions in relation to the Brexit negotiations contrary to the EU institutions.

Galicia mentioned some works done within the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. The General Affairs Council of June mainly decided the relocation of European Agencies based in the UK. The EP Fisheries Committee organised also a workshop on the Common Fisheries Policy and Brexit. A study, carried out by a researcher working in the University of A Coruña (available in this [link](#)) was presented on this occasion.

**Pauline Caumont** presented further details on the AAC and the CPMR's work on Brexit. The Atlantic Arc Commission is preparing a Political Declaration to send out to the EU and UK Negotiators, in particular to Commissioner Barnier, during a high level meeting between the Commissioner and President Retailleau by the end of November.

➔ See [PowerPoint presentation](#)

**The Brittany region** outlined the need of concrete data on the impact of Brexit on the ground.

**Norther Western Regional Assembly (IE)** insisted on the fact that Irish Regions will become even more peripheral in a post Brexit context and called for a support from the Member State to prevent serious economic disturbances.

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To conclude these two days of meetings, the Secretariat asked the Regions about their feelings concerning these meetings.

Participant Regions insisted on the good quality of speakers and on the practical aspects of gathering all working groups meetings in two days. It avoids too many travels to Brussels. Regions also welcomed the more coordinated approach between working groups.

On the other hand, Laurence Harribey from Nouvelle Aquitaine underlined the necessity to open these meetings to elected officials to prevent gaps between politicians and the regional administrations.

**Pauline Caumont and the Pays de la Loire Region concluded these first AAC Hub Meetings and thanked all the participants for their active contributions. Next meeting will be organised in October of November 2017. In the meantime, specific follow-up actions will be taken, as decided during the meetings.**