Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration

Approved by the Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly
on 23 May 2023 in Cardiff (Wales)

We, the Atlantic Arc Commission Regions,

1. **Welcome**, ahead of the 50th Anniversary of the CPMR, the impressive socio-economic development of the Atlantic Area linked with the EU integration and the development of interregional cooperation initiated by our association;

2. **Celebrate** the exceptional potential the Atlantic area offers Europe in terms of green energy, food production, sustainable industry, natural environment, attraction and retention of talents, industrial specialization, cultural diversity, and tourism as well as trade in essential materials. The big number of important Atlantic ports acts as a true gateway to Europe;

3. **Underline** that the Atlantic Area is facing unprecedented geopolitical challenges around the War in Ukraine, the Covid Crisis and the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. These challenges adds on persistent challenges related to the green and digital transitions, socio-demographic changes, the climate and nature emergencies and the shift to efficient, greener and more integrated energy and transport interconnections;

4. **Call** therefore 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 transatlantic partnerships necessary to address these complex issues;

5. **Note** that the current frameworks of cooperation in the Atlantic, namely the Atlantic Strategy and the INTERREG Atlantic Area should be enhanced to respond to these challenges. Synergies should be also sought with other territorial cooperation programmes for the development of joint projects of the Atlantic Regions;

6. **Recommend** a reinforced cooperation at Atlantic level with non-EU States, regions and nations;

7. **Invite** the first Atlantic Ministerial meeting in October 2023 to heed our advice and include our proposals in the Ministerial Declaration to be signed;
8. **Invite** the Council to develop a Resolution for the creation of an Atlantic Macro-Region during the upcoming Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, as a strategic framework for the Atlantic façade to join forces around a set of priorities harnessing the full potential of the Atlantic area for the overall prosperity of Europe.*

**A GREEN DEAL ADAPTED TO THE ATLANTIC AREA**

**On the Green Deal Industrial Plan**

9. **Recall** that health and well-being, agrifood, healthy and safe food, renewable energy, maritime technologies and resources, skills and competences, tourism, advanced manufacturing and ICT are Atlantic sectors of specialisation identified in the regions’ Smart Specialisation Strategies;

10. **Add** that the Atlantic area has a strong maritime sector based on its numerous ports, important traditional sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture and shipbuilding, which are actively contributing to the green transition through emerging industries such as ocean energies and blue biotechnologies;

11. **Propose** that the Green Industrial Plan adopts a place-based ecosystem approach and supports these Atlantic sectors of excellence. **Recommend** that it should be accompanied by a long-term vision for the sectors’ development including land-sea interaction planning at sea-basin level;

12. **Underline**, in relation to the Net Zero Industry Act and the creation of a European Hydrogen Bank, that the Atlantic Area is well placed to improve the value chain around green hydrogen, thanks to its R&I efforts, its production sites for green hydrogen, its potential combination with ocean energies mainly produced in the Atlantic, and the range of possibilities to use and distribute it through our ports;

13. **Highlight** the geopolitical and strategic importance of offshore renewables development in the Atlantic, including fixed and floating offshore wind energy, and wave and tidal energy. The natural potential of the Atlantic area facilitates strong industrial value chains in these areas. **Call** for European leadership in offshore renewables and achieving carbon neutrality in the face of increasing competition in global markets, always respecting the pre-existing activities and marine habitats;

14. **Ask** the Commission to heed the ambition and future results of the pilot project on transatlantic cooperation developed by the Atlantic Arc Commission with the support of the European Parliament, in its reflection on the Green Industrial Plan.

**On the newly proposed fisheries package and maritime policies**

15. **Regret** that the challenge of decarbonising fisheries has not been addressed with greater financial and regulatory ambition by the European Commission in its Communication on “the Energy Transition of the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector”. **Call for** a genuine support to the green transition in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors which would tackle bottlenecks related the Common Fisheries Policy regulation and the EMFAF implementation;

16. **Call on** the European Commission to engage in a real dialogue with fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders as well as coastal regions based on the co-construction of responses to the EU fleets’ challenges such as energy, climate change or biodiversity and in order to take into account good management practices, in particular, with regards the marine protected areas, before considering any legislative developments, particularly on the Common Fisheries Policy;

17. **Welcome** the contribution of the INTERREG Atlantic Area programme and the EMFF via dedicated calls for the strengthening of maritime sectors in the Atlantic area and **highlight** that the Atlantic Arc Commission participates in successful collaborative projects¹;

¹The Atlantic Arc Commission is a partner in the projects on “Atlantic Smart Port, Blue Acceleration Network” (AspBAN) to boost innovation transfer in ports, and on “Smart Atlantic Seafood Sector” (SAFER) to develop a transnational cluster on seafood. It has also engaged in a new proposal to create an Atlantic Smart Cluster for Maritime Decarbonisation (SMARTDEC).

* On this point, the Northern & Western Regional Assembly will follow the position of the Irish National Government.
18. Regret however that no other EU fund has launched dedicated calls on the priorities of the Atlantic Strategy and consider that the 2021-2027 programming period should be the occasion to develop dedicated Atlantic Calls for other EU funding programmes, such as with the future Horizon Europe Calls on Ocean Energy and other important Atlantic challenges;

19. Share also the need to sustain these projects beyond the pilot stage to ensure that Start-ups “made in the Atlantic” overcome the gap in growth funding known as the Valley of Death;

**On Interconnexions, the Fit for 55 and TEN-T negotiations**

20. Consider that efficient, modern and interconnected infrastructures for transport, energy and deployment of 5G are essential for the Atlantic area to take part in the Single Market and achieve national climate and digitalisation goals;

21. Share that a strong Green Industrial Plan deployed in the Atlantic can only be achieved with more efforts to improve Atlantic connectivity and thus reiterate our calls for a seamless and continuous Atlantic Corridor connecting the whole Atlantic Region from Andalusia to Donegal;

22. Call upon the EU institutions and all the institutions concerned to make all the necessary efforts to complete the Atlantic Corridor in due time, strengthen the governance scheme of the TEN-T when negotiating the Regulation and take into consideration the amendments proposed by the Atlantic Arc Commission on the TEN-T maps;

23. Call for the drawing of an Atlantic integrated hydrogen backbone as part of the Hi-West Corridor which would include a connection in the Atlantic Pyrenees by 2030;

24. Highlight that greening transport is paramount for the Atlantic regions and stress that successful implementation of the package will require strong territorial planning and cooperation involving regions. Acknowledge that border regions will be particularly important when developing a coherent network of recharging stations and alternative fuel refuelling points for cars, planes and ships;

25. Support the Council’s general approach to the TEN-T with regards the setting a criterion targeting ports that contribute to the EU’s energy autonomy. This criterion would allow these ports to answer Connecting Europe Facility Calls. Suggest the criterion considers elements such as the amount of renewable energy in GW-h enabled by the ports, the renewable energy development plan of the ports, and the amount of production or transport of green hydrogen via the ports;

26. Support the position of the European Parliament on the TEN-T in particular its strong approach towards cross-border sections;

27. Call to ensure a timely development of the extended core network by 2040 to enable the sections that the European Parliament has advocated for in its report on TEN-T. These additions will improve the Atlantic geographical coverage of the core network. Ask the Council of Ministers the necessary ambition to include mature sections of the comprehensive network in the extended core network, as well as relevant ports, as suggested by the European Parliament;

28. Boost the deployment of 5G networks and services in the Atlantic area to enable the development of services such as intelligent manufacturing and facilitate the remote control of devices in real time including the deployment of connected and autonomous cars, as well as the intelligent management of transportation and energy resources. In addition, 5G will make it possible to extend high speed broadband coverage in rural and isolated areas, helping to reduce the digital divide and increasing public service availability.
IMPROVING ATLANTIC COOPERATION: TOWARDS AN ATLANTIC MACRO-REGION *

29. **Recall** the longstanding cooperation in the Atlantic thanks to the Atlantic Arc Commission, the INTERREG Atlantic Area programme and the Atlantic Sea-Basin Strategy. **Caution** that current challenges faced by the Atlantic area go beyond the existing cooperation frameworks;

30. **Demand the evolution** from an Atlantic Sea-Basin Strategy to an Atlantic Macro-Region as a necessary step for a stronger Atlantic cooperation. A Macro-Region would allow Atlantic cooperation to address both territorial and maritime challenges, streamline funding and improve multi-level governance of the Strategy (see [Atlantic Arc Commission Technical Paper](#));

31. **Consider** that the Atlantic Strategy Assistance Mechanism, including pillar coordinators and task forces, and the local representatives of the concerned regions, should be involved in the Macro-Region creation process, together with other Atlantic stakeholders;

32. **Invite** also the next Atlantic Ministerial Meeting organised by Portugal in October 2023 to consider the present messages in the Ministerial Declaration which will be signed during the event;

33. **Invite** the Spanish Government to include the Atlantic Macro-Region as a political priority and the European Council, including the EU Atlantic Member States, to give a mandate to the European Commission to develop such initiative taking into account the following proposals.

**Scope**

34. Priorities for inclusion within the Atlantic Macro-Region strategy could be:

   **(1) AN INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ATLANTIC ECONOMY**

   **(2) AN INTER-CONNECTED ATLANTIC AREA**

   **(3) AN ATLANTIC AREA RESILIENT TO CLIMATE-CHANGE**

   **(4) SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COHESION IN THE ATLANTIC AREA**

   **(5) IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND COOPERATION IN THE ATLANTIC AREA**

35. On an Innovative and Sustainable Atlantic Economy:

   - Foster cooperation between the education sector, research centres, clusters and industries to create an Atlantic Smart Specialisation ecosystem geared towards the green transition;

   - Create synergies among Atlantic maritime clusters and diversify funding sources for innovation “made in the Atlantic” to support start-ups and SMEs to overcome the “Valley of Death”;

   - Develop an Atlantic value chain on innovative green vessels and offshore renewable energies, in particular floating offshore wind;

   - Harness the opportunities for Atlantic ports to become hubs of the economy in furthering the Atlantic strategy work;

   - Develop a long-term vision for Atlantic economic sectors taking into account land-sea interactions;

36. On an inter-connected Atlantic Area:

   - Strengthen a joint approach to transport planning for the completion of TEN-T Atlantic corridor, with the support of the Atlantic corridor forum;

   - Foster the North-South/East-West connection of the Atlantic coast as well as motorways of the sea connecting the entire Atlantic continental façade;

   - Develop a network of logistics platforms, encouraging multi-modality and rail/port connections;

   - Develop an Atlantic green hydrogen corridor and energy connections;

   - Develop interconnected infrastructures for the digital transition;

* On this point, the Northern & Western Regional Assembly will follow the position of the Irish National Government.
37. On an Atlantic Area resilient to climate change:

- Coordinate actions on the management of coastal and maritime areas, and joint management of cross-border Marine Protected Areas;
- Include coordination actions such as common response plans to climate events and pollution;
- Develop a circular economy value chain in the Atlantic to fight against ocean pollution;
- Ensure a joint planning on climate change adaptation;
- Protect natural heritage based on joint scientific research;
- Conserve Atlantic biodiversity;

38. On the Social and Cultural Cohesion of the Atlantic Area:

- Multiply partnerships among universities and vocational educational training institutions to develop skills appropriate to the needs of the Atlantic sectors and attract talented academics and researchers;
- Develop a joint cultural offer linked to the maritime identity of the Atlantic to foster the attractiveness of its territories;
- Participate in the coordination of Atlantic sustainable tourism strategies.

**Governance**

39. Recall the importance of Atlantic coordination at all levels of governance to ensure that the common challenges mentioned above are tackled jointly and more efficiently;

40. Call for the direct and full participation of regions in all the governing bodies of the future Macro-Region, to ensure the efficiency of public policies, synergies and economies of scale, to the extent of their human resources capacities, following the Alpine Macro-Region Model.

41. Deem necessary the involvement of the Atlantic socioeconomic stakeholders in the day to day of the Macro-Region to ensure that they endorse the chosen priorities and contribute to their implementation;

42. Remain also convinced that the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, which has developed internal coordination methods throughout its 35 years of existence, can help the governance mechanisms of the future Macro-Region.

**Geography**

43. Call to involve Wales and other non-EU nations and regions in the Macro-Region as full members and provide scope for direct engagement with the EU Atlantic regions, including islands and outermost regions around the Atlantic.

**Funding**

44. Suggest monitoring the Interreg Atlantic Area future call on governance to evaluate the possibility to prepare the ground for the creation of the Atlantic Macro-Region;

45. Suggest the creation of an Advisory Board on funding opportunities attached to the Macro-Region including different Directorates of the European Commission, Managing Authorities of INTERREG programmes and Cohesion Policy funding as well as relevant national and regional departments, including the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission;

46. Propose that the European Commission reflects on the development of calls under EU directly managed programmes for Macro-Regions, or cofinancing bonuses when a project meets a Macro-Region objective.