



Atlantic Arc Commission

# “Comillas 2018” Political Declaration

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## *Messages from the Atlantic Arc Commission to European decision-makers*

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**The Regions of the Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC) of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) met in Comillas (Cantabria, Spain) on 14 and 15 June 2018 for its 29<sup>th</sup> annual General Assembly. During this event, the Member Regions adopted this “Comillas 2018” Political Declaration addressed to European and national decision-makers.**

This Declaration reiterates the commitments made by the Atlantic Arc Commission since its creation in 1989, namely the balanced development of the European Union taking better account of the peripheral maritime regions. In a context of upcoming significant changes for the European Union, the Atlantic Arc Commission wants to stress, now more than ever, the need to promote an ambitious vision of the European project that is closer to the citizen.

On 2 May 2018, the European Commission unveiled its priorities, as well as its funding options for the next seven years of the 2021-2027 programming period, when it published the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

This document was followed up with various legislative proposals, notably with the publication on 29 May 2018 of the ERDF Regulation, the Cohesion Fund and the General Regulation on Cohesion Policy, followed by the ESF+ Regulation on 30 May, the EMFF Regulation and the CEF Regulation on 6 June. All these European Regulations will have a significant territorial, social and economic impact for the Atlantic Arc Regions, both in terms of their ability to invest and the governance of European funds.

In addition, the Brexit negotiations open up a breach in the European project. The United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union, currently scheduled for March 2019, will cause significant imbalances. The lack of visibility concerning the implementation of European policies along the Atlantic coast, particularly Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), and the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) is a real concern to the Regions of the Atlantic Arc Commission.

**Faced with these challenges, the Atlantic Arc Commission has identified eight key messages to convey to European decision-makers in this “Comillas 2018” Political Declaration.**

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## I. For an ambitious vision of the European future through a Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) that is adapted to the needs of the territories

### Regarding the European Commission's proposal for the next financial framework 2021-2027, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

1. **Cautiously welcomes** the budget proposals presented by the European Commission on 2 May 2018. While the proposed budget appears to be increasing by 2% compared to the current period, shared management funds, which are often managed by the Regions, are significantly reduced: at least -8% for Cohesion Policy, -13% for the EMFF, see table in Annex 1, which concerns the Regions of the Atlantic Arc Commission.
2. **Highlights and endorses** the message adopted by the CPMR Political Bureau in Patras on 8 March 2018 in its Policy Position "[CPMR vision for a post-2020 budget](#)". An ambitious budget is needed to finance the European Union's new priorities without this being to the detriment of policies with a strong territorial impact (cohesion, transport, fisheries and the Integrated Maritime Policy, climate action, etc.).

## II. For an Atlantic Strategy that takes into consideration the Atlantic double identity, maritime and territorial

### Regarding the implementation of the Atlantic Strategy, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

3. **Underlines** that Brexit requires the launch of a reflection on the future of the Atlantic Strategy and **calls** on the States concerned to step up their commitment to a strong Strategy for the Atlantic.
4. **Reiterates** that despite the UK's exit from the EU, common challenges remain, such as the management of fish stocks, coastal erosion, maritime pollution, scientific discussions etc, which require a European strategic framework for joint action as well as dedicated financial resources to support it.
5. **Calls** on the Atlantic States and the European institutions to strengthen the governance of the current Atlantic Maritime Strategy, by allowing the Secretariat and a member Region of the Atlantic Arc Commission to participate in the Atlantic Strategy steering group. The Atlantic Arc Commission asks to explore the possibilities for moving towards a macro-regional strategy.
6. **Calls for** a real reflection within the Atlantic Strategy Group (ASG) on highly strategic sectors that require enhanced cooperation between Atlantic territories. These sectors should form the basis of the renewed Action Plan for the Atlantic Strategy, taking into account the clear maritime dimension and also the territorial dimension of the Atlantic Arc.
7. **Proposes** contributing directly to the identification of these sectors on the basis of its expertise developed in the various working groups and its closeness to the field. In light of this, the Atlantic Arc Commission suggests organising joint meetings between its Atlantic Strategy Working Group and the institutional ASG group.

### III. For an ambitious European Territorial Cooperation Policy that is adapted to macro-regional areas

#### Regarding the future of European Territorial Cooperation Policy (ETC), the Atlantic Arc Commission:

8. **Stresses** the importance of the ETC for all members of the Atlantic Arc Commission, as well as its real European added value. Indeed, Interreg programmes help find solutions to challenges that the actors or the Regions could not solve alone.
9. **Regrets** the still insufficient proportion of the budget earmarked for the ETC (2.5% of the Cohesion Policy budget see Annex 2) in the MFF budget proposals, which is in contradiction with the principle that only policies with a strong European added value should be included in the European Union's priorities for the post-2020 period.
10. **Calls for** the strengthening of the budget earmarked for territorial cooperation within the Atlantic area in order to take better account of the priorities of the renewed action plan of the European Strategy for the Atlantic.
11. **Calls** to maintain internal and external maritime cross-border cooperation programmes to strengthen European territorial cooperation in our Regions.
12. **Proposes** that the procedures for drawing up the future Atlantic Area Operational Programme should be carried out in conjunction with the review of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan.
13. **Calls on** the United Kingdom to seize the opportunity offered by Article 5 of the draft ERDF Regulation which allows British actors to continue participating in territorial cooperation programmes, particularly in the Atlantic, if the UK agrees to contribute to the EU budget for these programmes.
14. **Underlines** that the United Kingdom's exit will certainly modify the territorial cooperation maps, especially in the Atlantic. The Atlantic Arc Commission advocates for a stronger Atlantic transnational area.
15. **Supports** maintaining transnational Territorial Cooperation Areas, which, though they have no maritime dimension, address specific issues and have proven to be coherent and useful over the years to offer solutions to challenges in line with EU policy priorities. Territorial cooperation in these geographic areas is key and needs to be based on issues that are specific to these areas.
16. **Calls on** the European Commission to be vigilant regarding the designation of the Managing Authority of the future Atlantic Area programme. The future Managing Authority (MA), as well as its Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS), must be functional and experienced enough to ensure a rapid launch of the first Calls for projects.
17. **Calls for** a sufficient technical assistance budget that is adapted to the workload caused by the increase in the applications submitted by the project leaders (425 applications for the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for projects of the Atlantic Area for a team of only 4 officers within the JTS).

#### IV. For a Fisheries Policy that is closer to the coastal communities and less bureaucratic; for proper consideration of rapid developments in the field of aquaculture

##### Regarding fisheries and aquaculture issues, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

18. **Is alarmed** by the reduction in the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) budget of around 15% in the European Commission's budget proposal for 2021-2027. The Atlantic Arc Commission **reiterates** the request from Regional Authorities to directly manage their EMFF allocations.
19. **Calls on** the Commission to provide for significant adjustments to the implementation of the **landing obligation** scheduled for 1 January 2019, given the real difficulties encountered on the ground and put forward by experts (refer to the [Seminar](#) organised by the European Parliament on 14 May 2018 and [Atlantic Arc Commission's Vigo Declaration](#)).
20. **Welcomes** the proposal for a first multi-annual management plan for Western waters presented by the European Commission that the Atlantic Arc Commission had called for. This plan should allow for greater flexibility and consultation with a view to establishing opportunities to fish at maximum sustainable yield whilst contributing to the maintenance of ecosystems.
21. **Underlines**, in the context of the Brexit negotiations, the importance of shared management of fisheries resources between the United Kingdom and the EU27, especially in Western waters. The fisheries sector could bear the brunt of the impact of Brexit in social, economic and ecological terms if it is not managed in a concerted way.
22. **Recalls** the vital importance of the Regions in the development of European aquaculture, particularly in the framework of the implementation of the multi-annual strategic plans that the Member States must prepare by 2021. **Welcomes**, in this respect, the report by MEP Carlos Iturgaiz (EPP, ES) of 24 May 2018, "[Towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector](#)".
23. **Invites** the Commission to encourage and support the development of seaweed farming, a sector with high ecological and economic added value for the Atlantic Arc Regions.

#### V. For a **better connection for the Atlantic Regions to the corridors of the Trans-European Network of Transport (TEN-T)**

##### Regarding European Transport Policy, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

24. **Endorses** the European Commission's proposal (2018/0228 COD) for the expansion of the Atlantic Corridor towards the Atlantic ports and its connection with the Mediterranean Corridor. The Atlantic Arc Commission **calls** on the European Parliament and the Council to swiftly approve this new Regulation so that all Regions concerned may benefit quickly from these improvements.
25. **Regrets** that the European Commission is proposing to reduce the share of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) dedicated to transport by 13% and **urges** Parliament to ask for this budget to be increased.
26. **Notes** that the draft CEF Regulation gives high priority to actions relating to intelligent and sustainable transport but **points out** however that the peripheral and Atlantic Regions still

have significant basic infrastructure needs in order to improve their accessibility and connectivity, in particular in ports. These needs are even greater for Regions that are facing demographic challenges related to an ageing population or low population density.

27. **Draws** the Commission's attention to the fact that the post-2020 CEF must be more attentive to the geographical allocation of funds to the peripheries, as almost 90% of the appropriations of the current period have been focused on the Corridors and the Core network.
28. **Proposes** that in addition to the "European added value", a new selection criteria be adopted that takes into account the "peripheral added value", which would highlight the connection needs of the logistics networks and hubs that are not included in the corridors.
29. **Welcomes** the fact that the updated version of the Motorways of the Sea's [Detailed Implementation Plan](#) published in April 2018 advocates the peripheries and consideration of the impact of the Brexit. The Atlantic Arc Commission calls for this to lead to effective financial support.

## VI. For more ambitious marine renewable energy goals in the Atlantic Arc

### Regarding marine renewable energies (MRE), the Atlantic Arc Commission:

30. **Supports** the European Parliament's position in the current triologue to increase the share of renewable energies in European energy consumption by around 35%, rather than that of the Commission and the Member States, which propose 27%. We believe an ambitious objective is needed more than ever to tackle climate change that particularly affects the Atlantic coasts.
31. **Calls**, therefore, on the Atlantic States to be ambitious in their marine renewable energies deployment objectives, a sector with high economic and industrial potential in the Atlantic area and a source of non-relocatable jobs.
32. **Highlights** Stakeholders' needs to i) implement reindustrialisation policies to help support Regions that are undergoing industrial change inherent to energy transition and ii) obtain support to anchor new MRE industrial sectors in a balanced way relying on the traditional industrial base existing in the Atlantic Regions.
33. **Calls on** the Member States to formally include the Atlantic Regions, cornerstones of energy transition, in the development of national energy and climate plans<sup>1</sup> scheduled for autumn 2018.
34. **Welcomes** the fact that Priority 2 of post-2020 Cohesion Policy will focus on climate change and energy transition; **calls for** the ERDF to support the development of marine renewable energies by allowing a rapid transition from the experimental phase to the operational phase.
35. **Welcomes** the fact that the European Commission proposes to increase the budget of the "Horizon Europe" research programme by 7%. The Atlantic Arc Commission very strongly **supports** the creation of an "Ocean Mission" as part of Horizon Europe, which would finance projects related to the sea. This Ocean Mission should pay particular attention to marine renewable energy projects to help technologies reach the commercialisation phase.

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<sup>1</sup> These national plans are mandatory under the [Governance of the Energy Union](#) Regulation of 17 January 2018

## VII. For a healthy and protected Atlantic environment

### Regarding environmental and climate issues, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

36. **Supports** the European Commission's ban on single-use plastics, most of which end up in the sea, and **proposes** to make tackling marine litter the "Great Cause" for the Atlantic for 2019. In this regard, the Atlantic Arc Commission will highlight the results of the [CleanAtlantic](#) project which aims to improve the prevention, monitoring and elimination of marine litter in the Atlantic area.
37. **Calls on** the Member States to step up their efforts with regard to the implementation of the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) (MSFD), in particular concerning the achievement of Indicator 10 on marine litter. Achieving this objective should help limit the impact of waste on marine ecosystems and contribute to the good environmental status of marine waters.
38. **Welcomes** the sound scientific cooperation stemming from the [Galway Statement](#). The Atlantic Arc Commission supports the exchange of good scientific practices across all European programmes, on both sides of the Atlantic, to mitigate the consequences of climate change on coastal regions. The Atlantic Arc Commission suggests that the Atlantic Strategy becomes the relevant framework to highlight the good results achieved by the various European and International projects on this issue.

## VIII. For innovative training that is adapted to the Atlantic entrepreneurial fabric

39. **Welcomes** the European Commission's initiative to pay particular attention to maritime training in the context of its New European Skills Agenda and underlines the opportunities for growth and employment that the blue economy sectors represent for the Regions of the Atlantic Arc Commission.
40. **Defends** the Regions' involvement in the discussions on a European Strategic framework on blue training. Through their territorial development strategies, the Regions are a lever to align the needs of the private sector with maritime training. The [Blue Biotechnology Master for a Blue Career](#) project (BBMBC), initiated as part of the Atlantic Arc Commission's Innovation Group is the perfect example of this which will be duplicated.

*Document approved by the Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly in Comillas,  
on 14 and 15 June 2018*

## THE CPMR ATLANTIC ARC COMMISSION

**WHO WE ARE:** The [CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission](#) is the united voice of the Regions of the European Atlantic shores. Founded in 1989, we are a platform for policy-oriented cooperation with 15 Members from Portugal, Spain, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom. The Atlantic Arc Commission is one of the six Geographical Commissions part of the umbrella organisation Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions made up of 150 Regions across Europe and beyond. The Atlantic Arc Commission benefits from the cooperation with other CPMR Geographical Commissions on common issues.

**WHERE WE ARE:** Based in Rennes and Brussels, the Secretariat of the CPMR Atlantic Commission has a double strategic location that offers the biggest added-value to liaise with the EU institutions and key Atlantic stakeholders at regional and EU level.



## ANNEX I

MFF comparison							
MFF 2014-2020				Amount Differences	MFF 2021-2027		
	Share of total MFF	2018 prices EU28	2018 prices excluding UK		2018 prices	Share of total MFF	
<b>Total MFF (in commitments)</b>	100%	1 108 072	n/a	<b>+2%</b>	<b>1 134 583</b>	100%	<b>Total MFF</b>

MFF comparison							
MFF 2014-2020				Amount Differences	MFF 2021-2027		
	Share of total MFF	2018 prices EU28	2018 prices excluding UK		2018 prices	Share of total MFF	
<b>CAP</b>	37,6%	416 805	<b>388 750</b>	<b>-17%</b>	<b>324 284</b>	28,6%	<b>CAP</b>
European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF)	28,8%	319 240	296 493	<b>-14%</b>	254 247	22,4%	EAGF
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	8,8%	97 565	92 257	<b>-24%</b>	70 037	6,2%	EAFRD
<b>Cohesion</b>	33,3%	368 658	<b>359 893</b>	<b>-8%</b>	<b>330 642</b>	29,1%	<b>Cohesion</b>
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	18,3%	203 184	197 089	<b>+2%</b>	200 622	17,7%	ERDF
Cohesion Fund (CF)	6,9%	76 487	76 487	<b>-46%</b>	41 374	3,6%	CF
European Social Fund (ESF)**	8,0%	88 987	86 318	<b>+3%</b>	88 646	7,8%	ESF+ ***
European Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)	0,6%	6 530	<b>6 282</b>	<b>-13%</b>	<b>5 448</b>	0,5%	EMFF
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) **a	0,3%	3 202	<b>2 828</b>	<b>+225%</b>	<b>9 205</b>	0,8%	AMF

The comparison below does not exclude UK due to lack of comparable data

MFF comparison							
MFF 2014-2020				Amount Differences	MFF 2021-2027		
	Share of total MFF	2018 prices EU28			2018 prices	Share of total MFF	
<b>Transport</b>	2,2%	<b>24 550</b>	n/a	<b>-13%</b>	<b>21 384</b>	1,9%	<b>Transport</b>
of which :							
CEF Transport General envelope	1,2%	13 015	n/a	<b>-13%</b>	11 384	1,0%	CEF Transport General envelope
Contribution from Cohesion Fund	1,0%	11 535	n/a	<b>-13%</b>	10 000	0,9%	Contribution from Cohesion Fund
					5 767		Military Mobility
<b>Horizon 2020</b>	7,3%	<b>81 053</b>	n/a	<b>+7%</b>	<b>86 596</b>	7,6%	<b>Horizon Europe</b>
<b>Global Europe + European Development Fund</b>	9,0%	<b>100 038</b>	n/a	<b>+9%</b>	<b>108 929</b>	9,6%	<b>Neighbourhood and the world</b>

\*Source of data : MFF2014-2020 [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/programmes/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/programmes/index_en.cfm) and using deflator to convert from current prices, MFF2021-2027 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-modern-budget-may2018\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-modern-budget-may2018_en.pdf) and part of the fund to UK

\*\*ESF, YEI, Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived were merged to be compared with ESF+ of the MFF2021-2027

\*\*\* less the Health, employment and social innovation programme.

\*\*aSource of data : MFF2014-2020 [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/programmes/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/programmes/index_en.cfm) and using deflator to convert from current prices, MFF2021-2027 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-modern-budget-may2018\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-modern-budget-may2018_en.pdf) and UK national allocation

**Note:** This table is the result of a budget comparison exercise carried out by the CPMR Secretariat. It highlights the budgetary developments in the policies of interest to the Member Regions and the most important expenditure items. These figures are estimates provided to CPMR Members in the absence of an official comparison table from the European Commission.



## ANNEX 2: Detailed budget proposed by the European Commission for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) 2021-2027:

According to the draft ERDF Regulation, the future European Territorial Cooperation policy will be broken down into five components, with a total budget of 8,430,000,000 EUR (2018 price/current prices) which is 2.5% of the Cohesion Policy total.

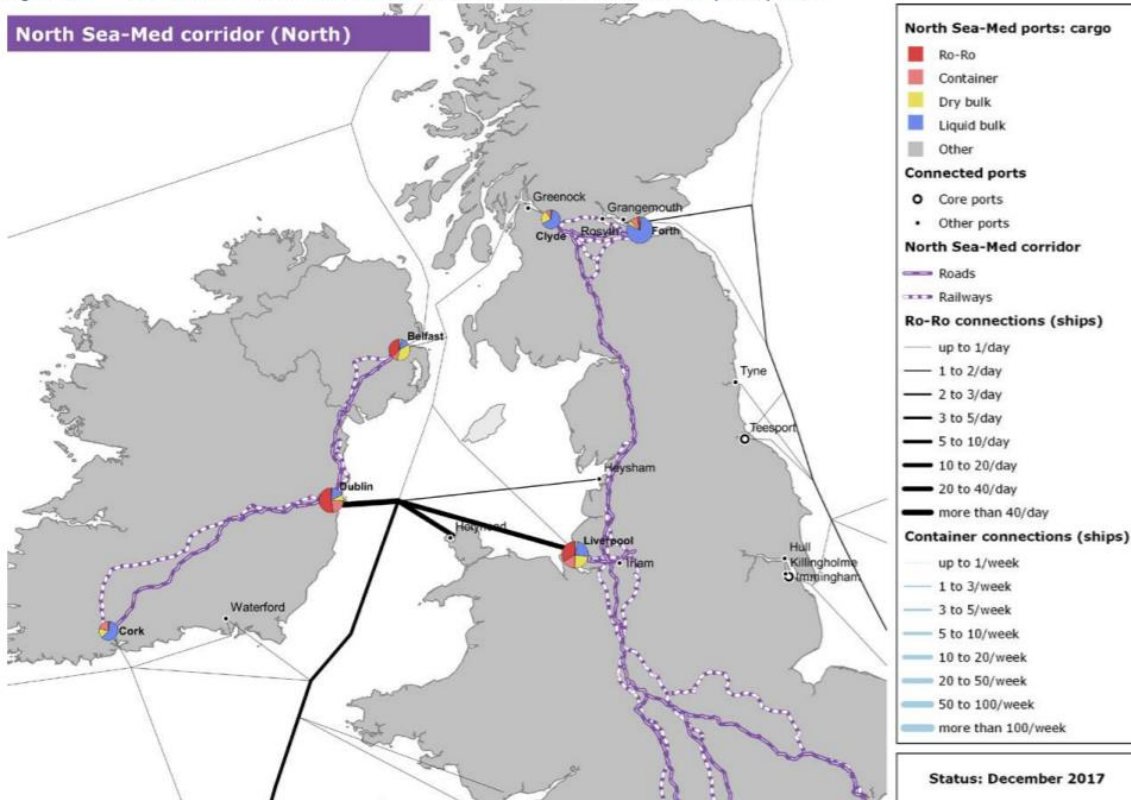
The maximum co-financing rate proposed is 70%.

Components	Percentage of Cohesion Policy	Total Budget proposed	Change compared with 2014-2020
1 <sup>st</sup> component: cross-border cooperation	52.7 %	EUR 4 440 000 000	Reduction
2 <sup>nd</sup> component: trans-national cooperation	31.4 %	EUR 2 649 900 000	Increase
3 <sup>rd</sup> component: Outermost Regions	3.2%	EUR 270 100 000	New
4 <sup>th</sup> component: interregional cooperation	1.1%	EUR 100 000 000	Reduction
5 <sup>th</sup> component: innovative interregional investments (S3)	11.5 %	EUR 970 000 000	New

# ANNEX 3: Current maps of the two Corridors that concern the Regions of the Atlantic Arc Commission: North Sea - Mediterranean Corridor (Ireland, United Kingdom) and Atlantic Corridor (France, Spain, Portugal)

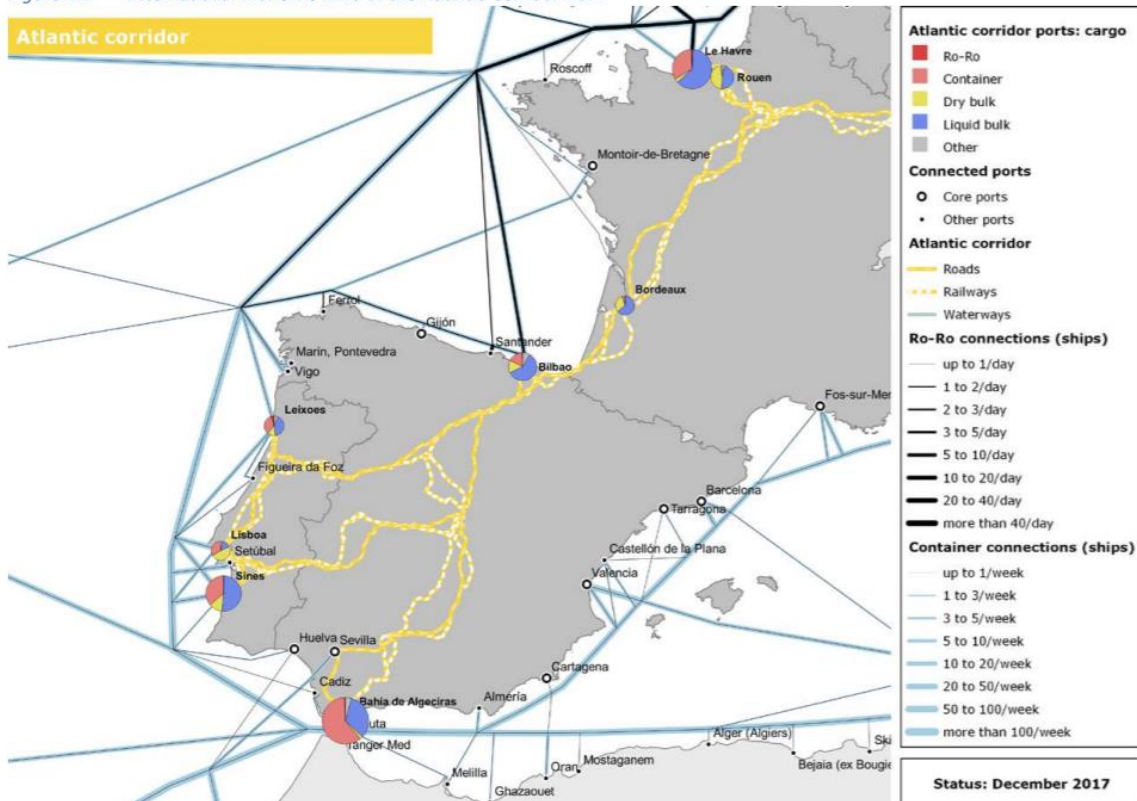
## 4.8. North Sea-Mediterranean Corridor

Figure 23: International maritime links of the North Sea-Mediterranean Corridor (North) 2017



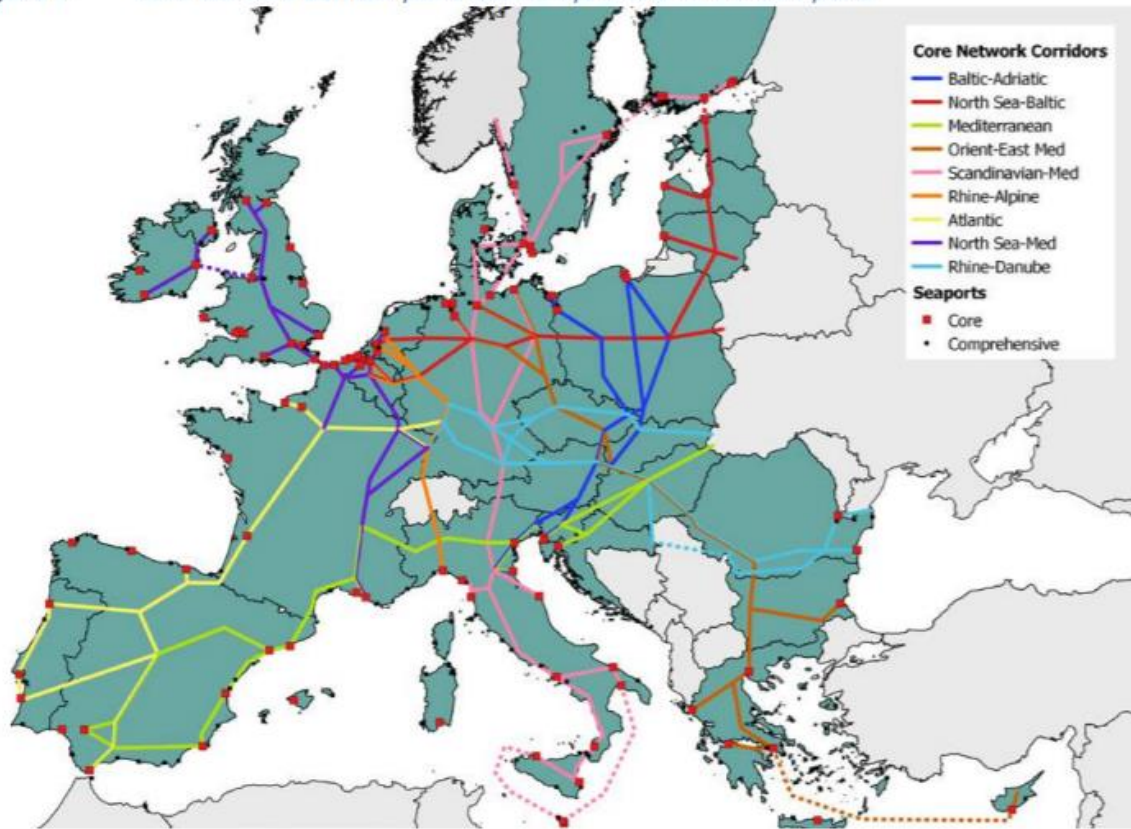
## 4.7. Atlantic Corridor

Figure 22: International maritime links of the Atlantic Corridor 2017



# Map of the corridors and ports of the Core and Global Network

Figure 1: Core Network Corridor ports and Comprehensive Network ports



Source: ISL based on Eurostat