Atlantic Arc Commission 2020
Political Declaration

Approved unanimously by the General Assembly of the Atlantic Arc
Commission on 26 June 2020

Messages from the Atlantic Arc Commission to European decision-makers:
For an effective green and blue recovery of the Atlantic Area

In the wake of an unexpected and hugely disruptive public health crisis, as the Atlantic moves into a new geopolitical era with the definitive exit of the UK from the EU, and as the need for our economies to be more green, more digital, and more resilient becomes ever more pressing, Regions of the Atlantic Arc make the following call to EU decision-makers.

The Atlantic Arc Commission:

Welcomes the ambition of the European Commission in its proposal for the new 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and an EU Recovery Plan.

Alerts decision-makers to the consequences of the COVID-19 health crisis for employment in key sectors of the maritime economy, with a deterioration in the social situation of the European blue growth workforce.

Highlights that Atlantic regions are facing a second economic catastrophe in addition to the COVID-19 crisis caused by Brexit in December.

Reminds decision-makers that it will be the same sectors currently being hit by public health measures introduced to combat COVID-19 that will be negatively impacted by a hard Brexit, namely fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, trade, transport, and industry, especially aeronautics and automotive.

Calls on the EU Institutions thus to introduce measures to support Brexit impacted sectors and regions, including:

- Widen the scope of measures in the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative I and II to include the impacts of Brexit;
- Extend the application of the temporary framework for State Aid beyond December 2020, in order that states and regions most disrupted by Brexit may effectively support their most affected sectors;
- Create a specific objective in the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy to take into account the challenges linked to Brexit and set up additional funds to mitigate the impacts.

Furthermore, strongly recommends that the EU extends the COVID-19 flexibility measures to ensure a full recovery of the fisheries and aquaculture sector from the crisis. While the increased resources allocated to the EMFF are welcomed, the flexibility measures introduced in April 2020 to support the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the face of the COVID-19 crisis have not been extended.
Regrets that the EMFF has been excluded from the REACT-EU Programme, which means the fund cannot benefit from the flexibility offered as part of this programme.

Recalls that Brexit will add new external borders to the regions of the Atlantic Arc, along with the already existing ones. To adapt to the new situation will require common work based on consensus, dialogue, and exchanges of best practices, as well as additional funds.

Expect full respect of the principle of multi-level governance and the involvement of regions in the programming and funding allocation of REACT-EU, in order not to leave any region behind and to foster local innovations for an effective recovery.

Appeals to the EU Institutions to do their utmost to avoid a cliff-edge situation for EU investments at the end of 2020. Without agreement on the EU budget or on the specific programme regulations, there is a risk of significant disruption to regional investments and cooperation projects, notably in the Atlantic.

Signals the need for investments in greening transport, for the completion of the Atlantic TEN-T Core Network corridor by 2030, and further enhancement of the Atlantic dimension of the future Trans-European Network of Transport regulation. Mobility has reduced drastically during the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting important Atlantic infrastructure, maritime links, logistical chains, tourism activity, and cultural and creative industries.

Urges the European Commission to develop a comprehensive strategy for the tourism and culture sectors (including cultural tourism and heritage), supported by a specific budget line, and to extend the COVID-19 state aid flexibility measures to ensure a strong and sustainable recovery for the sectors from the COVID-19 crisis and to guarantee resilience against future shocks, including Brexit. Decision-makers are reminded of the contribution the tourism and culture sectors make to the realisation of the EUs Green and Digital Agendas.

Underlines the commitment of Atlantic Regions to the implementation of the Green Recovery on the ground, and notably their support to the development of tidal, wave, fixed and floating offshore wind energy. Due to COVID-19, necessary investments have been postponed, such as those required for the development of technologies, adaptation of infrastructure, maintenance of systems, coordinated and effective spatial planning, and skills (including reskilling and upskilling) advancement. Greater support to this dynamic should be provided to the Atlantic Area as part of the upcoming Offshore Energy Legislation, the next Skills Agenda, and the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework.

Underlines that the disruption caused by COVID-19 and Brexit on the fisheries, aquaculture, industry (in particular automotive and aerospace), tourism and culture, and transport sectors of the Atlantic Arc can also be an opportunity for those sectors to evolve and update their technological capacities. Thus, strongly encourages efforts at EU level to facilitate advancements in training and technology in line with the Digital Agenda, while always taking into account gender equality.

Advises that a stronger role for Macro Region and Sea Basin Strategies be provided in the implementation of the EU Recovery Pan and the Green Deal at Sea Basin and Macro Regional levels, as this would help to streamline the different funding sources for the recovery of the entire targeted area.

Requests more transparency in the elaboration of the future INTERREG Atlantic Area programme for 2021-2027 and adequate financial resources, to ensure that Regions’ priorities for cooperation are included. To avoid disruptive changes in the geographical scope of the programme, the programme should maintain its blue economy focus.
WHO WE ARE: The CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission is the united voice of the Regions of the European Atlantic. 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 of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), a regional lobby and think tank for 150 Regions across Europe, EU and non-EU.