Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration
Sines 2024

Approved by the Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly
on 9/10 April 2024 in Sines (Alentejo)

“Vision and Action Plan for a prosperous Atlantic Arc by 2030
Towards an Atlantic Macro-Region”

The Atlantic Arc Commission messages
to the new European Parliament and European Commission

In a global context where the centre of gravity of economic activity and innovation is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and in the European context, the weight tends to shift increasingly eastward with the perspective of enlargement, the Atlantic Arc Commission Member Regions of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) call on the European Institutions to give a stronger attention to the Atlantic Area, to ensure that it remains strongly anchored in the EU project, it contributes to and is an active part of it, while at the same time it benefits from new international exchanges. In the absent of joint efforts at EU level, there is a serious risk that the peripheral condition of the Atlantic Arc will result in an insufficient consideration of its interests, a loss of competitiveness, attractiveness, and capacity to shape a European prosperous future. In this Declaration, the 15 Atlantic Member Regions jointly define a vision for a prosperous future of the Atlantic Arc, and proactively propose an action plan and new governance model to achieve this goal.

A vision for the Atlantic Area prosperous development by 2030

The Atlantic Arc Commission Regions

1. **Support** the EU Green Deal call for a modern, resource-efficient and competitive EU economy while tackling Climate change and environmental degradation, leaving no person and no place behind and **call** for joint efforts to achieve this political project in the Atlantic Area by 2030;
2. **Acknowledge** the major challenges facing European agriculture and **stress** that the primary sector play an important role in maintaining economic and social activity in the Atlantic Area. In this respect, **ask** for a transformation of the current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) instruments, with the Regions acting as managing authorities with regional strategic plans. **Affirm** that a stronger involvement of European regions in the governance and implementation of the CAP is fundamental to develop policies and measures that support the transition of the sector while taking into account regional diversity.

3. **Reiterate**, as expressed in in the previous AAC Cardiff Declaration in May 2023, the need to ensure the prosperity of the Atlantic Arc, and **demand** the creation of an Atlantic Macro-region that would enable an enhanced collaboration around the following thematic priorities:

   - **Priority 1**: an **innovative and sustainable Atlantic economy**, leader in its key sectors of smart specialisations;
   - **Priority 2**: an **interconnected Atlantic area** not only in terms of transport but also in terms of digitalisation, production and use of green energies;
   - **Priority 3**: an Atlantic area **resilient to climate change** and front-runner in achieving a **zero-pollution environment**;
   - **Priority 4**: a **socially and culturally cohesive Atlantic area** to secure the attractiveness of territories and enhance skills in the main sectors of smart specialisation;
   - **Priority 5**: **improving governance and cooperation in the Atlantic Area**.

4. **Work together** this vision with the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and key stakeholders of the Atlantic civil society as reminded in the Bilbao Declaration of the Atlantic Network of Chambers of Commerce (June 2023), the report of the CESER de l'Atlantique (October 2023) and the statements of the President of CRUSOE, the network of 29 universities and polytechnic institute from the Northwest of Spain and Portugal;

5. **Recall** that under the leadership of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, other Atlantic associations such as Atlantic Cities and RTA-ATN join forces to steer an ESPON Targeted Analysis aiming at building a common development vision for the Atlantic Area and orientations for the creation of an Atlantic Macro-Region;

### The action plan to achieve a prosperous Atlantic Area by 2030

6. **Support** that a strengthened transnational cooperation among the Atlantic community and between different levels of governance including regional (EU and non-EU Regions concerned) is of paramount importance to achieve theses priorities make sure they found complementarities and avoid competing with one another;

7. **Recommend** the achievement of the above-mentioned priorities through the identification and implementation of flagship projects and **reiterate** the following ideas:

   - the co-creation of an Atlantic Innovation Valley based on most common and needed Smart Specialisation Strategies of the Atlantic Arc;
   - the development of an Atlantic value chain on innovative green vessels, for all types of vessels, including the fishing and aquaculture fleet, and other types of vessels;
   - the development of an Atlantic value chain on offshore renewable energies, in particular floating offshore wind, in consistency with pre-existing fishing activities;
   - the achievement of an Atlantic green hydrogen corridor;
   - the finalisation of the Atlantic corridor by 2030 and of the Atlantic sections of the extended core network, mainly strategic rail infrastructure projects, by 2040 aligning national investment plans to eventually achieve a progressive implementation of a seamless network of transport connecting all the Atlantic areas, affordable and accessible for all citizens and economic actors, removing all bottlenecks.
enhancing the use of more sustainable modes of transport, thanks notably to the cross-border planning of the electric charging infrastructures and to decarbonized shipping and ports;
- the creation of coordinated response plans to climate events and pollution;
- The development of a charter of Atlantic protected areas that can accompany the efforts of traditional activities in their protection and avoid undermining their activity;
- The development a joint cultural and touristic offer to foster the attractiveness of Atlantic territories and its economic potential;
- The creation of a System of Indicators on the Climate Change-Tourism Relationship, to measure the extent of the impacts of climate change in the Atlantic Regions which ecosystems are already altered and in highly fragile conditions, preventing them to deliver the social, economic and environmental benefits they have provided until now;
- The creation of an Atlantic university partnership to adapt skills to the needs of the private sector, in most needed smart specialisation areas of the Atlantic.

8. **Confirm** that the aforementioned flagship projects on the one hand address maritime issues and on the other hand tackle issues that are beyond the scope of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy.

### Adapted EU legislations to Atlantic ambitions

9. **Highlight** that the development of such flagship projects is conditioned to adapted legislations at all levels of governance. A particular attention should be pay to the regional level when developing new EU legislations with territorial impacts;

10. **Share** interest in addressing an authentic reformulation of the Common Fisheries Policy. Without losing sight of its objectives, the CFP must adapt to the reality of fishing activity, bringing simplification, more flexibility and adapting to new challenges that have arisen since its approval in 2013, such as the expansion of marine protected areas, the decarbonisation of the fleet or the deployment of offshore energy;

11. **Request**, with respect to EU law that the upcoming Parliament and European Commission suppress of the legislative barriers of the Common Fisheries Policy and the EMFAF implementation preventing the support the energy transition of the fishing fleet;

12. **Add** that the European Commission should support, as part of the TEN-E Regulation, the inclusion of more Atlantic projects of common interest in its upcoming Delegated Act, to ensure a genuine Atlantic interconnected area;

13. **Call** on the European Commission and Atlantic Member States, following the adoption of the Regulation on the Trans-European Transport Network to secure a better governance for the implementation of cross-border and specific sections of the Atlantic Corridor. The Atlantic Regions are very committed and proactive in completing the Atlantic Corridor, which links the Iberian Peninsula to Northern Europe and need insurance that Member States will step up their efforts to finalise the Atlantic Corridor. They should also ensure that national transport and investment plans are consistent with TEN-T objectives when setting infrastructure and investment priorities within the Atlantic Corridor;

14. **Highlight** the needs to accompany the Fit for 55 package by sufficient investments in infrastructure and full integration of the transport sector in the electricity grid to leave no Region behind;

15. **Stress** that adequate involvement of regional authorities and communities in the implementation of legislations under development such as Net-Zero Industry Act and the Critical Raw Materials Act is vital to ensure sustainable development that preserves local environments and equilibria;

16. **Call on** the EU institutions to adapt their reflexion on the EU budget post 2027 in coherence with the ambition of the Atlantic area, especially when it comes to Cohesion Policy, Connected Europe Facility and Horizon Europe;
17. **Note** that the overall health of the Atlantic Area is also conditioned to the ambitions that States will demonstrate in current negotiations at international levels, in particular on the Global Plastic Treaty.

**The ideal governance to achieve a prosperous Atlantic Area by 2030**

I. **Working today on the Atlantic Maritime Strategy**

18. **Commit** all their efforts as a first step to exploit the potential offered by the Atlantic Maritime Strategy;

19. **Suggest** therefore the review, with the Atlantic Regions, of the composition of the pillar task forces of the Atlantic Strategy to make sure that the right institutions and stakeholders are involved to support the definition and implementation of the maritime flagship projects;

20. **Insist** that the composition of the pillar task forces should include Atlantic Regions and existing Atlantic civil society networks such as the Atlantic networks of Chambers of Commerce, Atlantic Cities, RTA-ATN and other European sectorial networks;

21. **Recommend** that “Pillar I” takes on the responsibility to implement the flagship project on developing the Atlantic value chain on innovative green vessels building;

22. **Add** that “Pillar III” takes on the responsibility to implement the flagship project on developing an Atlantic value chain on offshore renewable energies, in particular floating offshore wind and complementarities between Atlantic ports to support its development;

23. **Complement** that “Pillar IV” takes on the responsibility of the implementation of flagship project on the creation of coordinated response plans to coastal erosion, submersion and ocean pollution;

II. **Evolving towards an Atlantic Macro-Region to encompass territorial challenges**

24. **Reiterate**, while implementing the Atlantic Maritime Strategy, their commitment to prepare the evolution towards an Atlantic Macro-regional Strategy

25. **Support** to deepen and enlarge the scope of the current cooperation, so that, in addition to the maritime challenges of the Atlantic, the Macro-Region allows to jointly address the main territorial challenges and particularly the sea-land connection, and call on the Belgian presidency to include in the agendas of the Council preparatory groups such evolution;

26. **Encourage** the deepening of the priorities of the Atlantic Macro-Region approved in the Cardiff Declaration which where: (1) An innovative and sustainable Atlantic economy; (2) an interconnected Atlantic area; (3) An Atlantic area resilient to climate change; (4) Social and cultural cohesion in the Atlantic Area, by strengthening skills and training in the main sectors of smart specialisation; (5) improving the governance and cooperation in the Atlantic area. These priorities would integrate the existing Atlantic Maritime Strategy pillars:

   - “Pillar I” and “Pillar III” should be integrated in a broader pillar on “Innovation and sustainable Atlantic economy”;
   - “Pillar II” should be broadened towards priority 4 “a socially and culturally cohesive Atlantic area”;
   - And “Pillar IV” should be included in priority 3 “Atlantic area resilient to climate change and front-runner in achieving a zero-pollution environment”;

27. **Recall** the need to fully involve the Atlantic Regions so they participate directly and effectively in the design and implementation of the Atlantic Macro-region strategy;

28. **Propose** to involve the different administrations in the Atlantic Macro-Region Steering Committee and create a General Assembly that would gather high-level representatives of participating States and Regions, the European Commission and all interested parties the Atlantic civil society networks
representatives; **suggest** that both Atlantic States and Regions should have the possibility to hold the rotating presidency of the Macro-Region;

29. **Aim** to create detailed rules of procedure that would support the participation of the relevant stakeholders and the civil society organisations in the different governing bodies, so as to allow them to have a say about how to orient the future of the Strategy, decide on areas of cooperation to focus on, and appoint Priorities/Flagship projects’ coordinators;

30. **Put forward** the need to connect the governance of the future Macro-Region to the Atlantic Corridor Forum, to the network of Atlantic chambers of commerce, to the Atlantic network of Agriculture Chambers (AC3A), to the ATN (Atlantic Transnational Network) and to Atlantic Cities and explore the possible foundation of new Atlantic networks (Universities, clusters...);

31. **Suggest** the creation of an Atlantic Observatory to gather knowledge and develop tools for monitoring the socio-economic trends affecting the Atlantic area. The Atlantic Observatory would provide advice for the General Assembly to decide the future of this area. It may be supported by ESPON (European Spatial Planning Observation Network);

32. **Highlight** the need for the creation of a permanent Secretariat to advise the stakeholders, accompany them in the definition of new collaborations, ensure a proper implementation of priorities and the sustainability and growth of flagship projects;

33. **Request** therefore a bigger budget for INTERREG Atlantic Area programme post 2027 to support the upgraded ambitions to improve the governance of this territory. Consequently, it is appropriate that the current political objective "better INTERREG governance" should remain among those included in the post-2027 European Territorial Cooperation in order to finance projects or initiatives in this field and to support the implementation of an Atlantic macro-region.