

TOWARDS EU STRATEGY FOR THE ATLANTIC MACRO-REGION



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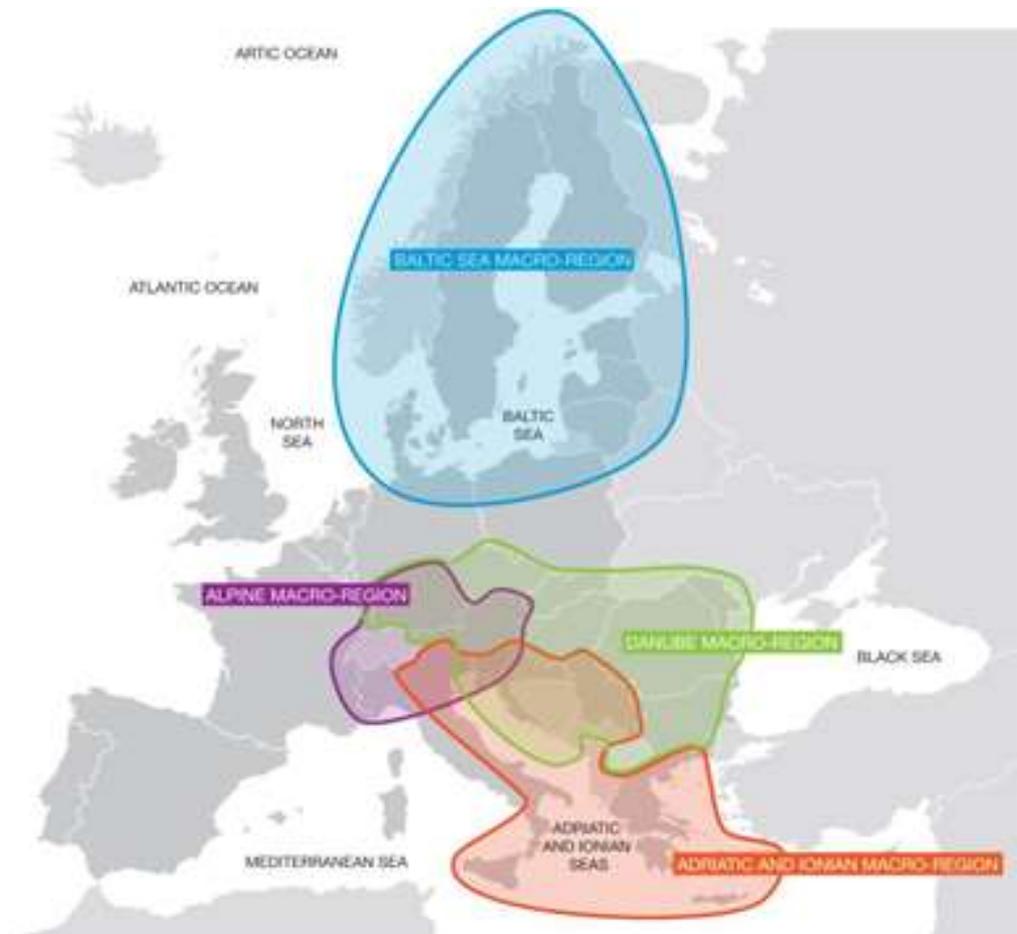
Delegate of the Basque Government to the EU

1. Background

- The General Affairs Council meeting (June 2010) approved a mandate to the Commission to **adopt an Atlantic Maritime Strategy**, which occurred in 2011.
- After a consultation of the 5 Member States with Atlantic coasts (Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Portugal), **an action plan was developed** (2013): 1,200 projects / Investment 6 Billion euros from the EU , EIB,MMS/Regions and Private sector
- Some **20 projects involving 320 international research teams**, including trans-Atlantic neighbours, have been implemented by 2018 thanks to the Galway statement and the Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance between the EU, the US and Canada.
- The success of the Galway Statement **led to cooperation in the South Atlantic**, particularly with Brazil and South Africa, which culminated in the **signing of the Belém Statement on Atlantic Research and Innovation Cooperation** in July 2017.

Map of current EU macrorregional strategies:

- MFF (2021-2027) negotiation: Majority of MMSS will be aligned with macrorregional strategies, Atlantic Area would be missing in the map.
- ECT Cooperacion Transnacional Component 2(2A transanional total ERDF Macrorregional / 2B Maritime (70%) with Macrorregion or Basin Strategy



2. Current Situation

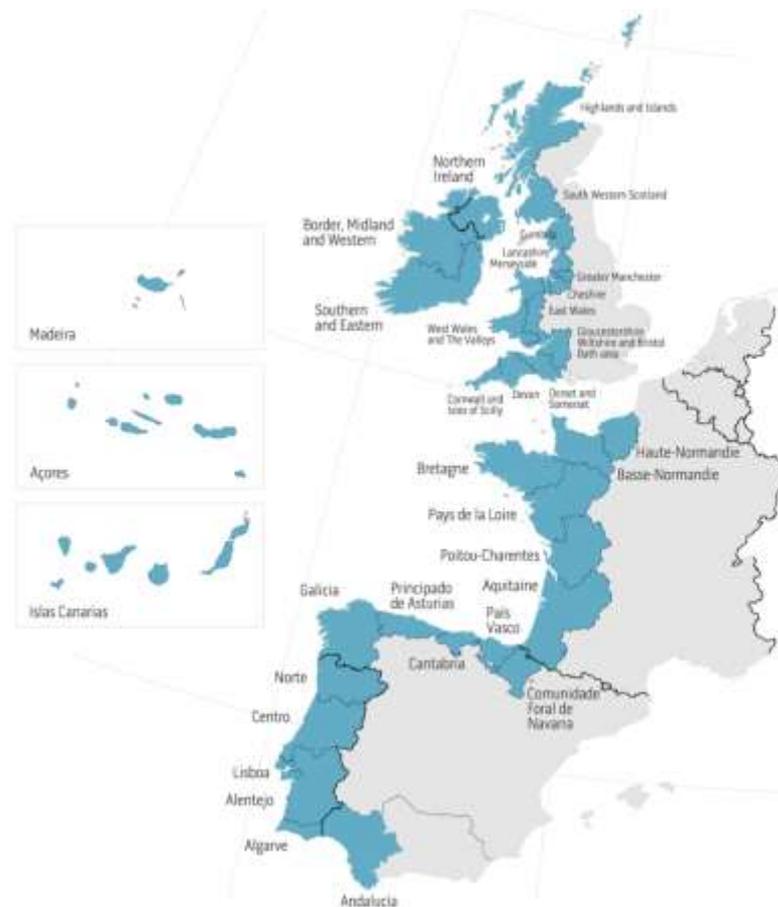
Key moment to relaunch the demand for an Atlantic Macrorregional Strategy:

- The **2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework**:
- **ETC Proposal Regulation**
- **Synergies and cooperation projects** (The council adopted a regulation to remove obstacle for synergies between funds (Invest EU funds and Seal of Excellence , and for projects of ETC will be exempted from EU state aid rules (16 November)
- **International dimension : Trade and Brexit** will inevitably affect the concept of the Atlantic Strategy and the future cooperation between Atlantic partners (Port Hubs,)

A macro-regional strategy should be endorsed by the European Parliament and European Council → **qualitative leap** as regards the **political momentum** given to the macro-regions in relation to maritime strategies.

→ Not Enough to add “...and the sea basin strategies” . Existing experience demonstrates that macro-regional strategies have added value because they strengthen cross-sectorial regional cooperation both within and outside the EU and the vision and the strategic decisions are taken at the highest political level by consensus. **A well structured multilevel governance is a must .**

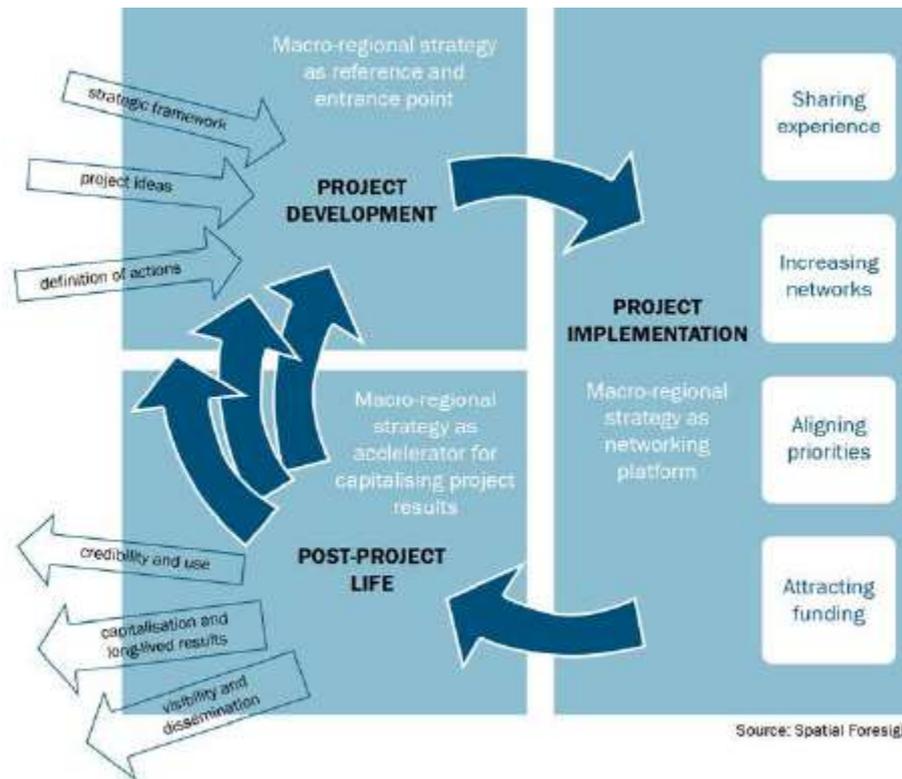
Figure 1 NUTS regions covered by the Interreg Atlantic Area programme



4. The arguments for an Atlantic macro-region

- The **sea & its peripheral territory status** define the Atlantic area → connections between the periphery and centres of political and economic power are essential for territorial structuring.
- Atlantic cooperation has an **international vocation** → The activity of the main Atlantic ports is proof that the Atlantic Seaboard can be seen as the gateway to Europe for many vessels, which unload their goods at our continent. This international dimension is further corroborated by the agreements reached with regions on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean and enshrined in the partnership statements (Galway, Belem).
- **Sea, Periphery and the International Dimension** underpin the definition of the geographical framework of the Atlantic area.

Implementation of the macrorregional strategies



4. The arguments for an Atlantic macro-region

- The ultimate goal of an EU Strategy for the Atlantic region should be **to drive the economic development of this peripheral zone**, thanks to greater territorial, social and economic cohesion.
 - The Atlantic Strategy should **focus on a limited number of sectors** with future development capacities, which offer a truly transnational dimension.
 - A priori, **the Sea is the basis for traditional and cutting-edge sectors** (fishing, marine energy, research, etc.)
 - The **Periphery** has the proverbial **handicap** of the poor accessibility and connectivity, etc.
 - **Marine energies(Wind, Wave and Tide)** have the potential to play a fundamental role in the future energy system, while they contribute to cutting carbon emissions. The sector must overcome technological, financing and marketing **barriers and challenges**, along with environmental and administrative issues.
 - Ensuring **investment** for demonstration and pilot projects continues to be one of the challenges.
 - The level of **available public support is not adequate**.
 - **Tax incentives are necessary , (Feed in tariffs)**
- A macro-regional strategy for the Atlantic region could foster the coordination necessary to drive a **single energy market** and the implementation of the incentives required to do so.

4. The arguments for an Atlantic macro-region

There are other sectors that require coordinated actions, including:

1. **Environmental preservation and climate change.**

- The Atlantic area has a wealth of ecosystems that require efficient implementation of sustainable development territorial strategies, along with coordinated management of the coastal zones.
- However, some industrial areas still need to be adapted towards environmentally-friendly and clean production.

2. **Accessibility and Transport.**

- The Atlantic area is afflicted by a radial organisation of the network with congestion points.
- However, there seems to be **opportunities in the development of the multimodality, “green” transport** that, also, contributes to job creation.
- Completion of the **TEN-T** projects that affect the north-south connections of the Atlantic Seaboard is priority.
- The efficiency of the logistic platforms needs to be improved by setting up a network of Atlantic Logistic Platforms.

4. The arguments for an Atlantic macro-region

3. **Research, Development and Innovation.**

- There are numerous excellence and technology centres along the Atlantic Arc. However, the disparities between some Atlantic regions may make it harder to achieve a good international positioning.
- The Competitiveness Hubs and Clusters shape a forward-looking view of the industrial sector by generating important value added and opportunities for important alliances and to compete internationally.

4. **Cities and cultural & social dimension.**

- The mobility of scientists and students, along with every type of professionals, along the Atlantic Arc, is a factor that must be driven and there therefore is an urgent need for an excellent communications network.

5. **Tourism.**

- The **tourist potential** and **cultural attractiveness** (due to its diversity) of the Atlantic Arc should be stressed, making it a European destination par excellence and guaranteeing journeys within the territory (and from outside the Atlantic area).
- Thematic and cultural routes, along with the guarantee of sustainable and quality services, would increase knowledge, exchange, generating a sense of belonging with clear economic repercussions.

General findings from the experience of macroregional strategies ¹¹

Positive results

- Focus on cross-regional common challenges build clarity in the focus of projects
- Different EU funding sources have been mobilised
- Easier programming
- New networking opportunities
- New partners engaged and mobilised
- Capacity built for EU-funded projects in thematic areas
- Capitalisation of project and programme results

Challenges

- More funding is needed
- Limited alignment national or regional funding and & MRS priorities in practice
- Implementation of programmes has not been enhanced by the macro regional strategies
- Dissemination to reach stakeholders beyond national authorities is a key success factor

5. Conclusions

- The mid-term review of the Atlantic Strategy and the current climate of crucial changes for the Atlantic Strategy (Brexit and 2021-2027 MFF negotiations) → **opportune time** for an in-depth reflection on the nature and areas of concentration (Ocean energies, skills , port hubs and blue economy), of the future cooperation for the European Atlantic Region.
- Cooperation in the Atlantic area must keep the **maritime dimension**, a cohabitation between a Sea Basin Strategy (**Competitive Intelligence hubs**) and a Macro-region (**strategic decision making process/ political governance**) could be possible (Baltic case) .
- Framing Atlantic cooperation in a macro-regional strategy of the EU means **raising the political commitment** of the Member States and their Regions (three States is enough) to **Atlantic cooperation**, along with underscoring its Visibility/ Ownership in the EU as Gateway to the Western Europe. (E.g. Ocean Energies)
- Regulation No. 1303-2013 regulating ESIF **distinguishes between sea basins and macro-regional strategies** as regards financing possibilities. The proposal Regulation for European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) for 2021-2027 also envisages “Increasing the coherence between the financing and priorities of the macro-regional strategies”.

6. Next steps

Further to what we adopted in Comillas, (see point 5 of the Declaration: “ ...*The Atlantic Arc Commission asks to explore the possibilities for moving towards a macro-regional strategy.*”), we propose:

- To set up a working group in the AAC : to gather evidences and to share information, to contact our **national authorities** in order to share this approach and obtain their support
- To prepare a **declaration by the CPMR** (Atlantic Arc Commission and Islands Commission) targeted to the Atlantic Member States **asking for a mandate**, during the Portuguese Presidency of the ASG in 2019 and to the **Council of general Affaires in January 2019 , for the Conclusions on Macrorregions**, to be given to the Commission to develop a Macrorregional Strategy for the Atlantic Region
- To share the results of the study commissioned by the Basque Government and other regions , Commission , etc
 - Opportunities, needs and gaps
 - Potential synergies between the smart specialisation strategies (RIS3) of the Atlantic partners
 - Governance Model
 - Opportunities for international cooperation with third parties
- To organise a meeting on the Atlantic Strategy of the AAC in mid January 2019 with **European Commission and the European Parliament and the PERM REP of the 5 Atlantic MMSS**