The CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission will be celebrating its 2024 General Assembly in Sines, Portugal, on 9 and 10 April. This meeting of strategic importance is the occasion to gather elected officials to celebrate the Atlantic unity and pave the way towards an even more cohesive and attractive territory.

About the CPMR

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) brings together 150 Regions from 24 States from the European Union and beyond. Representing about 200 million people, the CPMR campaigns in favour of a more balanced development of the European territory. It operates both as a think tank and as a lobby for Regions.

Through its extensive network of contacts within the EU institutions and national governments the CPMR has, since its creation in 1973, been targeting its action towards ensuring that the needs and interests of its Member Regions are taken into account in policies with a high territorial impact.

The CPMR currently focuses its work around six policy areas of major interest to its membership: Cohesion policy, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Transport, Climate, Energy and Migration policies. It produces policy positions based on input from its Member Regions in these areas, as well as various studies, analyses and technical papers to support them.

About the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission

The Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC) is one of the six Geographical Commissions of the CPMR, gathering Regions around the Atlantic Sea basin, from the south of Spain to Ireland. It also includes non-EU Members such as Wales, which is an historical Member of the CPMR, and Québec who recently joined the AAC as an Associated Member. The CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission ensures that common interests among Atlantic Regions are represented and promoted at EU level, focusing on major common challenges such as the deployment of marine renewable energies, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, ocean pollution, innovation, transport, transatlantic cooperation, tourism and culture, creating synergies in the area. By promoting the regional interests to EU bodies and Member States, the Atlantic Arc Commission has asserted itself as a leader in a wide-ranging initiative aimed at promoting the sustainable development of the Atlantic territory.
The presidency of the Atlantic Arc Commission is currently held by Íñigo Urkullu Renteria, President of the Basque Government (Spain) and the First Vice-Presidency by Maria Teresa Mourão de Almeida, President of the CCDR de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo (Portugal).

CCDR Alentejo I.P. in the Atlantic Arc Commission

CCDR Alentejo I.P. has been a member of the CPMR since 1982 and Member of the Atlantic Arc Commission since 1989. Alentejo takes part in the various Working Groups of the Atlantic Arc Commission, notably contributing to cooperation on innovation, blue economy and tourism development aspects. Through its policies on blue economy and tourism development, CCDR Alentejo I.P. has promoted EU cooperation through the participation of regional stakeholders to various projects and initiatives at cross-border and transnational level.

Common Assets and Challenges

The Atlantic Regions share an attractive coastline that is the guardian of a high quality of life, offering numerous opportunities to various high-potential sectors to develop such as marine energies, maritime transport and shipbuilding, and seafood productions. Yet, it faces the challenges of a fragile biodiversity and various social and economic challenges. If the peripheral situation of the Atlantic Regions is a vector for a strong identity and anchor for cultural heritage, it is also a major issue in terms of spatial planning and economic development.

Observing a shift of focus towards the Eastern part of Europe, the Atlantic Regions have gathered forces to strengthen cohesion in the area and promote its interests at national and European levels, to ensure that the Atlantic is not relegated to the second plan in European priorities of development.

The CPMR and its Atlantic Arc Commission therefore believe that such challenges are better tackled by cooperating together, creating synergies and reducing overlaps, and thus speaking with a strong joint voice. Indeed, problems related to accessibility, climate change, energy or maritime safety go beyond the scope of regional and national borders and justify trans-national cooperation.

To achieve these objectives, the Atlantic Arc Commission ensures a dynamic framework of cooperation through the establishment of active Working Groups. Further aiming at developing synergies between various levels of representation, the Atlantic Arc Commission is an Associated Member of the Atlantic Strategy. The AAC has been leading an important political campaign to explore the benefit of evolving from an Atlantic Sea-Basin Strategy to an Atlantic Macro-Region, to allow a more structured cooperation on Atlantic in-land challenges. An Atlantic Macro-Regional Strategyy could also allow a stronger multi-level governance associating further local stakeholders, regional and national authorities to efficiently tackle Atlantic challenges. Finally, through the participation to projects on the reduction of marine litter, on transatlantic cooperation and on maritime transport decarbonisation, the AAC ensures close partnerships with Atlantic stakeholders.

The event in brief

What? General Assembly meeting of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission
When? Tuesday 9 April and Wednesday 10 April 2024
Where? Sines Sea View – Sines (Portugal)
Programme on Tuesday 9 April 2024 includes:

Opening Session with:

- **Nuno Mascarenhas**, President of the Câmara Municipal de Sines
- **António Ceia da Silva**, Presidente da CCDR Alentejo I.P.
- **Commissioner Elisa Ferreira**, European Commission (Video message)
- **María Ángeles Elorza Zubiría**, Secretary General for the EU & External Actions, Basque Government – Presidency of the Atlantic Arc Commission

Thematic Sessions on:

- Statutory issues
- The establishment of an Atlantic Macro-Regional Strategy – What way forward?
- Decarbonisation of the Atlantic fleet: opportunities, challenges and ways forward

Programme on Wednesday 10 April 2024 includes:

Thematic Sessions on:

- Co-creating the vision for an Atlantic innovation valley
- Voting of the Political Declaration
- Internal issues of the AAC

Check the full agenda here: [Programme – Atlantic Arc Commission 2024 General Assembly – Sines, Portugal](#)

Political Declaration 2024

The 2024 Political Declaration will be submitted to vote to all members of the Atlantic Arc Commission during the General Assembly of Sines. This year’s declaration underlines the need to face, more than ever, Atlantic challenges despite a geopolitical context oriented towards the East. Calling for a sustainable development of the Atlantic by 2030, Member Regions reaffirm their will to strengthen cooperation for a more innovative, resilient and socially cohesive Atlantic Area. Regions call upon the Atlantic States and EU institutions to adopt ambitious legislations and to allow funding instruments to support the completion of the Atlantic transport network, the sustainable growth and the strong Atlantic partnerships necessary to address these complex issues.

In order to achieve these objectives, Regions put a strong emphasis on the need for Atlantic States and EU Institutions to support the establishment of an Atlantic Macro-Region, highlighting its added-value of further connecting stakeholders, and aligning fundings for a more unite Atlantic area.

*An copy of the draft declaration can be shared upon request, and the final declaration will be published after adoption.*
The previous Cardiff Declaration, recalling the need to work on an Atlantic Macro-Region and strengthening Atlantic cooperation on a wide range of topics, adopted in May 2023, can be consulted here: Atlantic Arc Commission Cardiff Declaration – May 2023

The Thematic Sessions in Brief

Session 2 – The establishment of a EU macroregional strategy for the Atlantic - What way forward?

Since 2018, the AAC has promoted the creation of an Atlantic Macro-Region in a context where European attention has shifted to the East, with a high risk for the Atlantic area to be relegated at the second plan of EU priorities of development. In 2023, the AAC voted the Cardiff Declaration sketching the contours of the Atlantic Macro-Region possible priorities:

1) An innovative and sustainable Atlantic Economy
2) An inter-connected Atlantic Area
3) An Atlantic Area resilient to climate change and pollution
4) A socially and culturally cohesive area
5) Better governance and cooperation in the Atlantic Area

Following an important mobilization of the AAC, the Atlantic Macro-Region was brought as a point of information in the agenda of the General Affairs Council of 12 December 2024. According to the Spanish Presidency, interested Atlantic Member States agreed to explore the set-up of an Atlantic Macro-Region during the Belgian Presidency which started in January 2024. Based on this result, Regions have continued to promote the Atlantic Macro-Region to their national governments and the new Belgian Presidency of the Council.

After defining the priorities that this new framework of cooperation could encompass, the AAC Regions will use this session to further define the multi-level governance model that could be put in place to deliver on these priorities. They will also discuss further actions to carry out towards the Atlantic National government to support the work of the Council towards the development of a mandate of the European Commission on the Atlantic Macro-Region.

Session 3: Greening the Atlantic fleet: opportunities, challenges and ways forward

The Atlantic Regions have been developing interesting initiatives for the decarbonisation of the fleet. Taking stock of the recent EU initiatives on the energy transition of the EU fleet (ETS Maritime, Fit for 55, upcoming Energy Transition roadmap for the fisheries sector), the Atlantic Regions will share best practices on greening the fleet, sharing bottlenecks, solutions found and opportunities to join forces in this endeavour. They will also identify common political messages to convey to the European Institutions to accelerate efforts in the decarbonisation of the Atlantic fleet. These messages will cover all types of fleets (maritime transport, nautical tourism, fishing fleet) and current debates around a comprehensive EU strategy for ports and the energy transition of the EU fishing fleet. MEP João Pimenta Lopes, Member of the European Parliament, as shadow-rapporteur on the report “a comprehensive EU ports strategy” will be there to connect discussions with current EU debates on ports development with Member regions.
Session 4: Co-creating the vision of an Atlantic innovation valley

Building on the EU agenda that has developed new funding programmes to boost regional innovations, and the local experiences of various stakeholders in the Atlantic, the AAC Regions will discuss the opportunity to define an ambitious Atlantic Innovation Valley connecting innovative agents together for the development of value chains, sources of non-relocatable jobs in the Atlantic area. Atlantic Regions will discuss opportunities to increase regional coordination and collaboration to scale up strategic projects and support long-term innovation development in the Atlantic Arc, and will engage in a dialogue with the European Commission (DG Research) on future funding opportunities to accelerate innovation performance of AAC Members for ultimately fostering cohesion and competitiveness.

Contact

Elise Wattrelot, Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission
elise.wattrelot@crpm.org