



28th General Assembly
of the Atlantic Arc Commission

Final Declaration Pamplona 2016

2 & 3 June 2016 - Pamplona (Navarra-Spain)

The Atlantic Arc Commission's messages to European decision-makers

The aim of this Final Declaration is to send out the proposals of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission to European decision-makers in preparation for the review of the Multiannual Financial Framework, due to take place in the Autumn of 2016. More broadly, it aims to strengthen the synergies between EU and regional policies, in order to increase their impact on the Atlantic territories. These messages will form the basis of the activities carried out by the Atlantic Arc Commission in its different working groups.

The members of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, meeting in General Assembly in Pamplona (Navarre) on 2 & 3 June 2016, wish to convey the following political messages:

MARINE RENEWABLE ENERGIES

The development of marine renewable energies (including fixed or floating offshore wind farms) along the European Atlantic seaboard is a priority for the Atlantic Arc Commission. Throughout the year, discussions take place between elected representatives, technicians and other stakeholders in the sector in the framework of the Atlantic Arc Commission's "Marine Renewable Energies" working group. It is in this spirit of consultation and dialogue that the Atlantic Arc Commission wishes to convey the following messages. In the area of marine renewable energies, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

1. **Welcomes** the EU's efforts to encourage the deployment of marine renewable energies in Europe. These efforts are clearly reinforced by the Atlantic Regions which support the expansion of this alternative and low-carbon source of energy in their territories. Marine renewable energies are crucial if we are to meet the ambitious targets set for reduced carbon emissions. They also have a key role in stimulating diversification and innovation in the maritime industries, in order to create sustainable growth and jobs in the Atlantic Regions. Their development and installation must be compatible at all times with existing activities, particularly fisheries, shellfish farming and aquaculture.
2. **Emphasises** the importance of supporting innovation throughout the entire value chain and for the different types of energy (wind power, marine currents, tidal, wave energy, ocean thermal energy, salinity gradients, etc.). Only strong EU support for research, training and industrial development will enable the Atlantic Arc to become a global leader in the development of marine renewable energies. At the regional level, this necessity for investment in the marine renewable energies value chain is reflected in the Regions' Smart Specialisation Strategies. The Atlantic Arc Commission will help to coordinate strategies and investments at the Atlantic sea basin's level.

3. **Asks** for clarification of the State aid system, so that the expansion of the marine renewable energies sector can be better organised. The Atlantic Arc Commission asks that the regulations on State aids do not hinder the development of marine renewable energy projects. In this context, we call for the future marine renewable energies investment platform, under the Juncker Plan, to provide a clear and harmonised legal framework so as to facilitate Atlantic firms' access to funding.
4. **Suggests** that the European Union could provide specific funding (funds arising from support for Integrated Maritime Policy from the EMFF or other) to facilitate and support the de-risking process which is necessary for the installation of marine renewable energy projects. Identifying best practices in terms of administrative procedures (to obtain permits), environmental impact and social acceptance along the entire Atlantic seaboard, would provide the Regions with a simplified framework, to both make it easier for them to attract investors and to allow their players to position themselves beyond their national market alone. In addition, transnational projects like this would be a means of implementing the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive, while also taking into account environmental risks as required by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

ATLANTIC STRATEGY

The Atlantic Arc Commission has been closely involved in the preparation of the Atlantic Strategy and the drafting of the related Action Plan. Thanks to its “Atlantic Strategy” working group, the Atlantic Arc Commission has been able to forward many proposals to the institutions; notably to the Commission (DG Mare and DG Regio), as well as to the five Atlantic Member States. With regard to the development of the Atlantic Strategy, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

5. **Welcomes** the efforts made by the five Atlantic Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission to ensure the allocation of a specific budget for the implementation of the Atlantic Action Plan in the 2017-2018 work programme of the EMFF. However, the draft budget of € 1 million currently under discussion appears to us to be very small with regard to the structural actions needed for the Atlantic area. The Atlantic Arc Commission therefore calls on the Member States and the European Institutions to pursue their efforts to obtain increased funding that will enable the Atlantic Strategy to become a reality.
6. **Asks** for the introduction of a “bonus”, in the different EU funds, for projects which specifically target the priorities of the Atlantic Action Plan. This bonus could take the form of a co-funding rate 5% higher than that for other projects. This bonus would facilitate and speed up the implementation of the Action Plan by offering a financial incentive to projects seeking to convert the priorities of the Atlantic Action Plan into operational projects in the regions.
7. **Reaffirms** the importance of a genuinely open and multilevel governance of the Atlantic Strategy. The advantage of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy is that it can align the policy priorities of the different levels of governance (European Union, Member States, Regions, towns and cities). It is therefore essential that the Regions are fully and visibly involved in the governance of this Strategy. We ask that the Region holding the presidency of the Atlantic Arc Commission, in coordination with all Member Regions, be invited to attend the high level meetings of the Atlantic Strategy.
8. **Voices its relief** at the launch of the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme and the publication of its first calls for projects on 26 April 2016. The Atlantic Arc Commission nevertheless deeply regrets the delay of more than two years in the start of this programme, which jeopardizes the full implementation of its budget. We call therefore on all the relevant authorities to provide strong political support to ensure the smooth progress of the programme between now and 2020. The Atlantic Arc Commission will make every effort to mobilise its Members with regard to this programme.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Atlantic Arc Commission keeps a close watch on developments in EU Transport Policy and the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) affecting the Atlantic area. This policy has a very strong territorial impact and a balance must be ensured in order that all the Regions benefit. In this context, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

9. **Calls for** a truly Atlantic Corridor, covering the five Atlantic Member States (Portugal, Spain, France, United Kingdom and Ireland), in order to improve the connectivity between the Atlantic territories themselves as well as between these territories and the rest of Europe. The current Atlantic Corridor needs to be modified accordingly, on the occasion of the next review of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) corridors. In order to enhance the competitiveness of all the Atlantic territories, there is a need for a complementary Motorways of the Sea network linking the Atlantic ports, including those of the comprehensive network.
10. **Asks** that the completion of the already-identified sections (especially the cross-border ones) of the Corridors goes hand in hand with a better recognition of projects situated in Regions which are not on the Corridors. These projects linking peripheral regions to the Corridors help to improve competitiveness for all the Regions of the Atlantic seaboard. In the framework of the next CEF Calls, special attention should be paid to projects located within the Regions of the Atlantic Arc in order to foster a balanced coverage of the European territory.
11. **Welcomes** the efforts of the EU bodies to establish a dialogue with the Atlantic Regions, notably by allowing them to take part in the Corridor Forums. The Atlantic Arc Commission would like to take advantage of this constructive opportunity to put forward proposals to improve the existing routes, on the basis of studies which identify the needs of the economic stakeholders of the Atlantic Arc Commission Regions.

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Issues relating to fisheries and aquaculture are of prime importance for all the Atlantic Arc Regions. In a sector undergoing far-reaching changes, EU regulations are often very negatively perceived by those working in the sector. There needs to be more dialogue and greater consistency between the EU regulations and regional policies in support of this sector. To achieve this, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

12. **Echoes** the concerns expressed by the sector regarding the landing obligation. The lack of data and the delay in approving the operational programmes for the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) risk making certain segments of the sector vulnerable. The Atlantic Arc Commission asks the European Commission to start a dialogue without delay with the Regions, Member States and fishers, in order to identify effective solutions aimed at limiting the social and economic impacts of the landing obligation. In doing so, this dialogue will need to have an impact on existing quota allocations, on the correct implementation of this regulation and on the need to readapt to the realities of fishing practices.
13. **Repeats** that the Regions must have a key and officially recognised role in the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The Atlantic Arc Commission asks that the Regions be full members of the different existing Advisory Councils. This would help to reinforce the link and the consistency between EU and regional policies. The Atlantic Arc Commission offers a multi-regional platform which is ideal for facilitating discussions on the implementation of current and future management plans.
14. **Congratulates** the European Commission on the launch of the “Blue Career” initiative which is part of the continuation of the European pilot project “Vasco da Gama” led by the CPMR for the implementation of a maritime Erasmus. The Atlantic Arc Commission emphasises the significant efforts that are required to make training in the fisheries and aquaculture sector (including fish farming, seaweed farming and shellfish farming) more innovative so as to address

the technological and environmental challenges which are increasingly important in these sectors. Exchanges of best practice between those involved in training for these professions and the private sector concerned need to be encouraged over the long term and by an increased European funding.

15. **Urges** the European Commission to take better consideration of the difficulties linked to taking over fisheries, shellfish farming and aquaculture activities, due to their poor economic profitability and difficult working conditions. The Atlantic Arc Commission invites the European Commission to adopt measures making training a key element of the generational handover to encourage the development of professional careers in the fisheries, shellfish farming and aquaculture sectors.

INNOVATION AND BLUE ECONOMY

The Atlantic Arc Commission pays particular attention to the issues of innovation and competitiveness in the context of its “Innovation” working group. Whether it is concerned with technology or the territories, innovation has an impact on all the sectors of the blue economy (marine renewable energies, ship-building, maritime and coastal tourism, recreational water sports, maritime transport, marine research and training) and on all the Atlantic Regions. For these reasons, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

16. **Is surprised** at the small budget allocated to the EMFF’s three Blue Growth calls for proposals (€ 7.5 million in 2016 for the “Blue Careers”, “Blue Labs” and “Blue technology” calls for proposals)¹. Given that innovation is a key priority in the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan, we call for a significant increase in this budget in the future. In comparison, the Horizon 2020 Programme’s Blue Growth call for proposals in 2015 on Atlantic research was allocated a budget of € 20 million².
17. **Calls for** strengthened EU support for innovation and efficiency in energy resources. Such support is more necessary than ever in the Atlantic regions in order to tackle the problem of job losses attributed to the high cost of energy and competition from products manufactured in third countries with lower production costs (especially in traditional sectors such as steel-making).
18. **Asks** for the implementation of an integrated maritime industrial strategy to enable funding to be concentrated on research, innovation and training in the maritime sectors. The EU should put the appropriate tools in place to enable the maritime industries to pursue their strategy of differentiation and diversification and allow Europe, especially the Atlantic sea basin, to become a leading player in the global maritime economy.

Approved unanimously by the Atlantic Arc Commission

¹ “EMFF Blue Growth” call for proposals: https://ec.europa.eu/easme/sites/easme-site/files/emff_calls_final_web.pdf

² [BG-01-2015](#) call for proposals: “Improving the preservation and sustainable exploitation of Atlantic marine ecosystems”