



Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly

2/3 June 2016 – Pamplona (Navarra, ES)

MINUTES

OPENING SESSION

Juan José Sota Verdi3n, Regional Minister for Economy, Finance and Employment, Government of Cantabria and President of the Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC), announced the opening of the Atlantic Arc Commission 2016 General Assembly. He thanked Navarra for organising this event which marks the end of the Cantabrian Presidency of this Commission.

Ana Ollo, spokesperson of the Government of Navarra, thanked all participants for their presence. She reminded participants that despite its small size and small population, Navarra is a dynamic region that is doing well from an economic point of view, relying primarily on research and innovation. She concluded by saying that interregional cooperation is crucial for the consolidation of economic and social development in the Atlantic territories.

Pablo Azcona, President of the Federation of Municipalities and Councils, Navarra, thanked the Atlantic Arc Commission for inviting him. In Navarra, the municipalities are aware of the need to join forces and unite their voices to tackle common challenges. He encouraged the Atlantic Arc Commission to continue its collaborative efforts and its work to identify European opportunities within the territories.

Eleni Marianou, CPMR Secretary General, stressed the unique character of the CPMR, the only association representing the realities of the territories on a decentralised basis. She referred mainly to the next key steps in the European calendar: the mid-term review of the EU's multi-annual financial framework (end of 2016), the reform of the EU budget after 2020, and the 7th Cohesion Report (summer 2017).

Juan José Sota Verdi3n reminded participants that Cantabria has reached the end of its 4-year mandate at the head of the Atlantic Arc Commission. This Presidency mainly focused on the adoption of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy and its action plan. The Atlantic Arc Commission has played a decisive role in this. The Cantabrian Presidency also stressed the impetus of the working groups, which are now more focused on project development. New working groups, in line with priorities identified by the Regions, have also been created or reactivated, including the Innovation and Atlantic Tourism and Culture Working Groups. Finally, **Juan José Sota Verdi3n** congratulated Bruno Retailleau, elected by the Political Bureau as the new President of the Atlantic Arc Commission. He felt proud and honoured to have held the Presidency of the Atlantic Arc Commission and to have been able to fly the flag for the Atlantic territories.

Presentation of the new Region chairing the Atlantic Arc Commission for 2016-2018

Juan José Sota Verdi3n officially announced that the Political Bureau had elected Bruno Retailleau, President of the Region Pays de la Loire, as President of the Atlantic Arc Commission.

Pauline Caumont, Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission, announced the [Political Bureau's new composition for 2016-2018](#):

- **Spain**: Galicia, Cantabria and Basque Country
- **France**: Brittany, Normandy and Nouvelle Aquitaine (formerly Aquitaine Limousin Poitou-Charentes);
- **Ireland**: Northern and Western Regional Assembly;
- **Portugal**: CCDR Alentejo, CCDR Lisboa e Vale do Tejo and CCDR Norte
- **United Kingdom**: Argyll and Bute

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KEYNOTE SPEECH BY THE NEW PRESIDENT AND PRESENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2016-2018

Bruno Retailleau, President of the Region Pays de la Loire and President of the Atlantic Arc Commission, thanked the participants and Navarra for its hospitality. He paid tribute to the work carried out by Cantabria in recent years and introduced the [work programme proposed by the Pays de la Loire](#) as part of his candidacy for President of the Atlantic Arc Commission. He reminded participants that the Atlantic Arc Commission was created in 1989 by Olivier Guichard, then President of the Pays de la Loire, who became the first President of the Atlantic Arc Commission. **Bruno Retailleau** then introduced the four areas of work for the next two years:

➤ **Increase lobbying efforts**

The Atlantic Arc Commission should intensify efforts to ensure the voice of the regions is heard at this crucial time when fiscal policy and cohesion policy are being renegotiated. The Atlantic Arc Commission must fight to ensure the Atlantic maritime strategy is not overlooked.

➤ **Speed up the implementation of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy**

The instruments available to finance the Atlantic Strategy's Action Plan (Interreg Atlantic Area, EMFF) must be strengthened to give shape to the strategy and help achieve concrete results. The effects of the Juncker Plan - launched in November 2014 - are yet to materialise. The Atlantic Arc Commission should support the idea of setting up a 5% co-financing bonus awarded to projects that fall directly within the scope of the strategy.

➤ **Develop projects within the framework of the Working Groups**

The six Atlantic Arc Commission Working Groups should develop specific projects in order to give more visibility to the Atlantic Arc Commission. The Atlantic Arc Commission must also explore the possibility of developing an Atlantic-wide maritime Erasmus to meet the objectives of the Strategy.

➤ **Improve the accessibility of the Atlantic territories**

The Atlantic Arc Commission must continue to make efforts to improve the corridors that cross the Atlantic territories. Accessibility has a direct impact on the attractiveness of the territories. The Atlantic Arc Commission must now work to improve the routes in light of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) review.

Bruno Retailleau also made the point that the challenges of the XXI century and the development of new sectors should not lead to the sacrifice of traditional activities such as fishing, which must also be supported. The zero discards policy could have adverse consequences from an economic and environmental perspective. The Region of Pays de la Loire will fight for fishing quotas to be managed on a multi-annual basis.

Bruno Retailleau then introduced **Christophe Prioux** and **Sébastien Pilard**, elected representatives of the Region Pays de la Loire, who have been given mandates to monitor issues relating to fisheries and blue growth respectively.

He put the minutes of the Atlantic Arc Commission's previous statutory meeting, held in Florence in November 2015, and the agenda of this General Assembly, to the vote. Both documents were approved unanimously.

Finally, he thanked **Pauline Caumont** for the work carried out by the Executive Secretariat and introduced the next session.

SESSION 1 – ACTIVITY REPORT AND OUTLOOK FOR THE ATLANTIC ARC COMMISSION

Pauline Caumont thanked the President for his encouragement and confirmed the Executive Secretariat's commitment to the Member Regions. She introduced the Report on the Atlantic Arc Commission's activities since the General Assembly in Bilbao in March 2015. The [Activity Report](#) was sent to Members prior to the General Assembly. It is structured around 4 areas of work:

1. Mobilisation on the Atlantic Maritime Strategy;
2. Activities of the working groups;
3. Participation in European projects;
4. Activities and initiatives beyond the working groups.

Pauline Caumont stressed the importance of communication activities. She reminded participants that the Atlantic Arc Commission website is the most visited site of all the CPMR Geographical Commissions. The Atlantic Arc Commission Twitter account (@Atlantic_Arc) is becoming more popular. Furthermore,

the CPMR and the Atlantic Arc Commission will soon have new websites (launch expected in the second half of 2016). She also questioned the follow-up to environmental and coastal protection issues which are not dealt with by any working group and invited members to consider this.

⇒ See the [PowerPoint presentation](#) on the Activity Report.

Bruno Retailleau reacted to the issue of the environment and coastal protection and emphasised that the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) was not activated during the various disasters that have occurred (storm Xynthia, 2014 storms along the Atlantic coast), having failed to reach the required minimum threshold set at national level. In the [2015 Final Declaration](#), the Atlantic Arc Commission already called for the activation of the EUSF at multi-regional level. **Bruno Retailleau** stated that the CPMR should take action to change the EUSF activation criteria.

Budget issues:

Pauline Caumont reminded participants that the financial papers were sent to members before the General Assembly. During the Political Bureau meeting, membership fees were not increased. She announced that the final budget for the year 2015 will be adopted during the CPMR Political Bureau in Kotka in June 2016. Concerning the 2016 financial year, the membership fee is fixed at €5,297 per Member Region, and it will remain the same in 2017.

Eleni Marianou took the floor to underline that the Atlantic Arc Commission lacks British and Irish members, and she invited Members to encourage non-Member Regions to join the network in order to strengthen the Atlantic Arc Commission.

Laurence Harribey (Aquitaine-Limousin-Poitou-Charentes) asked what significance the Atlantic Arc Commission represents in terms of expenditure, particularly with regard to European projects.

Eleni Marianou replied that projects represent 10% of the CPMR's activities. The CPMR's activities focus primarily on defending the interests of Members and political positioning.

SESSION 2 –ATLANTIC ARC COMMISSION WORKING GROUPS – STATE OF PLAY AND PROSPECTS

Bruno Retailleau introduced the session by stressing the strategic role played by the working groups within the Atlantic Arc Commission.

➤ *Innovation Working Group (Aquitaine-Limousin-Poitou-Charentes)*

Laurence Harribey reminded participants that the activities of this group were re-launched during the General Assembly in Bilbao in 2015. A [roadmap](#) was adopted, with 4 key sectors: biological resources and biotechnology; boats of the future; coastal planning, monitoring and security; and marine mineral resources. Biological resources and biotechnology have been identified as a priority sector for this group, with the development of a European project as a deliverable. The working group was actively involved in the submission of a project in response to the EMFF Call for Proposals “Blue Careers”.

➤ *Transport Working Group (Cantabria)*

Inmaculada Valencia Bayón reminded participants that Cantabria took over as Chair of this group in 2015. Cantabria has ensured that the Atlantic Arc Commission has been represented in the various fora of the Atlantic Corridor. She then referred to the [analysis](#) of the results of the 2014 “Connecting Europe Facility” Calls, which show that many projects of interest have not been funded for budgetary reasons. She announced that the Atlantic Arc Commission would develop a short-term alternative map for the revision of the routes in 2023.

➤ *Marine Renewable Energies Working Group (Brittany)*

Claire le Tertre apologised for the absence of Jean-Michel Lopez, Director in charge of marine renewable energy in Brittany, who was participating in the exhibition on marine energy in Biarritz at the same time. The group has been chaired by Brittany since 2013. In order to highlight the potential of the Atlantic territories, the group developed an [interactive map](#) identifying the projects developed in the Member Regions. In 2016, three issues were addressed: the clarification of the state aid system; de-risking the planning process and spatial planning.

➤ *Atlantic Tourism and Culture Working Group (Asturias)*

María del Mar Martínez Salmerón reminded participants that the latest meeting of the group took place in September 2015 in Brussels. This meeting aimed to explore the various funding opportunities available. She mentioned the meeting held as a side event of the General Assembly that same morning in Pamplona, during which participants were able to move forward on future guidelines of the group.

➤ *Fisheries and Aquaculture Working Group (Pays de la Loire)*

Christophe Priou reminded participants that the group was created in 1994 at the initiative of Galicia. The Region of Pays de la Loire intends to rely on the expertise of Giuseppe Sciacca, CPMR fisheries advisor. Three priorities were defined by the Region: the implementation of the EMFF; the preparation of the next Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) post-2020 and interregional cooperation. **Christophe Priou** also stressed the need to collaborate closely with other stakeholders (including AGLIA) and establish networking between the Atlantic education and training institutes of the sector. The landing obligation is one of the priority issues that the group should address.

➤ *Atlantic Strategy Working Group (Executive Secretariat)*

Pauline Caumont reiterated that this is a cross-cutting group that develops according to the current European agenda. The group was reactivated in 2014 at the request of Cantabria in order to monitor programmes in support of the strategy (Interreg, [European Fund for Strategic Investment](#), EMFF, etc.). The group now meets frequently (there have been 5 meetings since the General Assembly in 2015), and ensures that all information concerning the Atlantic Strategy is efficiently transferred.

Bruno Retailleau suggested that regional representatives meet to provide an update of the projects developed or to be developed within the different groups.

Claire le Tertre (Brittany) expressed her concern about the possible effects of delays in the Interreg Atlantic Area programme and reminded participants that the submission of applications is now a two-phase process. Projects will only be able to start in spring 2017, and the first funding will not be transferred before the end of 2017.

Eleni Marianou replied that it is possible to negotiate with DG REGIO to prevent those involved being penalized.

Bruno Retailleau stated that he plans to meet with Commissioner Corina Crețu, and will share his concerns about the Interreg Atlantic Area programme with her.

Pauline Caumont stressed the need to obtain support from the Member States in order to facilitate the work of the programme and speed up the process.

Federico Cardona Pons, Representative of Focal Point Spain Support Team of the Atlantic Action Plan, reiterated the close cooperation that exists between the mechanism and the Atlantic Arc Commission. He reminded participants that Xosé Lago García (Galicia) will represent the Atlantic Arc Commission in the third workshop "Somos Atlánticos" in Vigo on 9 June 2016. He also mentioned that it is possible to present ideas of workshops for the Atlantic Stakeholder Conference, which will be held in Dublin, on 27 September 2016.

Bruno Retailleau thanked the participants and closed the first day of the General Assembly.

SESSION 3 – PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ATLANTIC STRATEGY

Pauline Caumont introduced the speakers. She reminded participants that the Action Plan was adopted in 2013 and it is necessary to review progress in 2016.

Belén Núñez-Lagos Bau, Spanish representative of the Atlantic Strategy institutional group presented the Spanish perspective in the Atlantic Strategy and the Ministry's role in this programme. She stated that the Strategy has been boosted by the Council and the five Atlantic Member States and highlighted the work of the Ministry in the implementation of the programme. She mentioned the participation in the Atlantic Strategy Group and the role of the assistance mechanism in the coordination between ministries and in aligning funds.

Andrea Mairate, for DG REGIO, European Commission, discussed the role of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) in the implementation of the Atlantic Strategy. He also stressed the contribution that is needed from the Member States in order to increase budgets. He highlighted the existence of a flexibility clause that helps to involve partners outside the programme area (up to 20% of the programme's budget). He informed participants of the future publication of a paper (at the end of 2016) for a review of cooperation policy. The three strands will be maintained, but the idea of better integrating macro-regional strategies with the concept of functional space could be raised.

Justine Jury, for DG MARE, European Commission, introduced a new budget in the DG MARE work programme for the Atlantic action plan. In her [presentation](#), she reminded participants of the process undertaken and the priorities of the action plan. With regard to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), only 10% is managed directly by the Commission, which represents 6 billion Euros. A work programme is published annually. 9% of this budget is dedicated to blue growth.

Inma Valencia Bayón, Government of Cantabria, explained the regional perspective in the Atlantic strategy. She explained how the Atlantic Regions, in 2009, adopted a declaration for "A strategic Atlantic framework"

ahead of the Spanish EU Presidency in the first six months of 2010. She mentioned the European Council in June 2010 and the mandate given to the Commission to adopt an Atlantic strategy. The Atlantic Strategy was the first Maritime Strategy, led by DG MARE. The Atlantic Arc Commission has been an indispensable reference for DG MARE, notably through its active participation in the 5 Fora between 2012 and 2013.

DEBATE:

Mikel Irujo, Region of Navarra, provided information on the meeting the day before the General Assembly on territorial cooperation with a presentation of the Interreg programmes and asked Andrea Mairate about the 15% of regional ERDF funds for cooperation projects. He also asked how a maritime strategy can benefit a Region that has no coastline, such as Navarra.

Claire Le Tertre, Brittany Region, asked how the European Commission could speed up the implementation of the Interreg Atlantic Area programme, since projects will not start until 2017.

On the Atlantic strategy, **Pauline Caumont** specified that the Atlantic Arc Commission wanted the strategy to be macro-regional, which does not appear in the Council's decisions. She mentioned MEP Alain Cadec's action to obtain two pillars, maritime and land.

Andrea Mairate explained that, regarding the issue of 15%, the managing authority needs to accept the principle and assign it to cooperation programmes with partners outside the area. It is necessary to demonstrate that the operation is advantageous to the programme; it is a question of will and this can be achieved (Article 70 of the Regulation). Delays in the Atlantic Interreg are regrettable. To speed up implementation, more resources have to be made available.

In response to Mikel Irujo, **Justine Jury** explained that the benefits will apply to all of society, not only maritime stakeholders.

SESSION 4 – HOW TO IMPROVE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIVITIES AT SEA?

Giuseppe Sciacca, Senior Policy Officer at the CPMR General Secretariat, reminded participants that the CPMR and its Member Regions strive to promote sustainable blue growth on an environmental, economic and social front. He highlighted that the session will focus on concrete examples of activities carried out by CPMR Regions in this specific context.

In his [presentation](#), **Carlos Neves**, Vice-President of CCDR do Norte, reminded participants of the strategic role played by Portugal, in particular the Region of Norte, in the development of offshore renewable energy. He introduced the WindFloat initiative that has reached the pre-commercial phase. In 2017-2018, between 3 or 4 floating wind turbines will be operational off the coast of Costa de Viana do Castelo. WindFloat provides for the mobilisation of private funding amounting to €100 million.

In her [presentation](#), **Rosa M^a Quintana Carballo**, Regional Councillor in charge of the Sea, Xunta de Galicia, underlined the strategic importance of fisheries and aquaculture in the socio-economic context of her Region. Galicia is active in this sector through fostering regional laws for the promotion of the sector (regulation), the implementation of specific standards for the protection of marine living resources (protection) and a more innovative and more efficient management of quotas (management).

François Gatel, Secretary General of the **Association du Grand Littoral Atlantique (AGLIA)** gave a [presentation](#) of the DECIDER and REDRESSE projects. Developed by AGLIA, these two projects focus respectively on interactions between fishing tools and the Atlantic natural habitat (DECIDER), and improving the selectivity of some fishing tools (REDRESSE). The implementation of this project has produced very effective results in reducing the volume of discards into certain active fisheries in the Bay of Biscay. These projects represent a very significant tool box for both professionals and policy-makers.

María del Mar Martínez Salmerón, Head of Department for Tourism, Principality of Asturias, began her speech with a presentation of the Principality of Asturias' sustainable tourism programme 2020. She gave examples with the development of tourism services relating to gastronomy and knowledge of the sea (Asturias con sabor a mar, Las Rutas com mucho gusto, etc.). In addition, the cruise tourism industry contributes to the local economy and to improving the attractiveness of the Principality of Asturias at international level.

DEBATE

On the issue of marine renewable energy, **Pauline Caumont** informed participants that the Atlantic Arc Commission will participate (through the CPMR) in the work of the technology platform on European innovation for ocean energy. The CPMR will be a Member of the Advisory Board of this platform which should start its work in early November 2016.

Christophe Priou indicated that some stocks are developing positively in the Atlantic. He asked François Gatel to comment on this development and underlined that this development should make European policy-makers reflect on the need for a substantial revision of the quota policy.

François Gatel emphasised that professionals have made great efforts through the introduction of more selective fishing gear. With regard to hake, the adjustment of quotas was not proportional to the stock's development. For example, in the Bay of Biscay, professionals face strict capture limits that threaten the economic viability of their activities.

Regarding the introduction of the obligation to land all catches, **Giuseppe Sciacca** asked M^a Quintana Carballo how Galicia is currently operating in order to minimise the socio-economic impacts following the establishment of this Common Fisheries Policy standard.

Rosa M^a Quintana Carballo highlighted that the discard ban and the obligation to land all catches were a major concern for the Region of Galicia. According to her, the professionals working in the fishing industry are subject to this measure that they do not understand and which contributes to the paradox of "choke-species". She regretted the fact that the decisions made by the Council of Ministers on the future quotas for the coming year do not adequately reflect the socio-economic impacts for the sector. She concluded by emphasizing the need to open a technical and political debate that could lead to the revision of the principle of relative stability.

On the issue of the discard ban **François Gatel** reminded participants that AGLIA is working on projects that study the survival rate of certain species in order to give professionals the opportunity to access exceptions to the requirement to land catches (for species with high survival rates).

With regard to the role played by the European Union to promote blue growth, **Giuseppe Sciacca** asked Carlos Neves and M^a del Mar Martínez Salmerón for examples of actions (in their fields) undertaken by their Regions which benefited from EU financial support.

M^a del Mar Martínez Salmerón indicated that Asturias collaborates with other Spanish and European Regions to have access to certain European programmes that promote the development of the tourist industry.

Carlos Neves, Vice-President of CCDR do Norte, reminded participants that the WindFloat prototype project was funded by private investments. Nevertheless, he pointed out that other regional projects, on specific technologies complementary to the development of floating wind turbines, were able to benefit from European subsidies (through the HORIZON 2020 programme).

SESSION 5 – INNOVATION AND BLUE TECHNOLOGY IN THE ATLANTIC

Morgane Lesage, Director of the Interreg Atlantic Area programme, informed participants of the 425 expressions of interest submitted under the first phase of the first call of the programme for the 2014-2020 period. She noted that the Atlantic Regions are not the best students with regard to investment in innovation. She stressed that the programme aims to provide direct answers to the challenges of the territories and the development of marketable products.

Innovation is present in objectives 1.1 and 1.2 of the programme.

⇒ See Morgane Lesage's [PowerPoint presentation](#).

The role of public decision-makers in supporting innovation and blue technologies in the Regions - Laurence Harribey reminded participants that the blue economy is one of the keys to developing the Atlantic Regions. It is both a source of new jobs in innovative sectors and helps consolidate traditional jobs. In this area, the public stakeholders that are the regions must first provide a conducive regulatory framework, provide financial support (grants or loans), and foster the exchange of experiences.

⇒ See Laurence Harribey's [PowerPoint presentation](#).

Investments of a non-coastal region in blue biotechnology - Inés Echeverría, Research and Development Director at the National Centre for Food Safety (CNTA), introduced the CNTA, an association of 250 companies, dedicated to making the industrial agri-food sector more competitive. The CNTA is involved in the development of advanced conservation technologies and food supplements derived from maritime activities. The centre develops methods to extract and incorporate these elements in other foods. In her presentation, she illustrated the involvement of players located inland in the value chain of products that have come from the sea.

Towards an Atlantic project on blue biotechnologies - Stéphanie Bordenave-Juchereau, Lecturer and Researcher, University of La Rochelle, presented the *Croissance bleue Biotechnologie Santé* (CB2S) project, an initiative launched by the University of La Rochelle to identify players in the blue biotechnology sector and to generate growth in this area. The project consists of four actions:

1. Bring together stakeholders in the field of blue biotechnologies to increase visibility of research in this area;
2. Create suitably equipped premises dedicated to product development to meet the needs of companies;
3. Provide training in blue biotechnologies through the creation of a Master for students, existing staff or unemployed people to help them achieve high-level blue biotechnologies. This action took the form of an application submitted in response to the European Commission's Blue Careers Call, which the Atlantic Arc Commission is involved in;
4. Seek and find solutions together by submitting joint research projects.
⇒ See Stéphanie Bordenave-Juchereau's [PowerPoint presentation](#).

SESSION 6 – CONCLUSIONS

Proposal to establish a Trans-Atlantic Cooperation Task Force

M^a Ángeles Elorza, Basque Country, presented the [Trans-Atlantic Cooperation Task Force](#) project, and mentioned the proposals put forward by some Regions during the Political Bureau meeting. This project would, first and foremost, study the cooperation possibilities/interests between the Regional Authorities of the Atlantic Arc Commission and those of the American Atlantic coast. The Basque Country will be a candidate for the coordination of this Task Force.

The Regions of Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, Norte and Asturias reiterated their support for the project and specified that they wish to be involved in the Task Force's work.

Following the approval of the Members, **Sébastien Pilard** validated the launch of this Task Force, reminding participants that the results would be assessed during the 2017 General Assembly. He also asked the Regions that wished to participate to contact the Atlantic Arc Commission Secretariat.

Examination of and vote on the Final Declaration

Pauline Caumont presented the text of the Final Declaration and detailed the amendments that were discussed during the Political Bureau meeting on 2 June. The Final Declaration was approved unanimously.

Pauline Caumont mentioned the date of the next Plenary Assembly of the Atlantic Arc Commission, which has been set for 3 November 2016 in the Azores (Ponta Delgada) in the framework of the next CPMR General Assembly.

Sébastien Pilard concluded the meeting by thanking Navarra once again for its hospitality. He reiterated the commitment of the Region Pays de la Loire in the work of the Atlantic Arc Commission, a unique and essential cooperation area in the European project. He mentioned the importance of our network to provide a more concrete image and a Europe that offers solutions, and reminded participants of the need for pragmatic approach to our actions, with concrete and visible results. He concluded with the firm belief that the Atlantic Arc Commission represents an ideal platform to carry out projects relating to the sea, at the heart of the major challenges of the XXI century.

Sébastien Pilard finally thanked all the delegates for their participation, the Government of Navarra for the exemplary organisation of this 2016 General Assembly. Before closing the meeting, he announced that the Region holding the Presidency will organise the 2017 General Assembly and that he looked forward to meeting the participants in 2017 in the Region Pays de la Loire.