



## Atlantic Arc Commission

# Minutes/record of conclusions Atlantic Strategy Working Group

Friday 14 January 2016 - Brussels

### Participants:

Representatives from the following Regions attended the meeting: Galicia, Cantabria, País Vasco, Andalucía, Aquitaine Limousin Poitou-Charentes, Pays de la Loire, Bretagne, Normandie, Wales and Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA). Excused: Asturias

Two associated partners from the Atlantic networks: Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities and Transnational Atlantic Network.

Representative from the European Commission (DG REGIO); Maritime attaché from the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU.

### I. Welcome address

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**Pauline Caumont**, Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC), welcomed the participants and thanked **Marcella Smyth** (Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU) and **Joanna Kiryllo** (DG REGIO) for accepting the invitation. She invited **Mar Martín Raba**, from Cantabria's Brussels Office, to speak on behalf of the Atlantic Arc Commission's Presidency.

**Mar Martín Raba** recalled that on the occasion of the [Atlantic Stakeholder Platform](#) in Brest on 29 October 2015, **Inma Valencia Bayón** (Director General for Economy and European affairs at Cantabria Government) gave a speech in which she stressed the importance of the Atlantic Strategy for the Atlantic Regions. This Strategy will be financed through regional funds but Regions should also look for synergies with other EU programmes.

**Pauline Caumont** summarised the last activities of the Atlantic Arc Commission's Atlantic Strategy Working Group:

- Two technical papers were drafted: "[The Atlantic Strategy in the Operational Programmes of the Atlantic Arc Commission's Member Regions](#)" and "[Smart Specialisation in the Atlantic Arc Commission's Regions](#)". They will serve as a basis for drafting a contribution to the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan midterm review in 2017.
- Last meeting of the [Working Group](#) held in Brest on 28 October 2015
- Bilateral meeting in Brest with Georges Farrah on 29 October 2015, Quebec's General Secretary in charge of maritime affairs, who presented Quebec's maritime strategy, which budget amounts to \$1.5 billion (good example!)
- Participation in the Atlantic Strategy Group (ASG) Meeting on 17 December 2015. Minutes were circulated to the Atlantic Arc Commission members for comments and/or reactions.

### II. 2016 work programme of the Irish Presidency of the institutional ASG by Marcella Smyth, Maritime Attaché of the Irish Permanent Representation in Brussels

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**Marcella Smyth** thanked the Atlantic Arc Commission for the invitation and for the occasion to present the plans of the Irish Presidency and receive inputs from the Atlantic Regions.

She first mentioned the upcoming meetings of the ASG in 2016:

- 25 January / March / April / June / September (combined with the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform in Dublin).

She applauded the good work undertaken under the French Presidency and affirmed that Ireland was willing to continue the momentum that had been generated. She recalled that the second contract for the assistance mechanism for the Atlantic Action Plan was awarded to Kantor Qwentes, who had been managing the first one. The second contract will be focused on concrete results in view of the mid-term review of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan, which is expected to be concluded by mid-2017.

She highlighted the key objectives of the Irish Presidency:

- Establish a closer cooperation with the Galway Statement. She regretted that the Galway Statement, which was initially generated by the Atlantic Strategy, has now drifted away from it. A meeting with DG RTD was planned for 15 January;
- Organise an expanded meeting of the ASG including national units, regional managing authorities and DG REGIO;
- Increase the public political visibility in relation to the Action Plan;
- Secure specific EMFF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) funding for the Atlantic. The 2016 EMFF work programme includes specific funding for the Mediterranean but not for the Atlantic;
- Work more closely with the Atlantic Area Programme chaired this year by **Gerry Finn** (NWRA).

Finally, she presented the **key events** of the Irish Presidency:

- ✓ Ireland has been asked to deliver a keynote speech during the [European Maritime Day](#) in Turku (**18 & 19 May 2016**);
- ✓ The SEARICA intergroup of the European Parliament will organise an event on the Atlantic Strategy in **June in Brussels**;
- ✓ The Atlantic Stakeholder Platform will take place on **23 September in Dublin**. Commissioner Vella has confirmed his participation. A high-level meeting of the ASG will be organised the day before (22 September). The format of the event will be discussed during next ASG meeting on 25 January.

**Pauline Caumont** thanked **Marcella Smyth** and stressed the fact that Regions are willing to help implement the Atlantic Strategy by identifying projects and concrete ideas and see how ERDF funding could help. She recalled that the Atlantic Arc Commission already suggested that the EMFF should have a part dedicated to the Atlantic Strategy a few years ago and welcomed the fact that it is now directly suggested to the EC by the Member States.

**Claire le Tertre** (Brittany) asked for clarification on the wording in order to avoid confusions between ASG and Atlantic Arc Commission's Atlantic Strategy Working Group. The so-called "ASG" is the institutional group gathering the 5 Atlantic Member States, the EU Institutions (EC, EP, CoR, EESC, EIB) and the AAC.

**Arantza López de Munain** (RTA-ATN) welcomed the priorities set by the Irish Presidency. She regretted that so far, the Atlantic Strategy got blurred by other programmes that provide financing because of the lack of an Atlantic Strategy label. She also recalled that the RTA-RTA produced a report on the Atlantic Strategy, which was presented in the EESC on 9 September 2015, and that it is now planning to produce a new report on the revision of the Strategy.

**Ainhoa Azarloza** (Basque Country) recalled that DG REGIO advised some managing authorities to prioritise some projects related to the Atlantic Strategy. However, the managing authorities are not really enthusiastic as they don't see how tangible the Atlantic Strategy is. She also stressed the importance of strengthening the link between the Atlantic Strategy and the Atlantic Area programme, which is the "natural source of funding" for the Atlantic.

**Marcella Smyth** insisted on the necessity for the Regions **to help decide on a theme and chose an amount within the EMFF** in order to finance an initiative giving visibility to the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan. Suggestions from the different actors are therefore welcome. The Irish presidency will also contact **Gerry Finn** in order to establish a close collaboration with the Atlantic Area programme.

**Mar Martín Raba** (Cantabria) insisted on the necessity to go to the next step and develop concrete project proposals.

**Marcella Smyth** welcomed the will of the Atlantic Arc Commission Regions to work on concrete projects. So far, 18 projects have been identified as relevant to the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan. However, some Atlantic projects are impossible to identify as some actors are reluctant to share information. In this sense, the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform's award ceremony (23 September) intends to give more visibility to the projects aligned with the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan.

**Tamara Guirãõ** (CAAC) mentioned the official launching of the RTA-ATN's report on the Atlantic Strategy in the EESC on 9 September, during which the CAAC proposed to "give the Atlantic a soul" by increasing political leadership with a "*Mr. or Mrs. Atlantic Strategy*", for instance. She also mentioned the [AT Brand project](#) and suggested that the award of the "Atlantic city of the year" contest should be handed over by Commissioner Vella during the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform in September in Dublin.

### **III. Atlantic Area Programme for 2014-2020 by Joanna Kirylo, European Commission - DG Regio**

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**Joanna Kirylo** has been working on the Atlantic Area programme since 2015. She had an experience with the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which is the most mature in the EU.

She first stressed the importance of the visibility of the Strategy and the **need to create a logo** that would be used in applications or publications. The Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region can be used as an example in terms of communication strategies ([see the strategy's website](#)). She also suggested that the AAC's member Regions should meet with DG REGIO on a regular basis to discuss about the programmes.

She presented the main features of the 2014-2020 Atlantic Area programme. The first Monitoring Committee will take place in Porto on 20 January. The total budget for the new period is €140 million (€189 million, including national counterpart). The co-financing rate for projects is 75%. Priorities of the programme and information on eligibility criteria are available on her [PowerPoint presentation](#). The programme shall be officially launched in **April 2016** (around the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>) in Porto or Lisbon.

She stressed the fact that the European Commission is now mainly focused on **results and impacts** (value for money). During the first Programme Monitoring Committee (20 January in Porto), it will be decided whether the application process will be divided into two steps.

**Pauline Caumont** added that all the relevant information will be circulated to the member of this group. She then asked how the results and the impact of the projects will be evaluated and by whom?

**Joanna Kirylo** answered that there will be 2 assessments during the project duration and another one at the end of the project. The methodology on how the results will be assessed will be made public soon. She added that all the topics will be covered for the first call.

### **IV. Setting-up a meeting/workshop with Regional Managing Authorities around the Atlantic Strategy: proposals and discussion**

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**Pauline Caumont** presented the reasons why a meeting or workshop with ERDF Managing authorities should be organised:

- Improve their knowledge about whys and wherefores of the Atlantic Strategy;
- Strengthen the collaboration between the EU level and the Atlantic ERDF Managing Authorities;
- Fund large projects via mainstream ERDF (Managing Authorities can use up to 20% of the total amount of their OP to finance projects outside their territory);
- Exchange knowledge with other Macro-Regional Strategies (e.g. Baltic) – could be extremely useful.

As this idea has been taken on board by the Irish Presidency, the practicalities will be discussed within the ASG. Regions can help liaise with people from the Managing Authorities. It was suggested to organise a meeting **before 18 March**, possibly on 14 and 15 March.

## VI. Role and visibility of Regional Authorities in implementing the Atlantic Strategy

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**Pauline Caumont** stressed the fact that the members of the Atlantic Arc Commission should use different opportunities and events to show that Regions are at the front of the Atlantic Strategy. She suggested that the Atlantic Strategy should benefit from seed money facility as other Strategies did. The European Parliament awarded €2.5 million to the Baltic Strategy. Dialogue with the European Parliament should be intensified. In 2013, the European Parliament, under the initiative of MEP Alain Cadec, awarded €1.2 million to DG MARE in order to set up the assistance mechanism for the Atlantic Action Plan. The [SEARICA intergroup](#) will organise a conference dedicated to the Atlantic in June. It may be a good opportunity to ask for extra money to the European Parliament in order to develop specific projects aligned with the Strategy. A paper gathering these claims will be prepared and circulated. This document could be used during the SEARICA intergroup meeting in June.

Regarding the **Atlantic Arc Commission's Juncker Plan task force**, the participants stressed the fact that as regards the Juncker Plan, Regions can only transfer the information to partners and actors and facilitate contact with the EIB. In most of the cases, the projects developed under the Juncker Plan are not fit for Regions. Regions already have their own financial instruments for SMEs. As an example, Pauline Caumont presented a document identifying large projects in **Wales**. She asked for other Regions to send similar information (when Regions have it) so as to be able to identify analogous investment projects in the Atlantic Arc.

**Claire le Tertre** (Brittany) mentioned an initiative launched by Brittany Region called "Tag mer" which consists of identifying ERDF projects aligned with the Atlantic Strategy.

**Tamara Guirãõ** (CAAC) stated that the Juncker Plan is made for the private sector and that it cannot replace public funding. She added that the [European Investment Project Portal](#) (EIPP) will be launched soon. It will help identify the project financed by the Juncker Plan.

## VII. Assistance Mechanism for the Atlantic Action Plan

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**Pauline Caumont** recalled that the Atlantic Arc Commission submitted an application with Ecorys assistance mechanism for the Atlantic Action Plan. The contract was finally granted to Kantor Qwentes, which will be managing the assistance mechanism for 2 more years. More information is available on the [assistance mechanism's website](#). She suggested that Kantor Qwentes should be invited in the next AAC's Atlantic Strategy meeting so they can tell how they are planning to involve the Regions and what kind of cooperation can be foreseen. Participants agreed with this proposal.

The next Atlantic Arc Commission's Atlantic Strategy meeting should take place on 11 February (we will circulate the agenda shortly).

### Upcoming events

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- **20 January:** Atlantic Area programme Monitoring Committee in Porto
- **10 February:** Atlantic Arc Commission's Transport Working Group meeting in Brussels
- **11 February:** Atlantic Arc Commission's Atlantic Strategy working group meeting in Brussels
- **18 & 19 May:** European Maritime Day in Turku
- **June:** SEARICA intergroup on the Atlantic in Brussels (European Parliament)
- **22 September :** ASG high-level meeting in Dublin
- **23 September:** Atlantic Stakeholder Platform in Dublin

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**End of the meeting**

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