



Activity Report 2017-2018

Background Information

This document describes the activities led by the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC) since its last General Assembly in Sables d'Olonne (Pays-de-la-Loire, France) on 2-3 March 2017, in view of the upcoming General Assembly in Comillas (Cantabria, Spain) on 14-15 June 2018.

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I. The Atlantic Arc Commission's advocacy work on the Atlantic Strategy

a. Participation in institutional activities focusing on the Atlantic Strategy

Since the Atlantic Strategy was launched in 2011, the Atlantic Arc Commission has been actively engaged in defining and implementing it. Since 2016, the Atlantic Arc Commission has been associated with the Atlantic Strategy Steering Group (ASG) made up of the five Atlantic Member States (FR, ES, UK, IE, PT) and the EU Institutions (EC, EP, COR, EESC). In 2017, the ASG was chaired by the United Kingdom, followed by Spain in 2018. The mid-term evaluation of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan has been the main focus of work for these two Presidencies.

The Atlantic Arc Commission was represented at the various ASG meetings:

- 6 April 2017
- 8 June 2017
- 13 September 2017
- 25 October 2017
- 6 December 2017
- 12 February 2018 (in Madrid)
- 19 March 2018
- 4 May 2018

The Atlantic Arc Commission's attendance at these meetings made it possible to play an active part in evaluating the implementation of the action plan and developing recommendations aimed at improving the delivery of the Atlantic Strategy.

Examples of how we have exerted influence:

- Interview on 12 May with the consulting firm commissioned by DG MARE to conduct the evaluation;
- Hearing of the Atlantic Arc Commission by the Committee of the Regions in the context of its opinion on the Atlantic Strategy;
- DG MARE invitation to the Atlantic Strategy Working Group.
- In addition, there have been other informal discussions on the fringes of meetings, aided by our special relations with ASG members.

Issues highlighted by the Atlantic Arc Commission include:

- o The need to review the governance of the Atlantic Strategy in order to make the ASG a genuine strategic think tank identifying how the Atlantic Strategy can actually be implemented;
- o The lack of direct European funding which undermines the effectiveness and visibility of the Strategy within the Atlantic Area;
- o The limits of the assistance mechanism's work to increase the Strategy's visibility and support project promoters for transnational projects;
- o Too broad a spectrum of priorities covered by the action plan.

In addition, the Atlantic Arc Commission proposed to participate in the organisation of roadshows back-to-back with its events to collect proposals on how to improve the action plan, in close relation with regional stakeholders.

Achievements: The Atlantic Arc Commission's findings and positions have been included in the European Commission's [Staff Working Document](#) and in the new call for applications for the assistance mechanism. A roadshow will be set up to gather Atlantic stakeholders' proposals regarding changes to the governance of the action plan, as well as how it is funded and implemented. The Spanish government has proposed the date of 22 June in Las Palmas, Canary Islands.

II. Atlantic Arc Commission Working Groups

The Atlantic Arc Commission currently has six thematic working groups divided into two thematic hubs, as well as a Brexit Task Force. These groups evolve according to the agenda and interests of the member Regions and to address specific issues.

All the activities of the Atlantic Arc Commission working groups can be found on the [Atlantic Arc Commission Website](#). Since reshaping the working groups as proposed by the AAC Secretariat at the General Assembly in Les Sables d'Olonne (2/3 March 2017), there have been two meetings of the new thematic hubs:

- 19 and 20 June 2017
- 6 and 7 February 2018.

This organisation facilitates travel arrangements for member Regions' representatives and attracts a wider variety of political representatives from the EU institutions given the broad focus of the meetings. It also allows the regions to have an overview of the Atlantic Arc Commission's activities and their potential synergies, especially between the thematic groups and the cross-cutting Atlantic Strategy group.

→ [Minutes of the June 2017 hub meetings](#)

→ [Minutes of the February 2018 hub meetings](#)

Cross-cutting Topics

a. Atlantic Strategy Working Group

This group is led in close coordination between the chairing Region (Pays de la Loire) and the Executive Secretariat. Its purpose is to keep the Regions informed about the progress of the Atlantic Strategy in connection with the ASG meetings, and to formulate policy messages to improve the way the Strategy is implemented.

Since the Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly in 2017, and in addition to the two hub meetings, the group met on a regular basis four times:

- 29 March
- 18 September
- 27 September
- 18 May 2018.

The Atlantic Arc Commission's Atlantic Strategy Group invited the UK representative chairing the ASG, together with DG MARE, to inform them first hand of the regions' recommendations and understand the timetable for the action plan review.

The secretariat also contacted the Directorate-General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO) in charge of developing the new architecture of European territorial cooperation programmes (INTERREG). This initiative allowed us to convey the idea of ensuring greater alignment between strategies with a macro-regional dimension and funding programmes, which so far have been relatively disconnected from one another.

Interreg V-B Atlantic Area Programme Monitoring Committee

The Atlantic Arc Commission is associated with the monitoring committee of the Interreg Atlantic Area programme for the 2014-2020 period. The Atlantic Arc Commission has observer status which allows it to take part in meetings of the Programme's Monitoring Committee and thus make the link between the Programme, the Atlantic Strategy and the priorities of the Atlantic Arc Commission Regions. More information at www.atlanticarea.eu

Coordination with CPMR activities

The Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission, Pauline Caumont, is also in charge of the CPMR Macro-Regions Task Force, which met on:

- **10 May 2017**: meeting on macro-regions (EUSALP)
- **18 October 2017**, back-to-back with the CPMR General Assembly in Helsinki.

On these occasions, the Atlantic Arc Commission was able to report on the progress of the various macro-regional type strategies within the CPMR's Geographical Commissions (Intermediterranean Commission, Baltic Sea Commission, North Sea Commission and Black Sea Commission). These discussions fed into the Atlantic Arc Commission's position on the revision of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan.

The group helped to prepare a [policy position on the macro-regional and sea basin strategies](#) voted on 10 March 2017 at the Political Bureau in Malta and disseminated to the European institutions.

→ Consult the [documents of the Atlantic Strategy Group](#)

Outlook

The year 2018-2019 is the key moment to advocate for a new form of governance for the Atlantic Strategy that takes greater account of the regions. The Atlantic Arc Commission can continue to participate in the ASG Group's reflections as well as the planned regional roadshows.

b. Brexit Task Force – Led by Galicia (2017-2018)

The Brexit Task Force was set up at the Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly in Les Sables d'Olonne (Pays de la Loire) on 2-3 March 2017, under the impetus of Galicia Region, after debates on the [technical paper on the consequences of Brexit for Atlantic Regions](#) prepared by the Atlantic Arc Commission Secretariat.

Since the Atlantic Arc Commission's 2017 General Assembly, and in addition to the two hub meetings, the group met on a regular basis on:

- 29 March 2017
- 5 July 2017
- 18 September 2017
- 27 September 2017
- 18 May 2018.

These meetings gave the Atlantic Arc Commission regions the chance to inform regions on developments in the Brexit negotiations, to collect findings on Brexit's impact on the Atlantic regions and to draft a [policy statement on Brexit](#) (voted on 19 October 2017) designed to highlight Brexit's potential impacts on the Atlantic Arc regions.

Meeting with Michel Barnier

On **29 January 2018**, a meeting took place between the Atlantic Arc Commission's new President Christelle Moranças, Bruno Retailleau and **Michel Barnier**, the EU's Chief Negotiator in charge of conducting negotiations with the UK. This meeting provided the opportunity to put forward the [Atlantic Arc Commission's position on Brexit](#) and highlight the Atlantic Regions' concerns on Brexit's potential impacts on Atlantic territories ([cf. Press Release](#)).

Coordination with CPMR activities

The Atlantic Arc Commission contributed to the work of the Future of Europe Task Force by participating in the [Cardiff Conference](#) chaired by Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales, on 16 November 2017. The Atlantic Regions presented the Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration on Brexit, which inspired the [CPMR's Cardiff Declaration](#) approved by the 160 member Regions. This event gave the Atlantic regions a high profile in the Brexit debates, both at political level through the presence of numerous regional representatives, as well as in the media notably with a BBC article.

Outlook

The Atlantic Arc Commission could continue to advocate the implementation of cooperation programmes with the United Kingdom to mitigate Brexit's territorial impacts on local economies. It will continue to monitor the Brexit negotiations.

→ Consult the [documents of the Brexit Task Force](#)

Accessibility / Attractiveness Hub

a. Transport Working Group – Led by Cantabria (2015-2018)

Since the General Assembly in Les Sables d'Olonne, the Transport group met during the June 2017 and February 2018 hub meetings.

The group has helped the Atlantic Arc Commission Secretariat to compile the priority projects for which the regions are seeking more European funding. These projects were included in the [CPMR technical paper on the review of the Connecting Europe Facility \(CEF\)](#) published in June 2017, which proposes to add different rail sections and new motorways of the sea routes to Annex 1 of the CEF Regulation.

A regular working relationship has been established between the Atlantic Arc Commission and the Directorate-General for Transport (DG Move) in charge of the Atlantic corridor (meeting on 9 January, participation in the February 2018 hub meetings). These contacts have enabled us to gauge the acceptability of these requests for funding in the Atlantic and to take stock of the implementation of the Atlantic Corridor projects.

Coordination with CPMR activities

The Atlantic Arc Commission participated in the work led by the CPMR's Intercommission Transport Group. A [letter sent to Commissioner Bulc](#) and to the President of the European Parliament's Transport Committee, Karima Delli (Greens-EFA, FR), mentions two important issues for the Atlantic Arc Commission:

- the challenge of Ireland's isolation due to Brexit;
- the need to make motorways of the sea more accessible to the ports within the comprehensive network.

Outlook

The "Transport" panel discussion at the Atlantic Arc Commission's 2018 General Assembly in Comillas will be the opportunity to provide an update on the European Commission's proposal on the new multiannual financial framework and the CEF II regulation including a revised Annex 1 of the CEF. The Atlantic Arc Commission could also participate in the review of the TEN-T regulation starting at the end of 2018 to ensure that more consideration is given to the accessibility of the Atlantic regions in the future European maps.

→ Consult the [documents of the Transport Group](#)

b. Atlantic Tourism and Culture Working Group – Led by Asturias (2015-2018)

Since the General Assembly in Les Sables d'Olonne, the group met during the June 2017 and February 2018 hub meetings.

The group's primary objective is to exchange good practices so as to raise the Atlantic's profile as a tourist destination. In the longer term, the lead Region wishes to implement a common INTERREG strategy or project related to Atlantic tourism.

To this end, Asturias Region has provided the group with a roadmap identifying three areas in which regions are invited to share their projects and strategies. These are cultural tourism, natural resource tourism and culinary heritage.

The Atlantic Arc Commission meetings aimed to share information on European tourism projects in the Atlantic regions, such as:

- The Wild Atlantic Way
- CAPITEN
- Atlantic on Bike
- WAOH Route
- Channel Sail
- Atlantic Games.

They also aimed to identify funding opportunities in the field of tourism allowing regions to develop transnational projects.

DG MARE, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) and the Directorate-General for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) attended these meetings to inform regions of these financial opportunities, placing them in the EU legislative context:

- Nautical Tourism Strategies (2017)
- Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills (2017)
- European Year of Cultural Heritage (2017)

- Regional Dialogue for the Atlantic between Cruise Operators, Ports and Coastal Tourism (June 2018, tbc)

→ Consult the [documents of the Atlantic Culture and Tourism Group](#)

Maritime Affairs Hub

a. Marine Renewable Energies Group – Led by País Vasco (2017-2018)

The Marine Renewable Energies group met during the June 2017 and February 2018 hub meetings, as well as on a field visit to an offshore wind farm in the North Sea.

A variety of guest speakers including the Directorate-General for Energy (DG ENER), Ocean Energy Europe, Wind Europe, the Directorate General for Research (DG RTD) and DG MARE enabled the group to take stock of the challenges facing the industry, EU funding opportunities, as well as the European Commission's proposal on the Energy and Climate Package and how the regions are involved in its governance. Through the group, the regions also had the chance to notify the European Commission of the importance of EU support for regions to develop marine renewable energies in line with regional strategies.

Coordination with the CPMR's work

The Atlantic Arc Commission Secretariat contributed to the [Policy Position on the Future of the EU Budget](#), stressing the importance of funding for renewable energy initiatives at European level. It also contributed to the work of the CPMR's Climate Task Force led by Brittany. The group developed a [policy position](#) on the European Commission's proposed Energy and Climate Package. These policy positions were sent out to the European institutions in October 2017.

Discussions between the Atlantic and North Sea Regions

The group took the initiative to organise a field visit to an offshore wind farm in the North Sea in November 2017 to allow politicians and officers from the member Regions to discuss the development of wind power with their counterparts in the North Sea. The visit was held back-to-back with the *WindEurope* event that brought together private European players working in the wind energy sector. The executive secretariats of the North Sea and Atlantic Arc Commissions were responsible for organising the day's exchanges. This served to identify good practices on offshore wind power between the two sea basins and give regional SMEs access to the *WindEurope* Congress to develop their contacts (see [press release](#)).

Outlook

The Atlantic Arc Commission will keep a close watch on the new European multiannual financial framework and assess how much support there is for marine renewable energies in the Commission's proposal. It may, if necessary, develop a policy statement on Marine Renewable Energies in the Atlantic, as proposed by the Basque Government. In relation to the activities of the CPMR's Maritime Industries Group led by Pays de la Loire, it may also monitor the development of the EU's industrial strategy and investment platforms for Blue Growth.

→ Consult the [documents of the Marine Renewable Energy Group](#)

b. Fisheries and Aquaculture Group – Led by Pays de la Loire (2013-2018)

In June 2016, Pays de la Loire Region presented three work areas for this group: implementation of the EMFF, preparation of the post-2020 CFP and interregional cooperation.

The working group met on the occasion of the June and February hub meetings well as at the **seminar on the landing obligation in Vigo** on 26 and 27 June 2017 organised by the Atlantic Arc Commission and Galicia Region (see [press article](#)).

These meetings provided the opportunity to draft the [Declaration on the landing obligation](#), in cooperation with the Regional Fisheries Committee of Pays de la Loire Region (COREPEM). It was adopted on 19 October

2017 during the plenary session of the Atlantic Arc Commission held just before the CPMR General Assembly in Helsinki.

The declaration was disseminated to the European institutions on the following occasions:

- Meetings between the Secretariat and parliamentary assistants (13 April 2018)
- Seminars on the landing obligation organised by the European Commission (15 November 2017)
- CPMR Fisheries Group meeting in the presence of the European institutions (30/31 January 2018).

Project - Work by the Secretariat

The **SAFER** project, submitted under the Interreg Atlantic Area call for projects in May 2016, was officially launched on 14 June 2017. The leader is the ERNACT network (European Regions Network for the Application of Communication Technology), based in Ireland.

The aim is to encourage innovation in the seafood sector by promoting the adoption of new technologies and transnational cooperation in this area. The Atlantic Arc Commission is in charge of disseminating information and capitalising on the results of the project among its regions.

Coordination with CPMR activities

The Atlantic Arc Commission's policy messages are included in the [CPMR policy position](#) voted on 8 March 2018 urging to maintain the budget allocated to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund in the next European multiannual financial framework (2021-2027).

Outlook

The Atlantic Arc Commission will keep a close watch on the European Commission's proposals on the future multiannual financial framework, and particularly its EMFF component. As part of its work on the landing obligation, it will continue to follow the review process of regulations on multi-annual management in the Atlantic fisheries as well as the control regulation.

- Consult the [documents of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Group](#)

c. Innovation Working Group – Led by Nouvelle Aquitaine (2015-2018)

• Maritime Training

The group met during the June 2017 and February 2018 hub meetings. Its main objective has been to follow the development of the "[Blue Master for a Blue Career](#)" project (BBMBC), in which the Atlantic Arc Commission Secretariat is involved. This project, selected by the European Commission on 22 November 2016, has been to set up a master's degree on marine biotechnology at the University of La Rochelle. The Master's programme has been developed in partnership with European universities and SMEs. The master's course was launched in September 2017 and received five students during the 2017-2018 academic year. Since November 2017, these students have been on professional placements in different Atlantic countries and beyond. They will present their master's thesis on 25 June during the Summer School organised by the project.

Project – Work by the Secretariat

The Secretariat is in charge of communication and the dissemination information on the project. To carry out this task it has:

- Created a communication strategy
- Developed communication tools such as the website, press articles, social media addressed to the regions, universities, businesses and students;
- Put forward the project's best practices to the European Commission Expert Group on Maritime Training;

- Participated in European events to promote the project (e.g. 18/19 May 2017, European Maritime Days in Poole);
- Prepared communication materials (leaflets);
- Ensured communication related to the project at events organised by the project (3/4 May 2018, at the Catholic University of Valencia)

Outlook

The Atlantic Arc Commission could develop an emblematic project such as a sectoral knowledge alliance under the ERASMUS plus programme to strengthen its expertise on maritime training and its influence on the European training agenda. The Atlantic Arc Commission could also mobilise regional actors at regional seminars on maritime training organised by the MATES project, led by the CETMAR cluster in Galicia.

The CETMAR cluster has effectively won an EC call for proposals to develop a European strategy on maritime training. In this context, it proposes setting up local seminars to gather the reactions of territorial stakeholders on the strategic outlines it is drawing up. The CPMR and the Atlantic Arc Commission have been identified as potential collaborators.

The Atlantic Arc Commission will also be involved in the maritime trainee exchange network project proposed by the Azores.

- **Coastal environment**

The Innovation Group has also begun looking into the Atlantic Arc Commission's future involvement in protecting the coastal environment. Discussions between the Atlantic Arc Commission and the Intermediterranean Commission have identified the Bologna Charter as a policy instrument enabling regions to promote environmental protection in the Mediterranean.

Projects - Work by the Secretariat

CleanAtlantic was approved on **4-5 May 2018**: monitoring committee of the INTERREG Atlantic Area programme. The leader is the Maritime Technology Centre in Galicia (Spain). The project aims to reduce marine litter in the Atlantic area. The project consortium brings together regional actors, the research sector and industry to raise public awareness about the dangers of waste for the territories, public health and marine biodiversity. It aims to help change practices and improve marine litter management systems.

SIMNORAT is a project led by SHOM (FR), in response to DG Mare's call for the implementation of its Maritime Spatial Planning strategy. It was launched in Bordeaux on **26 January 2017**. Through this project, the CPMR aims to include the regions in Maritime Spatial Planning governance. In cooperation with the Atlantic Arc Commission, the CPMR has the task of:

- Organising a workshop in 2017 and the final project conference in 2018;
- Producing a report on land-sea interaction in the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive;
- Disseminating the results of the project, notably in the European Commission's Expert Group on Maritime Spatial Planning.

At this stage, the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission has conducted several interviews with Regions as part of its report on the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive.

Outlook

The Atlantic Arc Commission could increase regional involvement in coastal environment protection:

- in connection with the SIMNORAT project, it could organise an exchange of good practices on coastal erosion with other sea basins;
- in connection with CleanAtlantic, it could organise information campaigns to limit plastics.

→ Consult the [documents of the Innovation Group](#)