Dear Members,

The year 2020 has been a challenging time for all of us, affecting both our professional and personal lives. All together, we have learnt and successfully adapted our activities to go online – even though we would have loved to see you in person during our last General Assembly and Hub meetings! - and we would like to deeply thank you for your commitment and close cooperation, which maintained the Atlantic Arc Commission an active and influential network at the forefront of the European agenda.

We are sending you this news update with all our best wishes. Please take care and enjoy the holiday break with your loved ones!

We are looking forward to pursuing our activities in 2021,

The CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission Team,

Elise Wattrelot, AAC Executive Secretary
Delphine Kaczorowski, Project and Policy Officer
Catherine Petiau, Policy Assistant
Barbara Favaro, Project Officer
In a context where EU institutions were finalising negotiations on the 2021-2027 Multi-Annual Financial Framework, the CPMR’s Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC) held its hub meetings on 17-18 November 2020, where Atlantic regions were able to further conduct the priorities identified by the newly appointed AAC Presidency and discuss with representatives from the EU institutions on the post 2020 programming period.

You will find the minutes of the meeting as well as PowerPoint presentations of guest speakers on our webpage: Minutes – AAC hub Meetings (November 2020).

The EU Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States finally gave their green light on 10 December for the adoption of the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 and the Recovery Plan. The European Parliament will vote the budget on 18 December 2020. The AAC will continue to work to harness all the opportunities offered by this new programming period.

Evolving towards the adoption of an Atlantic Macro-Region Strategy is one of the AAC’s core priorities for 2020-2022. This document initiated by the Basque government requests the Council to give the Commission a mandate to develop a Macro-Regional framework for the Atlantic Strategy in order to face a common context of multiple challenges with Brexit and COVID-19 aftereffects. The latest version has been validated and is available online: AAC Declaration on an Atlantic Macro-Region. Congratulations!

As next steps, we invite you to constitute delegations at national level and contact the relevant national ministries to promote this declaration. The AAC will also organise a meeting early 2021 with Atlantic Permanent Representations.

Following the various exchanges between the Atlantic Arc and the North Sea Commissions, the two commissions developed a political declaration tackling the necessity of a regional approach to the implementation of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve. The Declaration was amended and approved by the CPMR Political Bureau on 16 December 2020. Congratulations!

While negotiations have been delayed due to apart positions on several issues such as the level playing field or fisheries, we will release a special a press release in this respect. The AAC will promote the Declaration to the relevant EU political representatives.
QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE ATLANTIC ACTION PLAN 2.0

In the context of the revision of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy, we shared with you a questionnaire to fill in produced by the Cantabria Region. We received six answers so far, which will be taken into account in Cantabria’s opinion on the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0 as part of the Committee of the Regions. Thank you for your contributions. For those who have not send any feedback yet, you can still send us your answer before 27 January 2021, as we will also use the result to build our own AAC analysis.

COOPERATION WITH MEPs ON THE AAP 2.0

As you know, the AAC Secretariat met with MEP Younous Omarjee on 3 November and MEP Pierre Karleskind on 20 November 2020. They are respectively rapporteur and shadow-rapporteur on the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0. We had the occasion to share the AAC main message on the AAP 2.0 based on our previous declarations. The final report of the European Parliament should be voted around April 2021 (to be confirmed).

AAC INVOLVED IN THE ATLANTIC STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM CONFERENCE

The AAC has been involved in the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference 2020 through various activities. Eleni Marianou, CPMR Secretary General, gave a speech during the plenary session and underlined the role of Atlantic regions as main actors for an economic, social and ecologic long-term development and a recovery from present crises. She was speaking alongside Commissioner Sinkevičius and Annick Girardin, the French Minister of the Sea. The AAC also organised the workshop ‘A SAFER approach to innovation in aquaculture: How cooperation can support ports to become hubs of the blue economy’. Read more HERE

IRELAND IS NOW THE NEW CHAIR OF THE ATLANTIC STRATEGY

Ireland has taken the Presidency of the Atlantic Strategy Committee. During last meeting on 9 December 2020, it presented its priorities for 2021:
- Support the implementation of the AAP 2.0 and monitor progress;
- Align funding with the priorities of the AAP, notably Blue Invest;
- Maintain relationships with regions;
- Examine the reports developed by the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament;
- Develop the international dimension of the AAP and consider the extension of the membership;
- Find synergies with other sea-basins, the Starfish mission and SEARica Intergroup.

The AAC Secretariat contributed to the discussion mentioning the aim to work towards an Atlantic Macro-Region. The meeting was also the occasion to meet with Pillar Coordinators. The AAC has already started to meet individually the Coordinators to create synergies between the Atlantic Strategy and the work of our working groups.
UPDATE ON INTERREG ATLANTIC AREA POST 2020

An agreement on the ETC regulation has been reached by co-legislators. The budget allocated to INTERREG (8,05bn €) has been divided within the 4 strands as followed:

- Land and maritime cross-border cooperation - Interreg A: 72,2% of total resources;
- transnational cooperation - Interreg B: 18,2% of the total budget;
- interregional cooperation - Interreg C: 6,1% of the total budget;
- outermost regions’ cooperation - Interreg D: 3,5%.

In this framework, the INTERREG Atlantic Area programme post 2020 is being discussed as part of a Task Force involving national delegations participating in the Joint Monitoring Committee of the programme. Uncertainties exist as per the geography of the programme, dependant on the maintain of SUDOE programme in the zone. Some Member states may in any case suggest modifications. In terms of priorities, a stronger alignment with macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies priorities should be included in the debates but doubts remain on its extent.

NB: The “Component 5 – Interregional innovation investments” will not be part of ETC regulation but transferred under the ERDF regulation with half the budget originally allocated (€500m).

A NEW WORKPLAN FOR THE MARINE RENEWABLE ENERGY WORKING GROUP

The AAC group on MRE gathered on 18 November to discuss a workplan for the group in 2021. This workplan aims to engage the AAC in the Atlantic Strategy Pillar on Marine Renewable Energy and harness new possibilities offered by the new legislative context.

The Commission has indeed proposed a new Strategy for Offshore Energies (19 November). The Commission sets a clear framework to allow the European sector to consolidate its position in offshore energies and especially wind power and to lower the price of other technologies and bring them to the market. Some legislative revisions are expected, but it is above all measures to support cooperation that have been announced. On the financing side, the Commission will mobilise existing programs to support projects, without indicating a precise amount. In this context, we invite you to react on the proposed workplan on MRE presented during the group by 27 January 2021. In absence of feedback, we will consider this new workplan as validated.

SAVE-THE-DATE: A MRE WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY THE ISLAND COMMISSION AND SOLUTIONS&CO

In relation with MRE activities, and as part of our objectives to develop more cooperation with other CPMR Geographical Commissions, we would also like to inform you of the forthcoming webinar “Renewable Maritime Energies and Smartgrids Systems in EU Islands: Focus on Challenges and Opportunities” co-organised by the CPMR Islands Commission and Solutions & Co, the economic development agency of the French Region Pays de la Loire. The meeting will be held on 18 February 2020 online. More information HERE!
On 9 December 2020, in the framework of the CPMR Transport Working Group, the AAC represented by Marta Marin, Delegate of the Basque Country to the EU met with Prof. Bodewig, Coordinator of Motorways of the Sea (DG MOVE) to express key AAC messages on maritime transport. Messages shared during the last hub meetings were included in the presentation: the impact of COVID 19 and Brexit on Atlantic maritime transport, notably on people working in the sector, the need to take into account the contribution of ports to the Green Deal via the development of Marine Renewable Energy projects and the adaptation of the TEN-T to the sea-basins specificities. Marta Marin also addressed the impact of including the Maritime Transports into the ETS legislation. The CPMR delegation was composed of elected officials and officers from the different sea-basins.

**CONNECTING THE AAC WITH PAYS DE LA LOIRE CITIZENS**

On 10 December, Vanessa Charbonneau, Vice-President of Pays de la Loire Region, Agnès Trarieux, Director of the Pays de la Loire Office in Brussels and Elise Wattrelot, Executive Secretary of the AAC were invited to a webinar on the Role of Regions in the future of the EU organised by the 5 EuropeDirect present in Pays de la Loire. The event gathered around 80 participants, mostly from Pays de la Loire Region, and was the occasion to present work of the CPMR and its Atlantic Arc Commission, giving greater visibility to the role of our network to citizens.

**RENEWING COOPERATION WITH OUR PARTNER RTA**

On 18 November, the AAC Secretariat presented the new priorities of the Atlantic Arc Commission to the RTA-ATN, the network of economic and social committees of the Atlantic. The RTA and the AAC signed in 2016 a memorandum of understanding to maintain cooperation between the networks. During this meeting, the AAC proposed to better coordinate the think tank work of both organisations.
We are pleased to announce you that the SAFER project was selected as winner of the Atlantic Awards 2020 under the “Atlantic Ports and Blue Economy” category, during the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference 2020! Earlier this year, the AAC prepared and published the project’s recommendations, “For a SAFER and Greener Seafood Sector” to address the impact of COVID19 on the seafood sector, the EU Recovery Plan, and the Green Deal and its Farm to Fork Strategy. The recommendations were presented during the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference on 19 November as part of a workshop organized by the AAC Secretariat, “A SAFER approach to innovation in aquaculture: How cooperation can support ports to become hubs of the blue economy”.

On 13 October 2020, the AAC organised a Clean Atlantic event in collaboration with the SEArica Intergroup of the European Parliament. Members of the SEArica board, MEP Catherine Chabaud, Pierre Karleskind, Tonino Picula and Manuel Pizarro, representatives of the EU institutions, regional authorities, organisations and partners seized this opportunity to discuss the projects’ results and the state of marine litter in Europe. More information here.

The AAC Secretariat is happy to announce that the project “Atlantic Smart Ports Blue Acceleration Network (AspBAN)” has been approved! This project will support implementation of Pillar I of the revised Atlantic Action Plan. Financed under the EMFF programme, the Atlantic Smart Ports Blue Acceleration Network (AspBAN) aims at launching an acceleration services platform for EU Atlantic ports to work as blue economy hubs, thus diversifying their business models and revenue sources. The project is a 2-year project led by Beta-I which involves 13 partners. The project will connect partners in the EEA, transatlantic and other relevant EU and non-EU maritime basins.

AspBAN aims to have a final pool of 30 innovative startup solutions developed as pilots in 30 Atlantic ports, attracting 6M€ in direct private investment, mobilizing 4,5billion€ of potential private investment and making a reduction of at least 100.000 tons of CO2 emissions in the operations of the 30 ports.

AspBAN will be based on the successful experience of Bluetech Accelerator – Ports&Shipping 4.0 in Portugal. The project has the support of the UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for the Ocean and the Minister of State for Economy and Digital Transition of Portugal.

The CPMR and more specifically the AAC will lead the work package on dissemination and transferability of results and will develop dedicated seminars and political recommendations. Keep posted!
AGENDA: From January to June 2021

January:
Beginning of the Portuguese Presidency (Council of the EU)
CPMR Meeting on Fisheries – EMFF and the use of financial instrument *(22 January, 10.00-12.00)*

February:
AAC Hub meetings (1/2)
SOLUTIONS & CO/CPMR Islands Commission webinar on MRE *(18 February)*

March:
CPMR Political Bureau

April:
AAC General Assembly *(date tbc)*

May–June:
AAC hub meetings (1/2)
French Regional Elections *(June)*

In the meantime, you can follow us on our social media!

@Atlantic_Arc
@CPMR_Europe

[www.cpmr-atlantic.org](http://www.cpmr-atlantic.org)