Dear Members,

With the Brexit agreement reached on 24 December 2020 and the European Commission’s proposal on the Brexit Adjustment Reserve on the next day, the year 2021 started under historical circumstances and will mark a unique time to reshape Atlantic cooperation. In this particular context, the Atlantic Arc will have an essential role to play to encourage and maintain collaborations and exchanges between all Atlantic Arc member regions.

The year 2021 is also beginning with the favourable occasion for the Atlantic Arc regions’ interests to be in the spotlight of the EU agenda with the start of the Portuguese presidency at the EU Council. Together, we should seize this opportunity to voice our priorities and be a strong ally to work along the presidency’s motto to deliver a “a fair, green and digital recovery”.

An exciting prospect is coming ahead, and we are looking forward to fostering the Atlantic cooperation by your side this year! In the meantime, we wish you a good reading, and we will be thrilled to meet you virtually for the next Political Steering Group (23 March) and the upcoming AAC hub meetings (15-16 April)!

With all our best wishes,

The CPMR Atlantic Arc Secretariat,
Elise Wattrelot, AAC Executive Secretary
Delphine Kaczorowski, Project and Policy Officer
Catherine Petiau, Policy Assistant

and the CPMR project team (AAC projects),
Barbara Favaro, Project Officer
Justine Brossard, Project Officer
Focus on the Brexit

The Atlantic Arc Commission activities following the Brexit agreement

**AAC representatives met with Commissioner Ferreira**

On 18 February, the AAC and the North Sea Commissions met with Commissioner Ferreira to tackle the Brexit Adjustment Reserve and called the European Commission to ensure a territorially balanced distribution and a place-based use of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve funds. The AAC was represented by Marian Elorza, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs for Basque Country, and Councillor Niamh Kennedy from Donegal City Council. Marian Elorza insisted on the need for guarantee to ensure that regions participate in the implementation of the BAR while Niamh Kennedy highlighted the impact on the fisheries sector and the need to reflect on an EU support after 2026. Along the discussions, Commissioner Ferreira also expressed her interest to follow the development of the Atlantic macro-region with attention. Read the full press release here

**AAC contributed to Brexit technical notes**

In January, the CPMR released one technical note on the UK-EU Cooperation Agreement and another on the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR), both drafted with the active contribution of the AAC Secretariat. The influential work of the AAC was especially highlighted, recalling four-year continuous activities from the outset. Read the notes here

**The Brexit Adjustment Reserve: AAC met with key negotiators**

To follow-up on the AAC/NSC declaration on the Brexit Adjustment Reserve, the AAC Secretariat met Pascal Arimont’s team, rapporteur on Brexit Adjustment Reserve at the European Parliament in early February to promote the declaration and share with the team comments on the proposal of the European Commission. The European Parliament is expected to adopt its position in April. The AAC Secretariat together with CPMR cohesion team also met on 16 February with the Portuguese Permanent Representation to share comments on the BAR. Member States have strong disagreements on the allocation key, but the other elements of the text are expected to be negotiated quite fast.

The AAC regions also contributed to the debate held during the CPMR Core Group dedicated to the Brexit Adjustment Reserve and the Resilient and Recovery Facility which invited Stefan Appel, Head of Unit, Administrative Capacity Building and European Solidarity Fund, DG REGIO, European Commission, in addition to its active involvement in the Brexit Adjustment Reserve proposal.
Brexit: Words from AAC regions

In reaction to the Brexit announcement, regional representatives from Basque Country, Bretagne, Galicia, and Pays de la Loire regions joined their forces to address the Atlantic concerns and perspectives about the consequences of Brexit by video. Many thanks for your contribution!

Watch the full CPMR playlist here

Maria Elorza, Basque Country, on the Brexit Adjustment Reserve

Jesús Gamallo Aller, Galicia, on the impact of Brexit on the fisheries sector

Vanessa Charbonneau, Pays de la Loire, on the future of cross-border cooperation

Loïg Chesnais-Girard, Brittany, on the essential role of the regions in the governance of the UK-EU agreement
Atlantic Arc Commission in interaction with essential actors on the Atlantic Strategy and the development of a Macro-Region

AAP 2.0: Cantabria at the Committee of the Regions

On the occasion of European Committee of the Regions' Commission for Natural Resources (NAT) organised on 29 January, Ms. Paula Fernández Viaña, Minister of the Interior, Justice and Foreign action of Cantabria Government and CoR’s rapporteur for the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan 2.0, called for a relaunch of the creation of an Atlantic Macro-Region, addressing its necessity in order to face COVID-19 and Brexit consequences in the Atlantic.

The questionnaire circulated by the AAC in late 2020 contributed to her report to the CoR. Thank you very much for your contributions!

AAC met with the Atlantic Permanent Representations on the Atlantic Macro-Region

In addition to sharing comments on the Brexit Adjustment Reserve, the AAC met with the Portuguese Permanent Representation on 16 February to share its Declaration on the Atlantic Macro-Region. The Portuguese Presidency was interested to learn our arguments and advise to reach the central government on this issue. The priorities of the Portuguese Presidency are focused in closing the discussion on the regulations for next programming period and reaching an agreement on the BAR. The end of the Presidency would offer more flexibility. The AAC Secretariat also met with the General Secretariat for the Sea in France on 11 February and the Irish Permanent Representation on 20 January and presented the Atlantic Macro-Region declaration.
On 10 February, the AAC Secretariat organised a joint meeting with DG MARE and JRC representatives, together with the Basque Country and CCDR-Lisboa e Vale do Tejo to share knowledge on the current Atlantic RIS3 and potential synergies. The importance of regional knowledge and approach on the industrial needs, challenges and existing initiatives was especially pointed out by DG MARE which is notably looking at implementing its new Offshore Energy Strategy in the Atlantic Area. Participants welcomed more cooperation with regions for an effective RIS3 implementation in the field of Blue Economy. The AAC will assess the possibility to get involved in a seminar on RIS3 and Blue Economy (April 2020). It will monitor possibilities for AAC regions to increase cooperation on Atlantic RIS3 via INTERREG programmes.

Read the JRC latest publication on S3 and Blue biotechnology in Europe here.

The AAC Secretariat is closely collaborating with the European Parliament and the Irish Permanent Representation, chair of the Atlantic Strategy in 2021, to develop a seminar on the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0 in the framework of the SEARICA Intergroup. The meeting will be held on 26 May (morning).

It will involve Members of the European Parliament implicated in the revision of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0 and with whom the AAC collaborated closely. The event will represent the culmination of this close collaboration between the AAC and the MEPs.

Indeed, the AAC Secretariat met with MEP Younous Omarjee’s team on several occasions in order to discuss his report on the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, as rapporteur for the European Parliament. The final report should be voted around June 2021. It also met with MEP Pierre Karleskind, chair of PECH Committee, who recently published his draft opinion. MEP Izaskun Bilbao has also released her draft opinion as rapporteur for TRAN Committee. Both are in line with AAC positions:

- See MEP Pierre Karleskind’s draft opinion
- See MEP Izaskun Bilbao’s draft opinion
The Maritime hub

The AAC developing new activities on Marine Renewable Energies and Blue Skills

MRE Workshop with CPMR Islands Commission and Solutions&Co

On 18 February, the AAC, the CPMR Islands Commission and Pays de la Loire development agency Solutions&Co jointly organised a webinar on MRE and smart grids systems in EU islands. In addition to the presentation of innovative initiatives, this meeting was an occasion to discuss the new EU offshore renewable energy strategy and AAP 2.0 with DG MARE and French General Secretariat for the Sea representatives. Laurent Gérault, member of Pays de la Loire Regional Council, chaired the event and highlighted the leading role of the region in wind energy on the national level and the importance of collaboration with islands. He also mentioned the SMILE project, in partnership with Brittany region. Presentations are available here.

Developing a project on Skills in the field of aquaculture

A series of bilateral meetings with potential partners from Nouvelle Aquitaine, Bretagne, Pays de la Loire, Andalusia, Galicia, were held to assess their interest in participating in a project aiming at improving skills in the field of aquaculture. Next meeting between identified partners will be held at the beginning of March (date tbc).

Answers received from AAC regions on a potential new EU MRE project

As part of the Pillar 3 of the Atlantic Strategy dedicated to MRE, the AAC Secretariat has been asked to gather regions’ ideas of potential future cooperation projects in the field of MRE combined with nature restoration. The results showcased that regions would notably like to enhance cooperation in the field of MRE testing in real sea conditions. We also received and sent proposals for clustering activities and analysis of the floating wind value chain, biofuels and green shipping studies, as well as interests in energy transportation vectors. Many thanks for your contributions!

Building of a Pact for Skills on Offshore Energy

The AAC has worked with key stakeholders to create a large-scale partnership on Skills in the field of Offshore Energy, composed of CETMAR, WindEurope, Ocean Energy Europe and SeaEurope notably. The aim is to create a Pact for Skills together on the Offshore Energy issue to foster collaborations and initiatives to update skills to better match with the sector needs. This initiative is in line with the AAC political orientations on MRE and will help the AAC to be well-identified on the Skills issues at EU level and be well-placed to monitor future political and financial opportunities. The AAC have submitted a letter of engagement which proposed to increase the partnership with one additional organisation per year, and organise one event on Offshore Energy skills per year.
The Accessibility/Attractivity hub

Update on Transport, Tourism and Culture activities

Transport – a TRAN Committee aligned with AAC positions on the Atlantic corridor

On 25 February, TRAN Committee met with Prof Carlo Secchi, coordinator of the Atlantic Corridor, DG MOVE. The AAC shared in advance its messages with certain members of the European Parliament. MEP Pierre Karleskind insisted on the need to enhance the Atlantic dimension of the corridor to include peripheries and contribute to a greater territorial cohesion. MEP Izaskun Bilbao Berrandica requested the need to complete the missing link of the corridor between France and Spain. MEP Riquet highlighted the need for a greater connection between ports and the corridor as well as links between the Atlantic and North-Sea Med corridor. MEP Isabel Garcia asked to achieve the core and comprehensive networks, foster intermodality and accessibility after Brexit, in close cooperation with regional authorities. All these positions are aligned with AAC messages. The AAC will closely work with CPMR Transport working group (30-31 March) and will deliver an Atlantic answer to the TEN-T consultation (deadline 5 May 2021) based on its previous works and declarations.

Atlantic Tourism and Culture: reports

As a follow up of the Hub meetings where the AAC met with MEP Claudia Monteiro de Aguiar and Andalusia Deputy Regional Minister of Tourism, Regeneration, Justice and Public Administration Manuel Alejandro Cardenete Flores, respectively rapporteur of the Parliament and CoR on sustainable tourism, we would like to share updates on the calendar of both reports:


- **CoR Opinion “Towards more sustainable tourism for EU cities and regions”** approved in December last year led by Manuel Alejandro Cardenete Flores
On 22 January, the CPMR Fisheries and Aquaculture Working Group met to identify challenges and opportunities that financial instruments represent under the EMFF. The meeting gathered around 50 regions from different sea-basins. Guest-speakers from DG MARE, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Estonian Ministry of Rural Affairs provided relevant information on the use of financial instruments. The AAC will therefore continue to follow the negotiations on this future instrument and provide support to the regions during its implementation phase. The Working Group also followed the discussions on the BAR at the EP and its consequences on fisheries. As the fisheries and aquaculture sector has been particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis, the CPMR will also explore the initiatives developed to help the sector.

On 26 January and in the context of the Regions Act! CPMR initiative, Donegal County Council presented good practices alongside regional representatives from the different CPMR geographical commissions. Mr. John Gallagher, Senior Engineer at the Donegal County Council, highlighted several initiatives such as the INTERREG NPA SmartRenew project and the sustainable green roof and pollination plan of Letterkenny Public Services Centre. This event was organised in the presence of Ms. Katerřna Fortůn, Policy Officer at DG CLIMA, reacting to the panel presentations and introducing the European Climate Pact platform and actions. Have a look at the CPMR Regions Act! Map here
On 1 March, CPMR President Cees Loggen represented the CPMR in the Macro-Region week organised by the European Commission. He was part of the opening panel composed of high-level speakers such as Commissioner Ferreira. This second edition aimed at rethinking the way to cooperate and prioritise MRS objectives in order to best recover from the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 with concrete actions on the ground. He shared CPMR key messages on macro-region, including messages from CPMR Geographical Commissions and recalled the proposal of key territorial players from the Atlantic Area for a new macro-regional strategy. Cees Loggen notably highlighted MRS potential to contribute to COVID-19 recovery, the untapped use of regional expertise in the governance of the strategies and the opportunities MRS represent for cooperation with non-EU countries.

The general EMD 2021 programme has been confirmed and includes the CPMR President in the opening plus several workshops of interest, among which CPMR workshop on sustainable coastal tourism. Built in cooperation with the European Commission, the agenda will display good practices developed by a variety of stakeholders. AAC regions are invited to take the floor during the debate session!
Atlantic regions, together for a cohesive Atlantic Area

AAC Projects

As the SAFER project will end in 2021, an online event will be organised towards the end of March (30 March – tbc), with the aim of presenting the results of the project and exploring the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on the project partners’ regions and the seafood sector. The AAC is also currently finalising SAFER’s digital catalogue, which promotes the results of the pilots implemented at the local level and highlight best practices of innovation in the seafood sector identified in the course of the project. The catalogue will be published by the end of March 2021 and distributed among stakeholders interested in fostering the blue growth of the Atlantic area. Stay tuned!

In January 2021, the mobile application Marine Litter LOC-app developed by INTECMAR in the framework of the CleanAtlantic project has been launched. The app offers the opportunity to geolocate marine litter, their characteristics and dimensions, to add pictures and comments and to collect specific information. As the project is coming to its end in 2021, a final conference will be organised in June 2021, in Vigo, Spain, or online depending on the sanitary situation.

On 10 February, the partners of the new Atlantic Smart Ports Blue Acceleration Network (AspBAN) met for the first time to prepare the launch of the project and define the first activities to carry out. They will meet again on 3 March 2021 to prepare the official kick-off meeting in April 2021 which will officially launch the start of the project. The AAC will lead the capitalisation activities of the project and will plan an AAC seminar in September/October (date tbc) to link up the project initiatives with the Atlantic regions’ practices. Stay tuned and read the full press release here.
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