Extraordinary meeting - Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Atlantic Arc Commission

5 June 2019 - Brussels

Minutes

I - Internal business (closed session): validation of two political papers

Vanessa Charbonneau, Vice-President of the Pays de la Loire Region, chairing of the Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC), welcomed the participants on behalf of Christelle Morançais, President of the Pays de la Loire Region, who was not able to come.

She recalled that this extraordinary meeting is not a General Assembly. The General Assembly will be held during the Second semester 2019. This meeting is meant to look at two possible political declarations addressing the future of Atlantic cooperation and celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Atlantic Arc Commission.

Before presenting the two documents under discussion, she also introduced Katie Cavell, the new Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission. She was previously delegate for Cornwall Council in Brussels. She thanked the former Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission, Pauline Caumont for her work the past few years.

- Vote on the Open Letter on the Atlantic Area Programme

As a follow up of different actions of the Atlantic Arc Commission to preserve the Atlantic Area Programme for the next programming period (see meeting with MEP Pascal Arimont, August 2018), it was proposed that members vote on adopting an Open Letter to be addressed to the EU Institutions and Atlantic Member States.

  ➔ The Open Letter was validated unanimously without amendments.

- Debate and vote on the revision of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan

In light of the revision process of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan by the five Atlantic Member States, a political paper was developed to gather regions’ orientations on the future priorities of the Action Plan, its governance, and the associated funding opportunities. On financing, it was noted that a greater alignment between the INTERREG Atlantic Area Programme and the Atlantic Strategy was agreed at the AAC General Assembly in Comillas, and subsequently led to an action to influence the Council (May 2018). The Council consequently voted on a 75% alignment of the priorities of transnational INTERREG programmes those of the relevant Macro-Region or Sea Basin Strategy.
On the Declaration on the Atlantic Strategy, several amendments were submitted. The consolidated Declaration passed unanimously.

- **Debate Amendment 6** (Pays de la Loire) proposed to ask for Atlantic Arc Commission participation in the Atlantic Corridor Forum.

**Vanessa Charbonneau** recalled that the Pays de la Loire region recently joined the Atlantic Corridor Forum, as a result of the inclusion of Nantes-Saint-Nazaire in the Corridor. However, not all Atlantic regions can be part of the Forum, hence why they proposed to request the participation of the Atlantic Arc Commission in the Forum.

**Aude Körfer**, Delegate of the Brittany Region to the EU, recalled that in the CPMR consultation process on the TEN-T revision, Brittany raised the idea that regions which are part of the global network should take part in the Forum of the closest Corridor.

**Sophie Cochard**, Delegate of the Pays de la Loire Region to the EU, answered that currently regions from the global network cannot join the Forums. Pays de la Loire has only recently been awarded the right to be present, after a request formulated to the Member States. **Aude Körfer** detailed that the Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration will be brought to the Atlantic Member States. In this sense, the inclusion of this message could be a way to inform them on the interest of all the Atlantic regions to take part in the Forum.

Pays de la Loire’s amendment was accepted unanimously.

- **Amendment 19** (the Basque Country) insisted on the need for the Atlantic Strategy to deal with higher education, vocational training, and dual education.

**Jean-Michel Arrivé**, Director in charge of EU Affairs at the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region, commented on the paragraph on governance, where the amendment was introduced, as it referred to the work of Nouvelle-Aquitaine as chair of the Atlantic Arc Commission’s Innovation Working Group. The paragraph gave the possibility for Atlantic Arc Commission regions to take responsibility for a new thematic group on Maritime Training at the level of the Atlantic Strategy. In principle, Nouvelle-Aquitaine agreed on the need to improve complementarity between the Atlantic Arc Commission Working Groups and the new Thematic Group of the Atlantic Strategy, but raised the question of the practical implications. The leadership of both groups would require considerable human resource which should be anticipated. **Jean-Michel Arrivé** agreed that the wording of the paragraph was broad enough to be kept as it is. However, he asked a further reflection to identify the modalities of work.

**Claire Le Tertre**, Head of the EU Programmes Unit in the Brittany Region, supported this point and suggested to develop a roadmap to clarify the way regions participate in the new governance.

**Vanessa Charbonneau** agreed on having a practical reflection on how to achieve the Political Declaration.

The Basque Country’s amendment was accepted unanimously.

### II - Celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Atlantic Arc Commission

#### 1. Inspirational speeches

**Ricardo Serrão Santos**, Member of the European Parliament, recalled the common characteristics and diversity of the Atlantic Regions. He emphasised the environmental challenges that affect the Atlantic Ocean: threat to biodiversity, acidification of waters, marine pollution. Technological innovations, transnational cooperation, or legislation are means to tackle those challenges. He recalled the work done by the European Parliament on key legislation for the Atlantic Ocean. He underlined that CPMR is key when it comes to support for such initiatives.
He emphasised the fact that it was a critical moment for the preservation of the Atlantic Ocean. Improvements in Atlantic Strategy governance processes could be made, and recalled that progress had been made in the management of fish stocks, reduction of pollution, or the fight against marine litter. He suggested to better integrate scientific knowledge in the governance processes to better inform political decisions.

**Eleni Marianou**, CPMR Secretary General, recalled the creation of the Atlantic Arc Commission in 1989 by 53 regions, which developed the sea-basin dimension of CPMR. She underlined the key achievements of the Atlantic Arc Commission until now, bringing a blue dimension to EU policies, as acknowledged on DG MARE’s website.

Key messages of the Faro Declaration, which established the Atlantic Arc Commission voted by the 53 Regions in 1989, are still valid. However, the current context of Brexit has created difficulties for cooperation possibilities. She recalled actions of the Atlantic Arc Commission and the CPMR to defend cooperation post-Brexit, and the request to create an EU budgetary assistance mechanism to support regions to manage the financial burden associated with the UK’s departure from the EU. This latter request was supported by the European Parliament and the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian.

She highlighted other challenges to work on: climate change, which particularly affects the Atlantic coast; the development of Marine Renewable Energy as a solution to climate change; and accessibility of Atlantic regions to be ensured in the TEN-T regulation. The transatlantic dimension was also a key element for the Atlantic Arc Commission to develop as it had been approached by Quebec.

Finally, she emphasised the need to work on the Territorial Agenda, to be operationalised under the German Presidency, to not leave any kind of territories out of the EU policies.

**Vanessa Charbonneau**, came back on the importance for the Atlantic Arc Commission to tackle climate change issues, recalling the storms that Asturias, Cantabria, and Pays de La Loire suffered, as well as the risk of maritime pollution and coastal erosion. In addition, she evoked the need to develop the economic potential of the Atlantic Arc Commission territories, as the BBMBC project did, and Atlantic connectivity.

### 2. Our Common characteristics and key area of work

#### a. Key areas on which the Atlantic Arc Commission should (continue to) work

**Forough Salami-Dadkhah**, Vice-President of the Brittany Region, addressed participants via a video message. She apologised for not being present and thanked the Pays de la Loire Region for initiating this exchange on the future of the Atlantic Arc Commission. She shared her thoughts on avenues of work for the Atlantic Arc Commission. Regarding the possibility to develop an Atlantic Macro-Region, Ms Salami-Dadkhah stated that the Brittany Region had no definitive opinion on the topic, but felt that embarking on a Macro-Region now was a bit premature and that Brittany would advise to decide first on the priorities of this Atlantic area before deciding on the design of the tool. She underlined that this did not mean that Brittany was against a Macro-Region. She then highlighted three priorities that should guide the work of the Atlantic Arc Commission. Firstly, Brexit and the future relationship with the UK partners. Secondly, the connection with Ireland, not only in terms of transport, but also in its digital and energy dimension. Finally, climate change, as regions have a responsibility and a need to have a strategy to tackle this challenge.

**Ester Silva**, Vice-President of the CCDR do Norte, picked up on Ms Salami-Dadkhah’s comment on climate change challenges, recalling that the Atlantic area was very strategic when it came to the development of marine renewable energies. She underlined the need to work on attracting investors and, thus the key role of EU programmes. She recalled the work of Norte region, as managing authority of Structural Funds for 30 years. She highlighted that the papers discussed today by the Atlantic Arc Commission regions went in the right direction.

**Juan José Sota**, Regional Minister for Economy, Finance and Employment of the Cantabria Region, highlighted that complementary to Cantabria’s participation in the Atlantic Area Programme was the fact that the Cantabria Region managed the SUDOE programme, which covered the Portuguese and Spanish regions, as well as the
Regions in the south of France, Gibraltar, and Andorra. It mobilised 16 797 organisations, amounting to around 980 project applications in three calls.

He recognised that the absence of related funding instruments was an obstacle to the success of Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies. However, he defended an Atlantic Macro-Region that would include the terrestrial element of the SUDOE area to tackle issues such as the protection of cultural heritage or the protection of rural communities, but also the maritime elements of the North West area. He also highlighted that Cantabria wanted to reflect on a Macro-Region for the SUDOE area.

He drew the attention of participants to the Commission's proposal on European Territorial Cooperation, which gave the possibility for functional areas that were close to a Macro-Region to contribute to the priorities of the closest Macro-Region. He suggested that the Atlantic Arc Commission could contribute to a definition of functional areas, as zones which share common challenges with the clear wish to cooperate.

He insisted on the importance to guarantee good management of the programme in order to ensure early publication of the first calls for projects post-2020. He also suggested that the Atlantic Arc Commission should propose a revision of the EU Solidarity Fund, to give the INTERREG programme the ability to distribute the money among regions affected by the same climate event.

Finally, he also recalled the importance for the Atlantic Arc Commission to participate in the TEN-T revision to defend Atlantic connectivity.

Jean-Michel Arrivé, Director in charge of EU affairs at Nouvelle Aquitaine Region, recalled the specific geography of Nouvelle Aquitaine region, an Atlantic region also involved in a Euroregion with Navarra and the Basque Country. He gave apologies for Mr Rousset, President of Nouvelle Aquitaine, and Mrs Boudineau, Vice-President, who were both unable to come.

He highlighted another dimension of the work that the Atlantic Arc Commission should continue to develop, which is the education and training in the sectors of importance for the Atlantic regions. He cited transport, blue biotechnology, marine renewable energy, as examples. He recalled the achievements of the BBMBC project, elaborated by the Innovation Working Group of the Atlantic Arc Commission, which developed a Masters degree in biotechnologies at La Rochelle University, adapted to business needs. He also explained the new perspectives that the Innovation Working Group should look at:

- A benchmark of existing blue training and needs for training in Atlantic Regions;
- The development of a MOOC to attract young people to blue jobs;
- An awareness raising campaign on Maritime jobs and opportunities to attract more young people to blue sectors.

He invited the Atlantic Arc Commission Regions to answer the questionnaire prepared by the Nouvelle Aquitaine Region to advance on the project development. He insisted that the improvement of training at all levels was a key challenge for the future of Atlantic economies.

Vanessa Charbonneau thanked Jean-Michel Arrivé and stressed that this issue was present in the orientation given by the European Commission in the Country Reports.

b. Key elements for the success for future actions

Patrick Anvroin, former director in charge of Transport at CPMR and former Technical Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission, concluded the session, presenting the history and framework from which all these new perspectives had been developed. He highlighted key elements which contributed in the past to the success of the Atlantic Arc Commission:

- The variety of stakeholders engaged in the creation and the development of the Atlantic Arc Commission, notably the participation of geographers in the early stage of the Atlantic Arc Commission development in the 1980s.
- The strong political commitment of key regional politicians with a bold vision able to drive dynamics, such as the creation of an Atlantic group in the European Parliament by Mr Raffarin, former Member of the European Parliament in 1995 and former French Prime Minister.
- A strong regional commitment in terms of human and financial resources to finance studies, exhibitions, and publications.
- A clear strategy of development, as drawn in the Atlantic Spatial Development Scheme (funded by INTERREG 3B Program).
- The Atlantic Arc Commission’s capacity to propose new instruments for cooperation, such as the Atlantis Programme (4 million Ecu) and transnational programmes (article 10b in ERDF regulation allowing the funding of trans-regional cooperation in 1986).
- Unity among member regions.

⇒ See PPT Presentation by Patrick Anvroin

c. Debate with members

Aude Körfer, for the Brittany region, shared the work that the Brittany region was undertaking on the history of the Atlantic Arc Commission and the specificities unique to the Atlantic Arc. Atlantic Arc Commission Regions would be asked to participate.

Jesús Gamallo, Director General for the Region of Galicia, suggested two proposals. He affirmed the support of Galicia to the creation of an Atlantic Macro-Region. He recalled that a Macro-Region was subjected to the ‘three-no rule’ (no new legislation, no new fund, no new institution), which was an opportunity for the Atlantic Arc Commission to be the key organisation to nurture the content of the Macro-Region. He suggested aligning more clearly the work of the Atlantic Arc Commission with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. He suggested a reflection on how the Atlantic Arc Commission Regions could fulfil the SDGs.

Vanessa Charbonneau added on the Macro-Region point that discussions were open, but expressed the priority of Pays de La Loire, shared by the other French regions, to focus on the improvement of the Atlantic Strategy governance to produce results that can be later capitalised on. However, she agreed to work jointly on the idea of a Macro-Region.

3. Atlantic regions at the bow of Europe, piercing the waves

a. Brexit and our future relationships with the UK

Scene setting

Vanessa Charbonneau introduced the session by recalling the work of the Atlantic Arc Commission on Brexit through its Brexit Task Force, such as the organisation of two meetings with Michel Barnier, EU Brexit Chief Negotiator.

Fabian Zuleeg, Chief Executive & Chief Economist, European Policy Centre, introduced the session on Brexit by recalling the context. The UK is facing a choice between a No-Deal scenario, a hard Brexit with tremendous economic impacts on the UK, or a soft Brexit where the UK would still be subjected to some EU law without the possibility to take part in the decisions. Mr Zuleeg felt the UK would avoid making a choice as long as it could. A No-Deal scenario remained a realistic possibility. There was a possibility to revoke Art. 50 or to hold a new referendum, but both were unlikely to happen. If it were the case, it would not resolve the outcome, and instability would remain for years to come. The EU27 would have to decide on the extension of the negotiating period. Unless there was a substantial change in the UK which required an extension, it was possible that there would not be an extension.

He insisted on the fact that consequences depended on the final outcome. A No-Deal would imply that a constructive relationship between the UK and the EU would be impossible. If there was a deal, cooperation
would still be qualitatively different than with Norway or Switzerland because the UK was far bigger and a different competitor.

**Work perspective**

**Jesús Gamallo**, Director General for the Region of Galicia, recalled that Galicia was a founder of the Atlantic Arc Commission. Manuel Fraga was President of the Atlantic Arc Commission and he was Political Secretary, working together with Patrick Anvroin, who was Technical Secretary. At the time, Xavier Gizard was Secretary General of CPMR, and was the impulse for the Atlantic Arc Commission and the regional movement in Europe more generally. Back at the time, it was a very political organisation which contributed to the creation of the Committee of the Regions. Now with Brexit, he believed the Atlantic Arc Commission had an enormous political dimension. In Galicia, 1700 crews would be affected by a No-Deal Brexit, as well as 110 fishing boats and 96 fishing businesses. The region would also lose 540 million euros per year at the first landing. As a No-Deal scenario was likely to happen, he recommended working on this scenario and on the mitigation of its impacts. He proposed three ways forward:

- The affirmation of key principles such as, for the fisheries sector, the double link between the access to market and the access to water, the necessity to maintain close relationships between the regions from both sides of the Channel after Brexit, and the need to have compensation funds.
- Work on contingency measures proposed by the European Commission. For fisheries, they were not sufficient because they proposed a temporary grant within the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which was already dedicated to important challenges.

He concluded that a strong relationship with UK regions on the issue of movement of people and goods was key to reduce the impact of Brexit.

**Simon Brindle**, Director for European Transition at the Welsh Government, underlined the Welsh context on Brexit. At the last European Elections, a clear split could be observed between votes for ‘leave’ and votes for ‘remain’. The Welsh Government was supporting a pragmatic approach to Brexit, based on six key aspects:

1) Full access to the single market and the customs union, as the vast majority of Wales’ trade was with the EU (100% for fish products);
2) Maintain social and environmental protections (including workers’ rights);
3) A new migration system linking migration and employment;
4) Maintain the same level of funding to regions post-Brexit, because Wales was by far one of the UK regions receiving the most EU funding;
5) A transition period to avoid a cliff edge;
6) A constitutional change to ensure Wales’ functioning as a nation.

As a No deal outcome was becoming more likely, Welsh ministers believed that the decision must be taken by the public in a second referendum.

Wales was working on three fronts: First, it was preparing for a No Deal, playing an active role in the negotiation of a future economic partnership, and for the implications of continued EU membership; Wales was also working on the consequences for its market of discrepancies between EU and UK law; and finally, it was working in favour of remaining part of EU programmes such as ETC, Horizon, and Creative Europe, but also engaging with international partners. Wales appointed a new minister for foreign affairs, Mrs Eluned Morgan, who was a former MEP. She worked on a new international strategy which underlined Wales’ commitment to continue relations with regions in the EU, as well as participation in CPMR and Atlantic Arc Commission activities. In this respect, he recalled Wales’ renewed bilateral Memoranda of Understanding with Brittany, Galicia, and the Basque Country.

**b. Our place in European Policies**
Macro-Region and Sea-Basin Strategies

Marian Elorza, General Secretary for External Action at the Basque Government, recalled that since 2010, the Atlantic Arc Commission Regions acted in favour of the development of an Atlantic Macro-Region. After several meetings, the General Affairs Council of June 2010 gave a mandate to the Commission to create a Sea Basin Strategy and not a Macro-Region.

Now that the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan was being revised, she believed it was an opportune time to re-launch a demand in favour of an Atlantic Macro-Region. The negotiation of the MFF and Brexit were occasions to reinforce Atlantic cooperation and to raise the political level. Furthermore, the General Affairs Council of May 2019, opened the possibility for the creation of a new Macro-Region.

She highlighted that the experience of the Atlantic Strategy was a good basis to ask for an upgrade to a Macro-Region. She recalled that the aspiration to move towards a Macro-Region was mentioned in the Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration of Bilbao in 2015, and in the Atlantic Arc Commission Comillas Declaration in 2017. She also underlined the integration of a Sea Basin Strategy within a Macro-Region was possible, as demonstrated by the Adriatic Ionian Strategy.

She also expressed her fear to see other Macro-Regions being created, leaving the Atlantic behind. She mentioned three Macro-Regions being mooted, in the North Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Carpathian Mountains.

She agreed that the Macro-Region was not the panacea which would solve all the problems in the Atlantic area, but it would mark a positive dynamic, with more positives than negatives:

- A major political commitment, as the European Council should approve and give the mandate to the Commission to initiate a Macro-Region. She recalled that Macro-Regions are intergovernmental strategies whose level of success depends on the level of engagement of Member States concerned, but also the level of engagement of relevant stakeholders in the process of elaboration and implementation.

- A better alignment of funding. The proposal of the European Commission on the Common Provisions Regulation showed greater financial support to the priorities of the Macro-Regional Strategies than to those of Sea Basin Strategies. The Structural Funds Regulation also makes a distinction between Sea Basin and Macro-Region Strategies. A better coordination with the Structural Funds was noted for Macro-Regions. According to a report from January 2019, on the evaluation of Macro-Regional Strategies, the Baltic Macro-Region was the most advanced in this respect, as 129 million Euros of investment from the EU Structural Funds was invested via the Macro-Region Strategy, while 14 million Euros was invested via the Danube Macro-Region, and 4 million in the Alpine and Adriatic Strategies. Elorza felt this showed that a Macro-Region was an instrument better able to align funding.

- A tool to broaden the scope of action. The first objective of an Atlantic Macro-Region should be the economic growth of a peripheral area thanks to greater territorial cohesion. Atlantic regions suffer from delayed development, which should be corrected. Some sectors face technological and financial challenges, which require joint planning and financial support. The preservation of the environment was another topic, as the Atlantic possesses an abundance of ecosystems, which demand a strong sustainable development strategy. Atlantic connectivity was another challenge characterised by a radial transport structure and a number bottlenecks. Research and innovation, regeneration of urban areas, and cultural heritage are other challenges cited. She also suggested that the Atlantic Macro-Region could be the first tool to integrate the social dimension as a horizontal theme in each of its actions.

Ms Elorza expressed her view that it is time to act in favour of an Atlantic Macro-Region, recalling the work of the Basque Government. She added two other positive points coming from the Basque analysis: the potential for a multi-level governance model with a major role for regions, as in the case of the Alpine Strategy; and the possibility to integrate third countries.

Ms Elorza concluded that she believed the Atlantic Arc Commission could work in parallel on the current revision of the Atlantic Action Plan and the Atlantic Macro-Region. Both processes were not mutually exclusive.
The commitment of regions and Member States was a requirement for the success of the Macro-Region. The Atlantic Arc Commission should discuss, reflect, and agree on a concrete approach.

Vanessa Charbonneau, agreed that the exploration a Macro-Region should be pursued, as the Atlantic Arc Commission was an integrated tool for cooperation in the Atlantic. But for the time being, a focus should be made on the Atlantic Strategy in order to develop practical proposals and not be left behind in the revision process of the Strategy.

Other legislation key for the Atlantic area

Nicolas Brookes, Executive Director of CPMR, linked the debate on Macro-Regions with the current negotiation on Cohesion Policy and its budget. He recalled some successes of the Atlantic Arc Commission to voice regions interests within Cohesion Policy. As an example, the Atlantic Arc Commission was key in reaching a 75% alignment between Sea Basin and Macro-Region Strategies and future transnational programmes, putting both types of strategies on an equal footing.

He recalled the state of the negotiations on Cohesion Policy. By the end of June, the Council would finalise their position on Cohesion Policy, excluding budgetary considerations, and then Trilogues would start. A technical update was expected in September, which could change the eligibility of some regions. Budgetary cuts were expected for the CAP and Cohesion Policy. For ETC and specifically Component 5, it was very difficult at this stage to know the budget and the possibilities for third country participation in the programme. There were still questions regarding whether thematic concentration would be at regional or national level. These points should be discussed during the CPMR General Assembly in October.

Mr Brookes also linked the discussions on a Macro-Region with the Council debates on the Territorial Agenda. Sea Basin and Macro-Region Strategies were important tools to give a regional perspective to EU policies. Until now, the Council conclusions on Macro-Regions were positive, and in most cases these conclusions could also be extended to Sea Basin Strategies. However, few references were made to Sea Basin Strategies in the Macro-Region annual report. In this respect, the CPMR would relaunch the technical Task Force on Macro-Region and Sea Basin Strategies, and Atlantic regions were more than welcome to contribute.

Debates

Claire Le Tertre for the Brittany Region, added to Ms Forough Salami-Dadkhah’s declaration that Brexit would have an impact on the EU budget and, most notably, on the ETC programmes. On the Macro-Region, she asked for clarification on the process of Member States reaching an agreement and the impact that would have on governance and the role of regions. She felt that both the improvement of the Atlantic Strategy and exploration of a Macro-Region should be looked at. She thought the Atlantic Arc Commission should benefit from the improvements foreseen for the Sea Basin Strategy, and keep in mind that in the middle to long term, the Macro-Region tool could be available. She recalled Ms Salami-Dadkhah’s speech that the choice of the tool was secondary to the identification of priorities and issues, such as Brexit.

Vanessa Charbonneau supported the position of the Britanny region.

Marian Elorza for the Basque Country thanked the previous technical contribution, but underlined that her role was a political one. She agreed that there was no political decision that did not have a challenge to overcome, and that different opinions were legitimate. For that reason, the Atlantic Arc Commission needed to work within a reflection group to overcome these challenges and to seize the opportunity. If regions had a constructive contribution to the debate on the Macro-Region, the Member States would be able to make a more informed decision.

Juan José Sota for Cantabria Region, supported the position of the Basque Country, stating that we should be conscious that transnational INTERREG programmes could be abolished if there was not a Macro-Region to support them. Sota also highlighted that a Macro-Region could include a Third Country.
Vanessa Charbonneau proposed that the existing working group could be reinforced, and should not prevent advancement on the improvement of the Atlantic Strategy. We want to continue to work with the UK, and the Atlantic Strategy could support the continuation of cooperation.

Katie Cavell, Executive Secretary, asked a question to Fabian Zuleeg that if, at the local/regional level the difficulty to work with the UK, whatever the nature of the agreement, would be the same as at State level.

Fabian Zuleeg answered that no matter the good will, the overall framework may make cooperation difficult between regions. In a No Deal scenario, the UK would probably not pay its contribution to the current MFF, which would impede constructive cooperation. On fisheries, no framework would trigger conflict.

c. Piercing the waves

Catalina de Miguel García for the Region of Andalucía recalled that the government of Andalucía had changed. She insisted on the importance of the blue economy for the Andalucía Region, which was at the junction between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

Fisheries, and notably aquaculture, was key for the economy of the region. The sector comprised 114 businesses, which were mostly SMEs. Tourism was another key sector for Andalucía. She underlined that 70% of tourism activity was concentrated in 9% of the territory, which created its own difficulties.

Besides those two sectors, Ms Garcia suggested to participants possible avenues of work for her region within the Atlantic Arc Commission. She explained that the Atlantic Arc Commission should work more closely with territorial stakeholders, such as CEIMAR, Campus de Excelencia del Mar, which was a public entity created in 2012, led by the University of Cadiz, and grouping universities from Algarve and Morocco. It focused on the development of research and knowledge transfer in the maritime field. It was key to developing the maritime dimension of Andalucía’s Smart Specialisation Strategy. She referred to two projects developed by the Campus on innovation in the naval industry and another in the tourism sector, both in favour of local development, and she mentioned the International Congress InnoAzul, organised by CEIMAR. The Atlantic Arc Commission could benefit from its expertise.

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