The Atlantic Arc Regions, listed below, that are members of the Atlantic Arc Commission:

CCDR do Alentejo (PT)
Junta de Andalucía (ES)
Principado de Asturias (ES)
Région Bretagne (FR)
Gobierno de Cantabria (ES)
Xunta de Galicia (ES)
CCDR de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo (PT)
Gobierno de Navarra (ES)
CCDR do Norte (PT)
Northern and Western Regional Assembly (IRL)
Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine (FR)
Région Pays de la Loire (FR)
Gobierno Vasco (ES)
Welsh Government (UK)
Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration

Considering the geopolitical context of the war led by Russia against Ukraine, the need to boost the recovery from COVID in Europe while ensuring greater energy autonomy for our countries to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, and following the first year of implementation of the new Atlantic Strategy Action Plan 2.0: Atlantic Arc Commission regions (AAC) call on EU institutions and National Governments of the Atlantic coast to improve joint working with regions to deliver a true blue and green transition in the Atlantic area:

We, the Atlantic Arc Commission Regions,

1. In common with the national governments and EU institutions concerned with the Atlantic Strategy, condemn firmly the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the atrocities perpetrated against civil population. We stand with Ukraine and its people who are fighting for their lives, their country and their freedom and we reiterate our commitment for the fundamental values of freedom, human rights and democracy as well as for prosperity in Europe.

2. Highlight that the Atlantic sea-basin represents a strong asset supporting Europe’s prosperity and is key to unlocking the potential of a sustainable blue economy to mitigate climate change. We stress that the ocean is the primary climate regulator and a vital producer of renewable energy from winds, tidal and waves. It also hosts a rich biodiversity, is a resource for global food security and human health, and a driver of economic activities such as fisheries, transport, shipbuilding, trade, tourism, renewable energy, research and health products.

3. Recall however that the Atlantic area is facing numerous challenges linked to several crises, the effects of which are cumulative and are making the economy, the environment and the populations of the Atlantic seaboard very fragile: the COVID-19 health crisis, Brexit, the energy crisis, the climate crisis with rising sea levels and the associated coastal erosion, the warming of the waters and the loss of biodiversity.

4. Call on national governments and EU institutions to respect the subsidiarity principle in developing policies with territorial impacts, and funding programmes which support regional investment, particularly in ports, in a logic of modernization and sustainable development aligned with the objectives of the Green Deal. Multi-level governance including Atlantic Regions is key to preserving and restoring ecosystems while ensuring that local communities depending on sea resources can be sustained.

5. Underline the role of cohesion policy in tackling the specific challenges of our regions but insist that it is still hampered by areas of unnecessary complexity. For example, the multiplication and fragmentation of funds directly or indirectly contributing to cohesion goals. The economic risks linked to the fallout of the war in Ukraine may also require adjustments to our funding plans in the medium term, thus generating additional administrative burdens. We therefore call on the Commission to explore all avenues for simplification in relation to the implementation of 2021-2027 cohesion policy;
6. **Suggest** for transport policies that regional authorities play a major role in planning and supporting transport in the TEN-T and beyond, contributing to the coherence and continuity of the whole transport network in the Atlantic. Regions must be full partners, including in the governance of future European Transport Corridors, and not just be consulted in the implementation of policies. In this respect, they recall the possibilities that exist for the co-financing of comprehensive network projects under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), which has a part of the CEF budget earmarked for this purpose, and call for a greater role of the regions in this funding programme.

7. **Recall** the Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration “*A TEN-T policy at the service of the sustainable development of the Atlantic Area*”, and reiterate the call for delivering an efficient and sustainable Atlantic Arc of transport connecting all regions. Better support to investment for rail transport and ports of all sizes is of utmost importance in reaching the objectives of the Green Deal.

8. **Welcome** the inclusion of the 2040 deadline in the proposed TEN-T regulation for the completion of the so-called "extended core network" and call for mature projects that serve to complete the Atlantic corridor and contribute to the achievement of European environmental objectives to be supported by national governments and European institutions to be part of it.

9. **Stress** the need for upgrading and retraining of workers in sectors linked to the Atlantic Area, and **welcome** the launch of the Pact for Skills and the Offshore Renewable Energy Skills Sectoral Partnership. However, **we emphasize** the need to go further in other industrial ecosystems, through financial and technical support and better coordination at European level.

10. **Ask** the concerned Member States to speed up the process for the European Council to give a mandate to the European Commission to create an Atlantic Maritime Macro-Region. This will provide greater political impetus and better coordination of projects at all levels, including at cross-border and neighbourhood levels, leading to overall benefits for the Atlantic seaboard as expressed already in December 2020 in the **Declaration on an Atlantic Macro-Region**. In the meantime, invite the European Parliament to convene later this year a high-level conference with the presence of all levels of governance involved to reflect on the Atlantic maritime macro-region.

11. **Welcome** the efforts made by national governments and EU institutions to consider a new Atlantic Maritime Strategy Action Plan 2.0 to support the development of four pillars: (1) ports as gateways and hub of the blue economy, (2) skills and ocean literacy, (3) marine renewable energies and (4) healthy oceans and resilient coasts.


13. **Call** on all parties to involve regions in the governance of the Strategy to speed up the achievements under these pillars and maximise the impact of the Atlantic strategy on the ground.
14. **Recommend** such clarification in the governance of the Strategy to ensure that opportunity of creating synergies between regional development plans and EU/National objectives and funding programmes are not missed. The involvement of regional stakeholders in the pillars task force is good practice that needs to be strengthened and organised in a more structured way.

15. **Invite** the Atlantic Strategy Committee to work hand in hand with us on the Terms of Reference to ensure an agile and transparent governance system, where regions can take an active role in the Atlantic Strategy pillars implementation. On this point, the use of the new specific objective "A better governance for cooperation the Atlantic Area" of the INTERREG Atlantic Area programme 2021-2027 is fundamental in order to finance this work.

16. **Will mobilise** its working groups to identify flagship projects for the Atlantic Area, especially related to the priorities identified by the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, but also in sectors which are important for regions and that have not been identified by the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0 such as Fisheries, Aquaculture, including seaweed, and Tourism. In this respect, the link with the INTERREG Atlantic Area 2021-2027 programme is important to establish, in order to support the financing transnational actions.

17. **Recall** the [Atlantic Arc Commission Declaration on Offshore Renewable Energies](#) where we insist on the necessity of efficient multi-level governance in boosting the deployment of industrial value-chains in the offshore renewable energy sector, provided that these are compatible with the pre-existing and respectful activities with marine habitats. Additionally, we suggest the development of offshore renewable energy projects under the Recovery and Resilience Fund with the involvement of regional authorities. They should avoid fishing or aquaculture areas.

18. **Ask** financial support to establish cooperation projects on common Atlantic smart specialization strategies priorities, notably in blue sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture, marine renewable energies, tourism/maritime leisure, blue biotechnologies, the decarbonization of the maritime sectors, including the fleets, and Smart ports. It should enhance the development of value chain in these areas, which would be the sources of non-relocatable jobs.

19. **Recall** that a stable institutional cooperation framework should be promoted in the Atlantic basin to favour the maintenance of a permanent dialogue on issues of common interest in the cross-border and neighbourhood areas.