Atlantic Arc Commission

Political Declaration 30 Years Porto 2019

General Assembly of the Atlantic Arc Commission
14 November 2019, Porto
(Norte, Portugal)

Messages from the Atlantic Arc Commission to European decision-makers:

Atlantic Regions are the Prow of Europe

Following elections in the European Parliament and as the new European Commission takes up its post, as relations with the UK change profoundly and fundamentally, and as the effects of climate change make themselves felt to greater and greater extent, Atlantic Arc Commission regions (AAC) insist EU decision-makers take note of the following messages:

1. Atlantic Regions have geopolitical and strategic importance, which is becoming more apparent in light of the UK’s departure from the EU.

1.1 Atlantic Regions are at the frontline of Brexit and must be consulted on negotiations on the future relationship with the UK.

1.2 Fisheries is perhaps the one sector where UK and EU regions may face disharmony due to the fundamental importance of the sector on the local economy and on the lives of citizens. Thus, a clear channel for Atlantic regions to express their interests and to be heard during the negotiation over the future fisheries agreement with the UK, will be fundamental to achieving a common accord that avoids potential social and economic difficulties within fisheries communities.

1.3 The Atlantic Arc Commission represents regions from the UK and the EU, and can thus be relied upon to bring a balanced contribution to consultation on the future EU-UK relationship. The EU Institutions are strongly urged to involve the Atlantic Arc Commission and its members at all stages of the negotiation process.

1.4 The Atlantic Arc Commission requests that EU decision-makers and the UK government respectively work to ensure clear budgetary tools are available to mitigate the impact of Brexit on regions in the EU and the UK, and to further foster regional development. Those tools should be elaborated in partnership with regional authorities.

1.5 The Atlantic Arc Commission calls for a clear strategy to connect the continent with Ireland after Brexit. The departure of the UK threatens the cohesion of the Atlantic area and thus the connection with Ireland should be one of the key priorities of the new European Commission in all its directorates. In addition, the EU should seek to work with the UK to protect and develop existing cooperative relations between EU regions and UK Atlantic areas, British Overseas Territories, and third countries.
2. Atlantic Cooperation is fundamental for the prosperity and security of the Atlantic area. Thus, the EU Institutions must provide a framework for cooperation in the Atlantic with a clear and permanent role for regions in its governance, and supported by a strong and closely aligned funding programme.

2.1 The Atlantic Arc Commission is pleased to note the strengthened position of regions in the governance of the Atlantic Strategy and the recognition of the importance of the role of territorial cohesion in the Action Plan of the Strategy, as stated in its Political Declaration on the Revision of the Atlantic Strategy.

2.2 The Atlantic Arc Commission is also satisfied with the greater thematic concentration between transnational programmes and Sea-Basin and Macro-Region Strategies, and recalls that the Atlantic Area Programme is the central programme for the implementation of the Atlantic Strategy, as stated in the Atlantic Arc Commission Open Letter 5 Reasons to Preserve the INTERREG Atlantic Area Programme, adopted in June 2019.

2.3 Regional programmes and other transnational programmes should connect territorial and maritime challenges. This would ensure better involvement of programmes in the comprehensive development of the Atlantic regions and neighbouring zones, which share interlinked challenges. This would support a desire to develop financial mechanisms within the Atlantic maritime Strategy in the future.

2.4 As the Atlantic Arc Commission explores improving cooperation via an Atlantic Macro-Regional Strategy and seeks possible new relationships with Third Countries, it asks the EU decision makers and the Atlantic Strategy Group to accompany this work through a regular dialogue. Furthermore, the Atlantic Arc Commission asks that the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 recognises the specific challenges of regions on external borders of the European Union who face concerns linked to overall issues of global regard, as well as specific challenges associated with migration or Brexit for example.

2.5 The Atlantic Arc Commission seeks in this respect the creation of an informal group in the European Parliament, gathering the Members of the European Parliament interested in the development of the Atlantic Area.

3. Greater attention should be given to the development of Atlantic Maritime economies when negotiating the EU budget and developing EU legislation.

3.1 The Atlantic Arc Commission, in line with the CPMR declaration, urges the European Commission to provide a strong maritime dimension to its new Industrial Strategy, fostering well-structured Atlantic industrial value-chains, a cohesive ecosystem of skills and competences, as well as forward-looking investments for innovation.

3.2 Atlantic Arc Commission Regions call on the European Union Institutions and National Governments to put in place adequate policy frameworks and funding programmes to achieve a genuine and inclusive All Atlantic Skills Alliance that would bring a sub-national dimension to the Galway and Belem Statements on transatlantic cooperation in the field of research for a healthy Atlantic Ocean. This would boost the response to training needs in specific professions in order to provide solutions to the needs of businesses in traditional and emerging sectors within maritime economies.
4. A Strong Atlantic Arc of Transport should be one of the principles to guide the TEN-T Regulation with the support of an adequate CEF II budget

4.1 The Atlantic Arc Commission defends a strong Blue and Green Atlantic Arc of transport, which would fully unlock the potential of the Atlantic façade as a gateway to Europe and ensure Atlantic connectivity in a post Brexit context.

4.2 The Atlantic Arc Commission recalls in this context the importance of completing the TEN-T Core Network before 2030, and in particular the sections identified in the Atlantic Corridor in accordance with the European Union's commitments on completing the network of priority TEN-T corridors.

4.3 The Atlantic Arc Commission highlights the necessity of tackling bottlenecks and completing missing links, such as at the border between France and Spain, between Spain and Portugal, as well as between the continent and Ireland.

4.4 The Atlantic Arc Commission requests the recognition of the strategic role played by ports for the Atlantic regions, not only because of the volume of freight or passengers flows, but also in terms of territorial development and cohesion. In this respect, it is of utmost importance to ensure ports’ connection with the hinterland and to develop multimodality to ensure the transport sector contributes to climate objectives. In this respect, the retention within the TEN-T of cross-border ports is strategic for our territories and has considerable importance for our living areas.

4.5 The Atlantic Arc Commission thus calls on Member States to secure an appropriate budget, which would allow CEF II to reach the above-mentioned objectives.

5. A strong EU Budget that recognises the essential contribution of regions in its implementation

5.1 Atlantic Arc Commission Regions support the Manifesto of the CPMR adopted in Palermo in 2019 calling for regions to be at the heart of a reformed European Union, a European Union where regions are relied upon to reach union objectives and where regions are empowered to deliver EU policy.

THE CPMR ATLANTIC ARC COMMISSION

WHO WE ARE: The CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission is the united voice of the Regions of the European Atlantic. Founded in 1989, we are a platform for policy-oriented cooperation with 15 Members from Portugal, Spain, France, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. The Atlantic Arc Commission is one of the six Geographical Commissions of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), a regional lobby and think tank for 150 Regions across Europe, EU and non-EU.