



Technical note of the Atlantic Arc Commission

An integrated strategy for the Atlantic Arc

Introduction: Brief presentation of the Atlantic Arc Commission

The CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission is a network set up in 1989 that currently brings together 27 Regions located along the EU's Atlantic coast. The aim of the Atlantic Arc Commission is two-fold. On the one hand it acts as a mouthpiece for its members before the EU and its Member States to promote an ambitious vision of the European project based on solidarity and a sustainable and balanced development of the territory. Secondly, through its working groups, it offers an ideal context for exchanging good practices, defining joint positions and developing cooperation projects, associating cities, socio-professional actors, universities, etc. The Atlantic Arc Commission is currently chaired by Basse-Normandie Region (France).

I- The foundation of the Atlantic Arc identity

A- The specifications of this area

The Ocean offers a close and permanent connection between the Atlantic territories, in addition to their diversity and their size. The Atlantic Arc is, above all, Europe's Western gateway, where transatlantic exchanges and traffic between the North Sea and the Mediterranean coincide. Furthermore, the Atlantic Arc has long been characterised by the development of economic and cultural exchanges such as Celtic heritage, the Road to Santiago and the role of these territories in the discovery of the New World, then in the Industrial Revolution.

Moreover, the peripheral situation of the Atlantic Arc on a European level incurs constraints, notably in terms of accessibility, which explain the delay in the development of certain regions in this area. So, the movement of the European slide towards the East due to later enlargements reinforce the risk of marginalisation of the Atlantic territories.

These characteristics consequently leave a glimpse of the development opportunities through the valuation of certain sectors: tourism, sailing, marine research and innovation, offshore energies, eco-activities, motorways of the sea and coastal trade, etc. But the balanced and durable development of the Atlantic territory also supposes the meeting of several challenges, presented in this document.

B- Borders: the many representations of the Atlantic Arc

The Atlantic Arc is a constantly changing area, the borders of which vary depending on the problems approached:

- *The Atlantic perceived in an ecosystem approach*, taking into account particular assets and habitats, human activity and current regulations. This approach is reiterated by the OSPAR Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic or even the repartition of the fishing areas within the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy, which divides the Atlantic into several sub-regions.
- *The Atlantic perceived from the viewpoint of transnational cooperation*: this approach returns to the policy of cohesion and the Interreg tool. Between Interreg IIIB (2000-2006) and Interreg IVB (2007-2013), we have been able to observe a refocusing of the programme on the coastal regions, which consequently gives the Ocean a central role in the projects susceptible to being developed.
- *The Atlantic perceived from the viewpoint of its sub-spaces and its "interior waters"*: the Celtic Sea, the English Channel, the Bay of Biscay or the area between Galicia and Northern Portugal, which because of their trans-border character have specific problems connected to the need to heal the fractures which create national borders. Trans-border cooperation therefore responds to the extremely concrete needs, and the projects implemented are projects of proximity that may be realised by the citizens themselves, which explains the very strong political support given to this instrument (through for example the Arc Manche or the Euro-region Galicia - Northern Portugal).
- *The Atlantic perceived as an area of cooperation with the other continents*: the historic links between the States, the Regions and the towns on both sides of the Atlantic are a barely-exploited asset. This global dimension of cooperation could benefit from the renewal of the transatlantic relationships that the political change in the United States leaves us to expect. Relationships with Africa and South America may also be strengthened in the years to come with the emergence of new challenges connected to climate change or to food safety.

C- The Atlantic Arc is above all a political project which must be encouraged

These representations of the Atlantic Arc show that the coherence of this area is justified above all by a strong political desire simultaneously to protect the Ocean but equally to exploit its potential long-term for the benefit of development of the territories bordering it. The Atlantic Arc symbolises this political desire of parties with different views which in addition to the Regions via the Atlantic Arc Commission and the cities brought together at the heart of the Conference of Cities of the Atlantic Arc seek to consolidate their efforts: this is for example the case of the Atlantic Economic and Social Councils (RTA network); the Atlantic Chambers of Agriculture (AC3A) or the Universities (RUOA Network). In addition, in order to facilitate joint work, the Atlantic Arc Commission has created a Coordination Committee where these different parties are represented.

The notion of an "ocean basin" inspired amongst others by the CRPM and introduced by the European Commission into the framework of the Blue Book on Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) has the advantage of harmonising these different approaches: aside from a coherent geographical area, the objective is to bring together the competent parties to identify the priority and strategic actions to take on a transnational level; to value the maritime potential of a sole area and to benefit from its synergies.

The policy of cohesion through its objective 3 offers an instrument for cooperation at the heart of the Atlantic area. Nevertheless, to meet the challenges mentioned above, it is worth giving a new dimension, more ambitious and more tangible of cooperation. Whence the idea suggested in this document to launch a strategy for the Atlantic Arc that will enable a strategic framework to be defined, priority projects and concentrating means.

II- Proposals from the Atlantic Arc Commission for the future Spanish presidency of the EU

A- The launch of a strategy for the Atlantic Arc

Drawing on preliminary studies like the Atlantic Area Development Plan and inspired by the examples of the Baltic Sea Strategy, then the Strategy for the Danube region, the Atlantic parties want an integrated strategy specific to their geographical area to be drawn up. This new strategic framework, in the form of a scheduling document, will present:

- The objectives, the subjects of intervention and strategic projects in the form of a plan of action;
- The implementation instruments: that through the transversal nature of this strategy, all the policies of the EU may potentially be associated. Nevertheless, the policy of cohesion and the maritime policy appear to be favourable instruments to coordinate the drawing up and the implementation of the strategy, which does not impede a contribution of other types of funding, in particular the PCRDT. Generally, the scheduling document should specify the methods of funding of the different projects susceptible to being implemented.
- An innovative model of governance, specifying the responsibilities of the different parties: the EU, States, regional and local authorities, etc. Innovative solutions will be considered in this domain, in the form of an agreement, even of contractualisation.

1- The strategy for the Atlantic Arc: what are the objectives?

To be effective, this strategy aims to focus on some limited objectives, of transnational nature, which share all of the Atlantic territories and are in fact connected to the element that creates the unity of this area, the Ocean. The main challenges for the development of the Atlantic territories can be measured through two approaches: on the one hand, the actions to undertake will have to meet the challenge of protection and, on the other hand, of valuation of the potential of the Atlantic Arc.

To protect:

- The environment and biodiversity: the Atlantic coast is particularly threatened by climate change but equally by human activity. Durable rural urban development must also be taken into account.

To value:

- Benefit from the territory's resources by the development or the reinforcement of the sectors: economy of knowledge, tourism, sailing, marine research and innovation, offshore energies, eco-activities, maritime transport, fishing, naval construction, development des ports, formation, etc.
- To make the territories more accessible: development of new maritime connections, improvement of the existing infrastructure networks, development of the TICs, encouragement for the territory's parties to work in a network.

The current economic crisis coupled with the need to act faced with climate challenges opens the path to the drawing up of a new really durable model of development for the European Union. This strategy for the Atlantic Arc offers the possibility, through the implementation of emblematic projects, of tending towards this objective.

2- Example of policies and actions which could be developed (non-exhaustive list)

'Traditional' sectors

▪ Transport

The choice of a radial transport structure that favours access to the capital Regions explains the bad quality of the transport networks **between** the Regions of the Atlantic Arc, as a result accentuating the phenomenon of peripheralness. This can be seen by rail and maritime connections that are often ancient and incomplete and by bottlenecks on the road network, as is for example the case at the French-Spanish border. For maritime transport, the challenge is to improve safety in an area greatly affected by accidents and ecological catastrophes. Air transport will also benefit from planning on a macro-regional level.

The Atlantic Arc Commission is very active on this subject through the intermediary of its work group presided over by the Basque Country. Taking into account the potential of transport to create jobs in a period of crisis, its importance for the accessibility of the territories and the creation of the Single Market but also from a perspective of the reduction of CO₂ emissions, this policy must become a priority for the EU. This dossier will occupy a very important place in the calendar of the Spanish presidency because the Commission will have to make public its proposals on the future of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) at the beginning of 2010.

Examples of structuring projects to implement in order to promote a capillary network for transport, absolutely multimodal:

- **To achieve the North-South railway corridor of the Atlantic Area** (notably the current project 16 of the TEN-T). To create an **East-West railway corridor** in order to connect the Atlantic Arc to central Europe.
- **To increase coastal trade connections and motorways of the sea** between the Atlantic regions, competitiveness factors and accessibility for this area.
- **To develop an Atlantic network of logistic platforms**, multimodal capillary network, to fully exploit the potential of the Atlantic ports and airports so that they find a more important position on a European level.
- **Naval construction**: to encourage the construction of ships specialising in coastal trade, boats for which the Atlantic ports and companies are well placed and have great potential.

▪ Fishing

Fishing is an important sector for the Atlantic Regions both in terms of jobs and of the creation of wealth. The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy launched in April 2009 by the European Commission should enable review of a policy that shows its limits both in its ability to protect fisheries resources, and to create wealth and to ensure satisfying conditions of life for the sector professionals. For the Atlantic Arc Commission, of which the "Fishing" work group is presided over by Galicia, innovative solutions exist but must be generalised:

- **Maintenance of financial support for the Common Fisheries Policy and integration into the EU's maritime policy**: faced with the emergence of new activities on the coasts and therefore with potential conflicts of use, it is necessary to have a general framework for the management of activities connected to the sea and to the coast. In the implementation of management tools such as the GIZC or maritime spatial planning, the regional rank is particularly pertinent in as far as it ensures the coordination of territorial strategies.

- **Governance:** the Atlantic Arc Commission considers that the role of the Regional Consultancy Committees (RCC) introduced by the previous reform is essential and should be reinforced. Furthermore, the Atlantic Arc Commission favours development towards regionalised management of fishing in coordination with the Member States within the framework of a greater freedom given to the Regions to manage their fisheries and to the local fishing communities to intervene in the control of their own resources in such a way as to ensure that they remain viable.

- **Coordination at an Atlantic level of aquaculture, industrial fishing and artisanal fishery activities** by according a specific status to the latter, and notably by sustaining small coasting fishery.

▪ **Maritime safety**

As well as being a gateway for the European Union, the Atlantic area is a maritime crossroads amongst the most frequented in the world. To this is added the difficult meteorological conditions, which make it a particularly dangerous sailing area. With the increase in maritime transport, this particular situation explains the large number of shipwrecks that have taken place in the last thirty years, with the environmental catastrophes that are the burden of this type of event. The question of maritime safety is therefore a priority for the latter which for the past several years has been motivated on this subject, as is illustrated by the expert appraisal coordinated by the CRPM in 2004 within the framework of the Interreg IIIB Atlantic Area¹ programme or the Interreg IVB ARCOPOL project bringing together 12 partners from the 5 Member States of the Atlantic Arc and working towards the improvement of prevention, the methods of fighting and the reduction of the impact of different types of pollution (petrol, dangerous and inert substances). But on a key subject for this area such as maritime safety, the mobilisation of the States is essential.

Examples of structuring projects to implement:

- Reinforcement of the technical requirements and the routes of ships in dangerous sectors;
- Pursuit of work on the identification of the shelter areas for ships in distress;
- Marine pollution: scientific support, operational and surveillance services, training of local staff and fishermen.

Sectors with great potential

▪ **Research and innovation**

Within the framework of the renewal of the Lisbon Strategy, research and innovation are priorities for the Spanish presidency. As the key axis of the regional strategies, these subjects also have a predominant place in the activities of the Atlantic Arc Commission. This seeks to promote cooperation in domains with great potential: energy, the activities linked to the sea, innovation in rural environment or even non-technological innovation. The exchange of experience between the Regions is revealed to be absolutely essential. Furthermore, the Atlantic Arc welcomes several maritime clusters of European renown in its territory. Their dynamism is an employment vector whence comes the interest in making them cooperate.

Innovation is concentrated predominantly in urban areas; networks such as the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities are very involved in this domain of cooperation. Although the Atlantic cities, with some exceptions such as Lisbon or Bilbao, cannot be considered to be in the category

¹ http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/44_mission_expertise-fr.pdf

of “global dimension” metropolises, they nevertheless have certain assets. By pooling their resources, they make polycentrism a development tool.

To do this, the urban networks work at different levels: transnational (the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities), trans-border (Eixo Atlántico: network of towns of Galicia and Northern Portugal, Eurociudad Vasca, etc.) and interregional (Federación Asturiana de Concejos, Espace Métropolitain Loire-Bretagne, Aire 198, Welsh Local Government Association, etc.).

Examples of structuring projects to implement:

- To make use of parties (universities, research and development centres, clusters, SMEs, etc.) to improve the propagation of information, to encourage benchmarking and the capitalisation of innovative actions, to strengthen cooperation and to develop projects, with an eye to the economy of the sector.
- **To sustain the development of transnational partnerships around the centres of excellence of the Atlantic regions** in the sectors with high technological content: maritime, food, future automobiles, energy, etc.
- **To identify and put in place common strategies in domains with great potential in the Atlantic area:** energies, automobile, food, tourism, culture, etc.
- **Improvement of access to financial engineering for innovation for the benefit notably of SMEs.**

- **Energy:** to exploit to the maximum Atlantic potential in terms of renewable energies to make this area a strong player in this domain on a European level:

Examples of structuring projects to implement:

- **To promote the development of renewable marine energies** (offshore wind power, water power, tidal power, etc.) by encouraging R&D in this domain, by removing the administrative barriers, etc. which impede their installation.
- **To create efficient distribution networks:** for offshore energies, this may be by the development of underground distribution cables.
- See the conclusions of the Interreg IIIB expert appraisal underway on marine energies (results end of November 2009).

- **Environment/Climate change:**

Examples of structuring projects to implement:

- **Management of the coasts:** Fight against pressure on the coasts and adaptation au climate change thanks to the development, on the Atlantic level of tools such as the Integrated Management of Coastal Areas (GIZC) or the Maritime Spatial Planning (ASM).
- **Development of transnational strategies to protect and restore the marine ecosystem, awareness of inhabitants and tourists.**
- See the results of the Interreg IIIB expert appraisal underway on climate change (results end of November 2009).

- **Others: Cooperation with the west coast of the Atlantic Ocean**

It is also one of the points mentioned in the programme of the Spanish presidency. On a European level, the Atlantic Regions historically have very strong links with the American continent. Political development as well as the development of infra-state relationships between the two coasts of the Atlantic Ocean may be the opportunity to reinforce this cooperation in domains such as maritime transport or maritime policy in general, the latter being the subject of very particular interest of the United States, since President Obama launched a *Task Force* on this subject on 12th June.

3- Strategic framework and instruments for the implementation of the Strategy for the Atlantic Arc

- **A renewed, multi-sector and multi-level governance**

The drawing up of a strategy for the Atlantic Arc involves a strong partnership between the EU, the Member States, the Regions and the towns, based on a closer involvement of the different ranks of governance. Only real political ambition and a strong involvement by the different levels of governance concerned will enable challenges and means to be brought together, in the respect of principles of subsidiary and proportionality. The regional and local authorities have demonstrated their ability to cooperate in developing innovative projects and are determined to strengthen their relationship. However, the development of more strategic projects needs greater involvement by the States, in drawing up programmes of cooperation but also in the operational phase.

Moreover, we cannot state the idea of an integrated strategy without approaching the role of the private sector, which will necessarily have to be associated with this process.

- **A new dimension for territorial cooperation**

Since the first Atlantis programmes at the beginning of the 1990s, cooperation at the heart of the Atlantic area has not ceased to extend its fields of action by transnational gateway projects about accessibility, maritime safety, the GIZC or adaptation to climate change while aiding a network of dynamic parties to emerge.

In 2005, the Atlantic Arc Commission published a strategy document identifying the essential challenges of the Atlantic Area², which concluded: "It will be necessary not to remain at the study stage, but to move on to another stage, constructive, as well as to an "official" permanence of certain networks". The Operational-Atlantic Area Programme 2007-2013 heads in this direction by encouraging more ambitious and operational projects but the low budget available limits actions of any standing. In fact, this "qualitative leap" needs to benefit from adequate political, technical and financial instruments, in the image of those drawn up within the framework of the Baltic Sea Strategy.

The creation of a *Task Force* (see below) at Atlantic level will enable the precise definition of the priority actions in connection with the regional strategies, the sharing of responsibilities and the necessary means to implement in the framework of a strategy for the Atlantic Arc. This strategy may begin to be implemented from the current scheduling period onwards, by focusing means on priority actions. But it will also be useful for forecasting the future of transnational cooperation and by extension the implementation of community policies by regional seas.

² Atlantic Area Development Plan (SDEA), June 2005, study co-financed by the EU in the framework of the Interreg IIIB Atlantique programme, www.atlantique-2007-2013.org/fileadmin/scripts/docs/download.php?file=uploads/tx_sqlidocs/4.34_SDEA_synthese_finale_fr_01.pdf

- **The implementation of the European maritime policy at Atlantic level**

Many problems are, in fact, only answered at European level, as is the case of maritime safety, fishing, the integrated management of the coastal areas and maritime spatial management, maritime transport, etc. Illustration of the importance for Europe of the Atlantic area on maritime questions, of many specialist agencies localised on the Atlantic façade: this is the case of the European Fisheries Control Agency (Vigo) and for maritime safety (Lisbon) or “Climsat”, the global UN centre of satellite images, dedicated to the fight against climate change set up in Brest.

For the Atlantic Arc Commission, the evolution of transnational cooperation goes hand in hand with the implementation of the integrated maritime policy. In fact, for the same reason as the CRPM, the latter has largely defended an approach of this policy by ocean basins, which has been replicated in the Blue Book.

After just two years in existence, the integrated maritime policy is still under construction and many challenges remain to be met. After a first phase, largely led by the European Commission, which consisted of carrying out studies, analyses and experiments, it is now time to move on to a phase to implement this policy and its appropriation by the territories. In the image of what was done for the priority projects of the TEN-Ts policy, the solution to ensure the implementation of this policy by ocean basins will be to designate a European coordinator for each of them.

B- The launch of a think tank or a Task Force charged with making proposals on the content of this strategy

This think tank or a *Task Force* may bring together representatives:

- From European institutions: at the heart of the European Commission: DG Regio, Mare, Tren, Env, etc., the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions.
- From the Member States (Services in charge of the EU, the sea and the management of the territory).
- From the regional and local authorities: They are in charge of the implementation of national strategies and the drawing up and then the implementation of territorial development strategies. Consequently, the regional and local authorities have a determining role to play in drawing up and implementing the strategy for the Atlantic Arc.
- From other Atlantic parties: the networks concerned, private parties. The Atlantic Arc Commission with the support of the Spanish presidency and in partnership with the different Atlantic parties se propose de play an active role in the motivation of this discussion forum.

Other parties also have to be consulted: the Community Agencies cited above: the European Fisheries Control Agency, for Maritime Safety, “Climsat”, OSPAR, etc.

The *Task Force* mission would be to define the content of the Atlantic Arc Strategy consulting the parties concerned and analysing the studies and existing knowledge for the Atlantic Arc: choice of policies to approach, priority actions. To begin with, an informal and restricted work group motivated by the Atlantic Arc Commission and the Spanish State could be set up in order to reflect on the orientations of a Strategy for the Atlantic Arc. These proposals could be presented during a seminar under the Spanish presidency (see below).

C- The organisation of a joint seminar

This proposal has already been formulated in the framework of discussions which the Atlantic Arc Commission led with the European Commission (notably the DG Mare), the Regions, the Interreg IVB-Atlantic Area programme Management Authority. The idea would be to organise a seminar during Maritime Day 2010 in Spain. It might for example be about innovation in the Atlantic Regions in order to best mesh with the priorities of the Spanish presidency of the EU. But more generally, it would be the opportunity to discuss the future of European maritime policy and the policy of cohesion³.

The proposal from the Atlantic Arc Commission is to make the connection between these two policies and the promotion of the idea of a strategy for the Atlantic Arc. This proposal will be based on the results of the work of the think tank stated above.

1st half of 2010: a crucial period in the EU agenda

The first half of 2010 should coincide with the new European Commission taking up office, while the newly elected European Parliament will be effectively getting down to work. Moreover, the Lisbon Treaty should normally have been ratified by this time.

This new institutional context opens up new prospects and is the right moment in which to put forward ambitious proposals. This is especially true, since the EU is expected to find responses to overcome the recession, overhaul a Lisbon Agenda that has so far failed to deliver, and also to officially initiate discussions on the future of EU policies. On this latter point, the Atlantic Regions and cities are especially determined to be involved in drawing up future cohesion policy and the integrated maritime policy.

The Atlantic area has played a pioneering role in the development of EU territorial cooperation policies from the 1980s onwards. Now the Commission's attention is firstly focusing on other geographical areas (Baltic Sea, Danube, Mediterranean). Yet, as a gateway to Europe, the Atlantic seaboard offers real potential in terms of maritime transport, renewable energies or indeed innovation - a potential that needs to be exploited. The Spanish government could take the opportunity of its six-month presidency of the EU to spearhead a wide-reaching initiative for this area in the form of an integrated strategy, along the same lines as the Baltic and Danube models.

Spain occupies a strategic position in the Atlantic area. In fact, since the creation of the Atlantic Arc Commission by the CRPM, the Spanish Regions have always played a very active role in the life of the network. Today, the Basque Country oversees the "Transports" work group, while Galicia presides over the "Fishing" group. In the Interreg-Atlantic Area request for proposals, the Spanish partners represent 30% of the total.

For its part, Spain was one of the precursors of the macro-region concept at a Mediterranean level through, for example, the Barcelona process. Furthermore, it is amongst the best-positioned European countries in terms of fishing, naval construction, and renewable energies and more generally in all the maritime domains.

The promotion of a strategy for the Atlantic Arc will be Spain's chance to demonstrate its know-how in the service of the community project while valuing its maritime dimension.

³ The DG Mare is giving the interested parties until 30th September 2009 to propose events that could take place during *Maritime Day*.