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Opinion of the Political Bureau of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission

Response to the EC consultation on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion: Turning territorial diversity into strength

This contribution, coordinated by the Atlantic Arc Commission, is the result of joint work led by Regions, cities, universities, socio-professionals¹ and chambers of agriculture within the Atlantic Arc. The Atlantic actors intend to take the opportunity offered by the Green Paper to affirm that the objective of territorial cohesion is a priority for them, and that they wish to see this concept reflected in reality.

- Territorial cohesion should become a priority objective of the EU alongside economic and social cohesion, and should be applied to all present and future European policies.
- Recognising the objective of territorial cohesion goes hand in hand with pursuing an ambitious cohesion policy after 2013. The Green Paper places much emphasis on cooperation as a favoured (though not exclusive) instrument to achieve this goal. In this context, the Atlantic actors consider that, following on from the initial experiences undertaken in this field, it would be appropriate to further initiatives so that cooperation areas (transnational and cross-border) can become real areas for delivering EU policies on the basis of concrete action plans. This is an essential approach for maritime areas that encompass different stakeholders.
- The Green Paper opens up a number of work areas such as governance, the territorial impact of EU policies, etc. The Atlantic actors therefore consider this to be a necessary first step, but it should not be short-lived. They therefore urge to move on to a second stage to shape proposals in the form of a White Paper.

¹ Socio-professional actors via the ATN played an active part in the debate and the work that led to this contribution. The chair of this network of Atlantic socio-professional actors approves and supports this paper. However, the contribution will only be officially approved once the ATN decision-making bodies have met.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Atlantic actors **welcome the publication of the Green Paper on territorial cohesion**. The Atlantic Arc has been campaigning for many years for this concept to be recognised as one of the European Union's objectives, and in particular for it to be included in the Lisbon Treaty.

2. Territorial cohesion strikes a particular chord in the current context. As Europe's citizens question the European Union's priorities and grounds for existence, the population and territories of Europe are set to be more or less hard-hit by the economic crisis. **The time is then ripe to reaffirm the strength of the values of cohesion and solidarity laid down in the European project.**

3. The debate on territorial cohesion falls into a much wider reflection on the direction that future EU policies are to take. To ensure that the consultation initiated by the Green Paper leads to concrete proposals, the Atlantic actors therefore join with the Committee of the Regions, European Parliament and CPMR in appealing for the debate on territorial cohesion to be taken forward through the **publication of a White Paper**.

4. **Cohesion policy** is the European Union's instrument specifically designed to deliver the objective of territorial cohesion. This gives rise to a certain number of requirements:

- Cohesion policy needs to **combine economic, social and territorial cohesion with a competitive and sustainable development** of the EU.
- Although it needs to address **first and foremost the poorest regions suffering from handicaps, it is designed to provide support for all regions and cities** to assist their development and help them put into practice their strategy for the future.
- The Green Paper devotes a chapter to territorial cooperation. The Atlantic actors recognise the **importance of territorial cooperation in achieving the aim of territorial cohesion**, and in this respect they consider that this type of cooperation **should take on a new and stronger dimension**.
- In view of the challenges facing European regions in the medium term in relation to the economy, environment, energy or demography², the recognition and delivery of the objective of territorial cohesion necessarily calls for an **ambitious cohesion policy after 2013**.

5. Without claiming to give an exhaustive definition, the Atlantic actors stress here a few of the main principles inherent to the concept of territorial cohesion:

- It refers to the notion of **solidarity at the different levels of the territory**. This means reducing gaps in development between the regions (both at European and national level) as well as within the regions (between and within infra-regional territories) and cities, to foster a balanced and sustainable development of the European territory. **Territorial cohesion implies equalisation mechanisms in terms of budget, legislation and taxation**.
- It refers to **equality in access to services and opportunities for all European citizens whatever their geographical situation** (transport facilities, education and culture, health care, quality of the environment, energy, water, etc.) **and to the same standard**. A cohesive territory is one in which the circulation of people, goods, services, information and knowledge provides the ability to adapt easily to any changes or possible crises likely to affect a territory. In this context, **the criterion of accessibility in its broadest sense (transport, information and communications technology, services of general interest) is therefore of the utmost importance**.

² "Regions 2020: An assessment of future challenges for EU regions" - Commission Staff working document - SEC (2008) 2868 final - 14th November 2008

- Territorial cohesion places emphasis on the **diversity and assets of the territories**, which should be used to their best advantage to develop their competitiveness.
- The concept of territorial cohesion is especially important for the Atlantic Arc. The most optimistic scenarios favouring cohesion over competitiveness show that a majority of Regions from the Atlantic seaboard will remain on the sidelines with regard to the part of the EU that fares best economically and whose centre of gravity is tending to move towards the east of the European continent. There is therefore a certain risk that this “Land’s End” of Europe will be marginalised³.

If we apply this final point to the Atlantic area, delivery of the objective of territorial cohesion might be translated by 3 keywords, “Maritime dimension-Governance-Territoriality”.

I -MARITIME POLICY AS AN INSTRUMENTAL FACTOR IN TERRITORIAL COHESION

6. The Atlantic area’s fundamental link with the sea is what underpins its development. **The ocean constitutes above all an asset** for the economic development of this area. A significant share of Atlantic-based activities depend more or less directly on the sea, whether they be traditional like fisheries, or emerging like renewable energies.

The Atlantic coastline remains relatively well-preserved and is recognised for its quality of life, thus ensuring its attractiveness. However, its coasts are increasingly vulnerable, and a number of factors are responsible for this, i.e. global warming, destruction of the coastline due to land pressure and deterioration of the coastal environment through pollution arising from major incidents or from pesticides, chemicals or oil.

7. The **Atlantic area’s maritime nature represents a real challenge**. Unless pro-active measures are taken, the phenomena related to climate change will lead to economic activities being relocated to the detriment of maritime areas and a deterioration of marine ecosystems. Activities related to the sea should therefore be developed in a coordinated way. In order to do this, researchers, professionals from the maritime sector and decision-makers need to seek joint responses and implement coherent policies and projects in order to maintain the marine and coastal equilibrium of the Atlantic area. **The Atlantic Arc Commission works along these lines by involving scientific and economic stakeholders from the regions in its work on marine and maritime research.**

Transport is also a big issue with regard to the **peripheral nature of the Atlantic area** or **maritime safety**, not forgetting **port facilities and multi-modal transport** that have to adapt to a constantly changing traffic.

The Atlantic actors welcome the setting up of an integrated EU maritime policy. This offers an innovative response by seeking to reconcile sometimes diverging issues. Recognition of the objective of territorial cohesion should help to strengthen this future policy, where special focus should be given to governance. **The Atlantic Arc Commission is aware of this challenge and intends therefore to strengthen its ties with the Managing Authority of the Atlantic Area cooperation programme and the European Commission in order to define ambitious policy objectives for this area.** These objectives will be implemented within an integrated maritime policy and through structural projects necessary to ensure the development of the Atlantic area.

³ European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) (2006), *Spatial Scenarios and Orientations in relation to the ESDP and Cohesion Policy* ESPON Project 3.2.1., Final Report, Executive Summary, p. 46 http://www.espon.eu/mmp/online/website/content/projects/260/716/file_4015/fr-3.2_final-report_vol1.pdf

II- BETTER GOVERNANCE TO ENSURE THE BALANCED INTEGRATION OF TERRITORIES

The Atlantic actors welcome with satisfaction the place given to governance in the Green Paper, though they regret that this issue is not developed in more detail. The European Union does indeed have a major role to play in **defining an effective system of territorial governance** that is both multi-sectoral and multi-level in nature:

Multi-sectoral governance

8. The objective of territorial cohesion has to take into account the cross-cutting nature of certain policy areas. In this regard, the European Commission should lead by example by involving its different Directorates-General in the same way as it did when drafting the Baltic Sea strategy. The Atlantic actors suggest that, following on from the Green Paper, **this kind of initiative should become widespread throughout the European territory, and especially within the Atlantic area**, so as to feed into the debates already under way on **future European policies after 2013**.

9. Improving governance is a priority issue within the Atlantic area. It ensures effectiveness, democratic legitimacy and a better visibility of EU policies. **The Atlantic actors (Regions, cities, socio-professionals, universities and chambers of agriculture) therefore favour concerted efforts to aid the strategic and integrated development of the Atlantic area**. This ongoing dialogue is shown at political level through shared aims and joint positions as well as at technical level with the setting-up of joint working groups and cooperation projects.

Multi-level governance

10. The objective of territorial cohesion will not be achieved unless **all actors are mobilised and take concerted action**, from local level right up to European level.

11. Regional and local authorities often have to manage the impact of EU policies in their territory, the effects of which are sometimes at odds with territorial cohesion. The Atlantic actors consider therefore that the EU should **systematically involve the different decision-making levels** in the formulation and delivery of European policies.

12. With regard to the use of structural funds, the Atlantic actors propose **introducing mechanisms for collaboration between the different levels (local, regional and national) during the drafting, monitoring and evaluation phases of the operational programmes**.

III – THE NEED FOR A NEW GOAL FOR TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

13. **Territorial cooperation**, particularly transnational cooperation, helps to provide real **added value** in terms of exchanges of experiences and good practices. The Atlantic area is a favourable area for cooperation in which a network of competent actors has built up over the years, helping to develop relevant projects (see Annex 1).

14. However, the implementation of the objective of territorial cohesion requires a **renewed and more ambitious approach to territorial cohesion going beyond a simple exchange of experience or transfer of good practices**. In this context, the Atlantic actors call for the following points to be considered:

- Understanding territorial cooperation from a **strategic and integrated** point of view. At Atlantic level, this requires looking at the challenges for the territory in terms of development, the tier of governance and the sectors concerned, and the concrete actions that need to be led. Another challenge is to improve **synergies with the territorial development policies defined at European**,

national, regional and local levels. Finally, territorial cooperation programmes need to make the link with the mainstream of cohesion policy to help towards implementing the principle of territorial cohesion.

- Rethinking the rules about **partnership** in the implementation of territorial cooperation programmes. This means i) systematically involving the different tiers of governance right from the formulation phase; ii) ensuring increased participation of the national public authorities to combine the bottom-up and top-down approaches; and iii) enabling wider participation on the part of private-sector players.
- Pilot experiences already integrate this approach which is oriented towards more concrete and structural actions. The Atlantic actors urge the European Commission to take action to step up and broaden these initiatives, as they provide avenues to be explored when outlining the **future European territorial cooperation system in which transnational or cross-border cooperation areas could become real areas for delivering EU policies.** At Atlantic level, some topics with a transnational scope such as maritime policy (maritime safety, ICZM, marine and maritime research, etc.), climate change, energy, transport, development of the knowledge society, etc., could hope to benefit from such an approach.
- Insofar as the reflections set out in this paper are designed to contribute positively to territorial cohesion, the Atlantic actors would like to see these ideas taken up and developed in the White Paper they are calling for.

IV - TERRITORIAL COHESION HAS AN IMPERATIVE AND CROSS-CUTTING NATURE THAT SHOULD BE IMPOSED ON ALL EU POLICIES

15. The role of cohesion policy is not to redress the imbalances brought about through the delivery of other EU policies. This is why the **objective of territorial cohesion should be applied to all EU sectoral policies, from the time they are drafted and throughout all the stages in their delivery.**

16. This choice means being able to measure the effect of sectoral policies on the development of territories. Also, it is necessary to take into account the handicaps and specific characteristics of territories when defining European policies. **For this reason, the Atlantic actors want their implementation to go systematically hand in hand with territorial impact studies. Moreover,** it is vital to develop clear-cut and comparable indicators allowing for analysis at European level with a view to identifying new territorial circumstances (e.g. development of polycentric conurbations). In this respect, we might highlight the standard of work led under the ESPON programme, which deserves to be broadened.

17. Moreover, sectoral policies are all too often delivered independently from one another whereas they ought to be **joined up in order to ensure better territorial cohesion.**

18. Examples of policies with a high territorial impact for the Atlantic area (*to be completed*)

- **Transport, information and communication technologies (ICT) and services of general interest (SGI):** territorial cohesion should be at the heart of these three policies since they are vectors for balanced development and for access to services throughout the European territory and more especially for peripheral and sparsely populated territories. By way of an illustration, looking ahead to the TEN-T review the Atlantic actors want the objective of territorial cohesion to be systematically taken into account.
- **Research and innovation:** overall, the Atlantic area does not appear among the most competitive regions at European level, although it does have some major research and innovation centres. Nevertheless, this area does boast many assets related to marine and maritime research, ITC, the food industry and renewable energies, etc. Furthermore, the Atlantic area has a fabric of innovative actors which, although they do not have world-ranking status, nevertheless

contribute towards the dynamism of their territory. **In view of this fact, the Atlantic actors believe that research and innovation policies should not be limited strictly to actors or regions that are leaders in a particular field, but be targeted at the European territory as a whole.** They also should enhance the potential of all European regions. Finally, **innovation has more than just a technological side and should be also understood in respect of its many different approaches (e.g. marketing, eco-innovation, social aspects, creativity, etc.).** This is why it is necessary to support the development of an innovative environment at local and regional level, which encourages this mixed approach.

- **Energy-Climate:** climate change will have consequences on the whole of the Atlantic area, whether we are talking about the coast or inland. Adaptation and the fight against climate change will therefore require a strong involvement on the part of all actors within the territory. Faced with rising energy prices and the depletion of fossil resources, another challenge lies in securing a regular power supply for the Atlantic territory. In relation to this point, the Atlantic area has many assets and a particularly high potential with regard to marine and solar renewables, etc. Local and regional authorities therefore need to actively harness this potential to foster a sustainable development of their territories.
- **Urban-rural relations:** the Atlantic area is characterised both by a high proportion of rural territories, often located inland, and a majority of medium-sized towns creating a relatively uniform network throughout the territory. Although territorial dynamics vary from one region to another, a large majority of them are faced with a falling and ageing population, while on the other hand urban areas are tending to extend. Moreover, although agriculture still occupies a big place within the Atlantic area, its relative importance has decreased while service industries are growing. In this context the CAP, which is the main policy targeted at the rural community, tends to marginalise areas where farming production is not very profitable. In this respect, direct subsidies favour certain crops or territories thus contributing to an unequal treatment of farmers. **Consequently, looking ahead to an overhaul of the CAP after 2013, in taking on board the objective of territorial cohesion this should lead to the policy being reconsidered to improve the way the territorial dimension is taken into account. Regionalising aid, as advocated by the CPMR, would be a step in the right direction.**

Furthermore, each urban centre not only acts as a catalyst and a factor of attractiveness to further the economic development of the Atlantic area, but also offers the necessary services for the surrounding rural areas in terms of health care, education, social and cultural services, etc. **This polycentric urban structure therefore constitutes an asset that needs to be supported by improving the offer of transport between towns or by boosting their potential in the field of R&D and innovation. In this context the European Union has a determining role to play.**

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Illustrations of collaborative projects implemented under the Interreg IIIB Programme for the Atlantic Area

1- ASDP (Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective)

This study sought to establish a polycentric development model for the Atlantic area. Working on the basis of a diagnosis and analysis of socio-economic, demographic and environmental trends within the area, the aim was to:

- identify a set of strategic proposals designed to orient regional and EU policies and strategies in order to improve the way the Atlantic seaboard is structured and create greater cohesion within its territories.
- identify issues of common interest for cooperation between the Atlantic regions and the big so-called “structural” projects for after 2006.

Results: This project involved a large number of partners, with institutional actors (regional and local authorities under the umbrella of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission and the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities) and socio-economic stakeholders (universities and research centres, regional economic and social committees via the ATN, port authorities, businesses, etc.) taking part alongside experts from the five countries of the Atlantic area. The work undertaken together gave rise to the publication of a study entitled “Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective”.

2- REGINA (creation of a sustainable partnership for regional scientific, technological and innovation knowledge management)

The overall objective of the project is to establish the basis for becoming regions of excellence (regions with a proven track record in competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development and social cohesion) by implementing a common methodology for managing scientific, technological and innovation knowledge at regional level. The project identifies five main objectives.

Results: The project helped to identify niches of common interest playing a driving role in science, technology and innovation. A geographic information system was designed to gauge the levels of performance in innovation. Actions were also undertaken to promote the Atlantic Area’s inclusion in the European Research Area. Ultimately, REGINA should help the Atlantic regions to rank among the “regions of excellence” in terms of socio-economic development and social cohesion, and encourage SMEs to be included in the programmes and cooperation networks on research, innovation and technology transfer.

3- VALBIOMAR (Biotechnological utilisation of marine resources) - www.valbiomar.org

This project aims to develop an Atlantic network of competences in the biotechnological utilisation of living marine resources and to boost relations between laboratories and SMEs to foster concrete cooperation activities and the development of new activities. The main objective of VALBIOMAR is to optimise the processing of raw materials and generate by-products (animal and human food, cosmetics, health sector). The project also helps to diversify derivative sectors of the fishing and aquaculture industry, where a strict framework is applied for the sustainable management of natural marine resources through a more efficient use of them.

Results: The project has enabled the transfer of knowledge and knowhow from laboratories to businesses within the food and fishing industries to foster the development of activities with a high added value (nutraceuticals, cosmetics). Moreover it provided the opportunity to organise training sessions for SMEs backed by a distance-learning tool on marine biotechnologies.

4- **EROCIPS (Emergency Response to Coastal Oil, Chemical and Inert Pollution from Shipping) – <http://www.erocips.org>**

The aim of this project is to formulate a communications methodology transferable between EU Regions, since it is they that possess the relevant information and responders and decision-makers involved in shoreline counter pollution operations following a shipping incident. This would allow the Atlantic Regions to work together in the event of an incident/accident and thereby limit the damaging effects on the environment and the economy.

Results: the project has led to the creation of a website designed to cater for both the general public and partners. An inventory has been made of ecologically important areas where traffic is dense, in addition to locations where material and human resources are based. Models were also established to identify sensitive areas along the coast with a view to minimising and managing maritime risks. Waste management systems and plans were drawn up leading to the drafting of manuals. Finally, scenarios of oil spills at sea were developed in order to aid coastal management actions.

5- **CANTATA (Celtic Authentic Niche Tourism Advancing the Atlantic Area)**

This project aims to foster a more uniform spread of tourism by seeking to attract visitors to the most well-known tourist spots into more peripheral and unexploited areas, by working on cultural identity. The two objectives of the project are to enhance potential and improve marketing.

Results: the project helped partners to draw up an inventory of local tourist resources and organise practical workshops targeted at tourist operators. Each partner focused on a specific aspect from among research, workshops and training, marketing and development. The project proved to be useful for the partners in terms of attracting tourists. This has led them to launch a second phase of the project (CANTATA 2) which will be implemented under the Atlantic Area cooperation programme.

<u>Annex 2: Examples of good practices in governance at Atlantic level</u>

1- **MAREA: the sea, a strategy for Asturias: Asturias' maritime strategy**

In relation with the delivery of EU maritime policy, Asturias, in partnership with the Spanish government, local authorities, private-sector stakeholders and the European Commission, decided to set up an integrated maritime policy for its territory. This initiative led to an in-depth diagnosis on the state of maritime policy in Asturias and a big consultation phase. This process formed the basis for developing Asturias' maritime strategy.

The strategy is based on a clear identification of responsibilities between the different levels of government (regional, national and European) and coordination of the different sectors involved. To this end, it has been proposed to set up a European Territorial Pact or tripartite agreement between Asturias, the Spanish government and the European Commission.

A number of different objectives have also been fixed:

- Environmental: conservation of the coast and the marine environment
- Economic: improving the use of marine and coastal resources
- Socio-cultural: improving the quality of life on the coast
- Research and development and innovation
- Training and awareness
- Developing an innovative public management model

2- European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) Galicia - North Portugal

This initiative embodies a new format of multi-level governance. Below is a brief presentation of some of the objectives of this EGTC:

- Promoting cross-border cooperation as a fundamental instrument in turning border territories into areas of development
- Enhancing and promoting the competitiveness of the business fabric of the Euro-Region through knowledge and innovation
- Converting the Euro-Region into a more attractive territory boosted by efficient transport systems and improved accessibility and by strengthening synergies between growth and sustainable development.
- Increasing the social and institutional cohesion of the Euro-Region of Galicia-North Portugal.

3- Regional Partnership Charter on Medical Demography in Basse-Normandie

The Regional Council, Urcam (regional union of sickness insurance funds) and URML (regional union of independent medical practitioners) have been working in partnership on issues related to medical demography since 2005, in order to encourage health professionals to set up practice in rural territories lacking in health care facilities.

However, the current situation and its consequences on the offer of health-care facilities have led them to take action to propose a new phase for the policy in which they have been engaged since 2005. They have been joined by representatives from the State, county councils, the regional in-patient care agency, the regional department of health and social welfare (DRASS), county-level committees of the national medical association and other health-care professionals, Caen medical school, the Basse-Normandie union of locum doctors and the regional health agency, etc.

This raising of awareness doubled by a thought process and listing of fundamental principles for active collaboration has led to the drafting of a partnership charter on outpatient care services and on how to converge the services provided by each partner to facilitate the deployment of independent and outpatient health care clusters in Basse-Normandie.

Objective evaluation criteria have already been fixed that will help to measure the success of this scheme:

- Number of actual groupings of health-care professionals,
- Measure of the improvement in primary health-care facilities on offer in priority areas of intervention...

Some groupings have already been set up and the success of the scheme appears to be shown in the growing number of local initiatives asking to receive engineering support.

4- Brittany Maritime Cluster (*Pôle Mer*): world-class competitive cluster

The Brittany Maritime Cluster brings together major companies, SMEs, public and private laboratories, universities and higher education institutions located in Brittany, and regional and local governments. Their aim is to develop innovative products and services based on key technologies in order to achieve a competitive edge on world markets and to create opportunities and jobs.

The areas of excellence and fields of research of the cluster cover maritime security and safety, undersea technology, engineering, merchant and naval ship repair and maintenance, fossil and renewable marine energy, biotechnology, fishing and fish farming and environmental and coastal management.

The Brittany Maritime Cluster combines its skills and expertise with those of the maritime cluster of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region on joint project work, in order to meet growing needs in terms of security, maritime safety and sustainable development.

5- Hampshire County Council's Climate Change Commission of Inquiry

This Commission, whose members include Hampshire councillors and UK government experts, media, insurance companies and other stakeholders, is tasked with making concrete proposals to mitigate climate change. The nature of its recommendations are:

- Develop knowledge: in order better to understand the impacts of climate change and the response required;
- Build partnerships to influence policy and action beyond the County Council;
- Education and communication to engage with the Hampshire community (local communities, private sector, schools and the staff of Hampshire County Council);
- Immediate actions to address issues within Hampshire County Council operations and procedures.