



Political Bureau of the Atlantic Arc Commission

24 April 2014 – Bordeaux (Aquitaine, France)

Minutes

François Maïtia, Vice-President of the Regional Council of Aquitaine, welcomed all participants and in particular the President of the Atlantic Arc Commission. He reminded participants that the Region of Aquitaine has always supported the Atlantic area and the maritime dimension of this CPMR Geographical Commission as a gateway to Europe, but also in all aspects relating to the blue economy that are of paramount importance for all Atlantic Regions. **François Maïtia** also referred to the Atlantic Strategy and the position that the Regions must take as he reminded participants that it is these Regions that foster the economic development of their territories and that the Atlantic must continue to assert itself as a fundamental area of economic and human development in European integration.

Ignacio Diego Palacios, President of the Atlantic Arc Commission and President of the Government of Cantabria, in turn thanked the participants for their presence and the Region of Aquitaine for its hospitality. He welcomed the incoming and outgoing Members of the Political Bureau, referring to the many initiatives that have been launched, some of which will continue during the 2014-2016 mandate. **Ignacio Diego Palacios** reminded participants of the importance of the active role of the political and technical levels of our Regions to maintain the sphere of influence of the Atlantic Arc Commission with the European institutions.

Presentation of the Atlantic Arc Commission Activity Report 2013-2014

Pauline Caumont, Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission, indicated that the Activity Report would be presented in more depth during the General Assembly, and gave the floor to the President for a summary of this report.

Ignacio Diego Palacios explained the key activities undertaken. He initially mentioned the action taken on the Atlantic Strategy and the submission of the application from the Atlantic Arc Commission to the Call for Proposals launched by DG MARE. He reminded participants of the creation of a new Working Group on Atlantic Tourism and Culture, coordinated by Asturias and the Portuguese Regions of Norte and Alentejo, and in particular the [first meeting in Gijón \(Asturias\), on 7 and 8 April 2014](#); he then mentioned the Atlantic Arc Commission's involvement in several cooperation projects: the [Atlantic Power Cluster](#) project coordinated by the Regional Development Corporation of Cantabria on the issue of marine renewable energies, the [Arcopol](#) project coordinated by Galicia on risk prevention linked to coastal pollution, and finally the [Digital Atlantic](#) project coordinated by ERNACT on the digital agenda.

Mikel Anton, from the Basque Government, wondered when the Commission would reply to our application to the DG MARE Call for Tenders.

Pauline Caumont explained that we should receive a response in early May.

Budgetary outlook for the Atlantic Arc Commission

Pauline Caumont continued on budget issues. She indicated that the documents presented today show the budget that was adopted by the Atlantic Arc Commission during the plenary meeting in September 2013. She detailed the income and expenditure and highlighted the reduction in expenses, in particular travel expenses. Even so, the 2013 accounts show a negative result of -7,867 Euros, less than estimated but which has decreased the amount carried forward, which now amounts to 17,670 Euros at the end of 2013. For the 2014 budget, it has been updated since the meeting in September 2013, mainly the part concerning the projects in which the Atlantic Arc Commission is involved (continuation of the APC project, start of the ARCPOL project and extension of the DIGITAL ATLANTIC project). The general budget for 2014 shows a deficit of 19,789 Euros, greatly reduced compared to the amount forecast in the budget that was previously announced, which is, in part, thanks to income generated by cooperation projects.

Presentation of the new Atlantic Arc Commission Political Bureau

After reminding participants of the procedures described in the Internal Rules of the Atlantic Arc Commission, **Pauline Caumont** gave a presentation of the new [Political Bureau of the Atlantic Arc Commission for the period 2014-2016](#) which met today and which will be presented to the General Assembly for validation.

François Maïtia expressed the satisfaction of the Region of Aquitaine, which once again has a seat on the Bureau of the Atlantic Arc Commission and its determination to participate in the work.

Discussion on the functioning of the Atlantic Arc Commission

Ignacio Diego Palacios introduced this session that aims to find a method of functioning that is as efficient as possible for our Commission on the basis of the means we have available. He felt that there should also be a reflection on the management of our working groups, which must be adaptable to the topical issues of the Atlantic Arc Commission and finally called on the Regions to formulate policy areas that they want us to work on.

Pauline Caumont reminded participants that the Atlantic Arc Commission currently has six working groups, which implies fairly intense activity in order for them to function, for both the Secretariat and for the Regions themselves. She wants the Regions to express their opinion on this theme and on the flexibility that they wish to give, to a greater or lesser extent, to these groups.

François Maïtia thinks that traditional maritime activities should not be abandoned – such as fishing and aquaculture, but also tourism and transport, which are matters of utmost interest to the Atlantic Regions. Yet it is impossible for us to set aside certain emerging activities, which help to build on research and development in many sectors.

Mikel Anton, Director of European Affairs for the Basque Government, stated that the Transport Working Group wanted to organise a meeting before the summer, in the framework of the consultation on corridors.

Ignacio Diego Palacios stressed the traditional activities that are specific to the Atlantic Arc and also the need for creativity which must lead to concrete proposals. Regions can submit any suggestions they may have to the Secretariat, which will be responsible for disseminating them, and we can then see which ones bring together the majority of the votes.

Christophe Clergeau, Vice-President of the Region of Pays de la Loire, called for pragmatism with regard to time management, that of the elected representatives but also of the officers, in order to ensure efficiency and commitment. He explained that he understood that groups are sustainable over time but only if they have specific objectives that result in added value for the Regions. In addition he indicated that the Atlantic Regions have issues to defend, both within the CPMR and with European institutions. He called for more detail and better political backing for our projects to ensure our presence is maintained at all levels.

Regarding the policy areas, **Christophe Clergeau** agrees with the activities mentioned above, such as transport, fisheries and aquaculture, innovation and Smart Specialisation, and even tourism, although, regarding the latter group, he would like to see changes over the coming months. He wants more consultations from the Political Bureau for better targeting of the issues that appear in the working groups in order to give real political momentum and to secure a stronger commitment from our Regions.

To continue this idea, **Ignacio Diego Palacios** took the example of the storms that hit several Atlantic Regions during the 2013-2014 winter and mentioned the European solidarity funds whose mechanisms are still quite rigid. He felt that political work to facilitate the access to these types of funds could be useful.

François Maïtia also thought that this issue is essential. Such action drives us in particular to adapt our regional operational programmes according to new concerns that arise.

Mikel Anton took the floor again on the technical assistance contract that we have applied for. In the event that we are not successful with this contract, we could still consider submitting other applications of this type, in the context of other strategic projects that would help benefit from European funding.

Ignacio Diego Palacios confirmed that indeed the Political Bureau has a duty to express itself with regard to this kind of guidance.

Christophe Clergeau challenged the involvement in terms of working capacity and in terms of policy areas if we are successful in the call for tenders. We will probably have to cross-reference the areas of work of the Atlantic strategy with our guidelines in order to identify existing links. He then asked for a roadmap

from the Atlantic Arc Commission on each policy area so as to clearly identify the subjects that we would like to convey to the CPMR and the institutions.

Ignacio Diego Palacios also specified that the most important thing is not specifically to know whether we maintain a particular working group or not, but to clearly define concrete targets to be achieved, in the medium or long term, and to decide how a group may or may not contribute to achieving these goals. The Political Bureau has to make choices regarding the priorities and the working groups must implement them, with deadlines and procedures that they have to establish.

Pauline Caumont indicated that the Secretariat can help the working groups to resume their action plans in order to establish their objectives that are internal to the Atlantic Arc Commission, within the CPMR and with the institutions. These action plans could be presented at the next plenary meeting in September.

Ignacio Diego Palacios asked the Regions to forward their proposals by the end of summer so that the Secretariat can coordinate the proposals and we can establish the priorities.

Miscellaneous issues

Ignacio Diego Palacios indicated that the Region of Pays de la Loire wishes to continue to serve as Alternate Member for the Presidency of the Atlantic Arc Commission in the CPMR Political Bureau. This proposal was approved.

Pauline Caumont then presented the proposed Partnership Agreement between the Atlantic Arc Commission and the Atlantic Transnational Network-ATN. She reminded participants of the debate held by the Political Bureau in Nantes (February 2013) on the participation of networks in our meetings which led to the establishment of memoranda of partnership for the organisations that wanted to be involved in our work. ATN is therefore the first network to present a [proposed memorandum](#) for a partnership with the Atlantic Arc Commission. This proposal was approved by the Political Bureau and will thus be presented to the General Assembly.

Christophe Clergeau quickly reviewed the issue of the Regions' involvement in the monitoring of the Atlantic Strategy implementation. In addition, he suggested that during the next CPMR General Assembly, a meeting could be organised with the Islands Commission, which shares some of our concerns for example with regard to transport and energy. Finally he expressed his hope that a reflection can take place on the agreements between the European Commission and North America, such as the trans-Atlantic project with Canada and the United States in the framework of Horizon 2020, which could provide interesting opportunities for our Regions.

On the first point, **Pauline Caumont** reminded participants that the contract is a 100% financed service contract and that if we are successful with the bid, we will recruit one person, which will enable us to expand the Secretariat of the Atlantic Arc Commission. A focal point service will be based in each Member State and we have the role of coordinator between these focal point services, and also on the link between our activities and those developed by the platform. This would for example, allow us to extend the meetings of our working groups to other actors, to have a consultation and to help the development of projects as the priorities of the Atlantic Strategy are in synergy with the policy areas that we address in our working groups. This is with persistent difficulty because the European Commission imposes an approach by Member State and not transnational. When we are informed of the results of the tender, we could arrange a consultation of the Political Bureau to study how best to participate in the activities of the platform. Regarding participation in the Horizon 2020 projects, the CPMR has planned to submit an application, and this might be of interest to the Regions of the Atlantic Arc Commission.

Sheila Zecovic, Policy Officer from the Region of Aquitaine, explained that the French Regions have created a link with the national level on some of our policy areas. She wondered about Regions from other countries.

Ignacio Diego Palacios explained that some topics come under regional jurisdiction and that the link with the State is not necessarily required. On the other hand, other subjects require coordination and the link can sometimes be complex.

With no further requests from the floor, **Ignacio Diego Palacios** closed the session.