



## FIRST REACTIONS TO THE AMSTERDAM PACT

June 2016

### CONFERENCE OF ATLANTIC ARC CITIES

#### The Conference of the Atlantic Arc Cities

The [Conference of the Atlantic Arc Cities](http://atlanticcities.eu) (CAAC)<sup>1</sup>, created in 2000, represents, as the Urban Atlantic Forum, more than 200 local authorities and 8 million inhabitants. Our main goals lie in the promotion of the potential of Atlantic cities, and in **the cooperation between Atlantic cities and with the stakeholders** of this area. The CAAC therefore positions itself both as a structure of coordination and also of representation of Atlantic local authorities, at the international level.

#### Atlantic cities challenges around the European Urban Agenda

Within the framework of the negotiations on the European Urban Agenda, the General Assembly of the CAAC adopted, in 2015, the **Atlantic Urban Strategy**.<sup>2</sup> This strategy is organized according to 4 main objectives:

- **Integrating the vision** of Atlantic cities in EU policies.
- **Being an example** in the development of the European Urban Agenda, providing it with an Atlantic dimension.
- Strengthening **Atlantic cooperation**, especially between the cities.
- Disseminating the **excellence model** of Atlantic cities.

Indeed, under the 2016 Dutch Presidency, the European Union has defined its future urban policy guidelines with the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam. The CAAC therefore hopes that the European Council, which will be held on June 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, will take into consideration its **suggestions for this European Urban Agenda**.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://atlanticcities.eu/?lang=en>

<sup>2</sup> <http://atlanticcities.eu/documents?lang=en>

First of all, Atlantic cities **congratulate the Dutch Presidency** for achieving this Pact, in which are tackled primordial themes and issues where our local authorities have been heavily contributing through numerous projects.<sup>3</sup>

Acknowledging that the European Urban Agenda responds to a diversity of urban concerns, Atlantic cities wish to make **complementary proposals**. That is why they:

- Suggest adding **better governance** to the other three established instruments. Within this framework, this must be implemented in a “multi-level” perspective, in order to provide cities with a **true decision-making power**, with the objective of guaranteeing a bottom-up approach. This must also ease **citizen participation** in European policies.
- Want to highlight the need to include a **geographical component** (article 174 of the TFEU).<sup>4</sup> This dimension must therefore be directly related to the future cohesion policy together with the rest of policies of the European Union. Similarly, as stated in the document “Urban Dimension of macro-regions”<sup>5</sup>, an **urban dimension must be included within the macro-regions** and maritime strategies.
- Specify that, taking into account the characteristics of each city, the implementation of the agenda should strengthen cohesion and territorial cooperation. As for the Atlantic area, **the sea, coastal areas and the necessary links with the hinterland are indeed essential** for the development of the urban grid.
- Recall that **the “urban acquis” also comprises current European initiatives** like the Covenant (Compact) of Mayors, as well as **policy documents of city networks**, such as the Charter of San Sebastian of the CAAC, “Local and Regional Governments in Europe: Structures and Competences”<sup>6</sup> of the CEMR, the Basque Declaration of April 2016 on sustainable cities, etc. Similarly, the Urban Data Platform that will be launched next fall must include these documents and the outcome of urban transnational and cross-border projects.<sup>7</sup>
- Propose, in order to encourage co-creation, **to include the networks present as experts at the Structured Dialogue on ESI funds**, in the relevant monitoring

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<sup>3</sup> <http://atlanticcities.eu/archives/category/s28-en-project/c60-en-project?lang=en>

<sup>4</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN>

<sup>5</sup> <http://atlanticcities.eu/archives/339?lang=en>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ccre.org/en/actualites/view/3295>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.keep.eu/keep/>

committees<sup>8</sup>, in the urban development network (UDN), in territorial impact assessments and in other forms of partnership related to the Urban Agenda.

- Advocate for a better regulation through a **substantial effort of simplification** and recognize the importance of the work of the High-Level Group for Simplification.
- Want to thank the position of the European Commission, which defines a "non-exhaustive list" of thematic priorities, and want to suggest, amongst others, the inclusion of the culture, tourism and maritime sectors in the agenda.

As a transnational network of reference, CAAC is at the disposal of the Urban Agenda in order to support the efforts of the European institutions in the definition and implementation of the Atlantic component of the pact, as well as to present the ideas outlined above in the context of a possible intervention during the next European Council.

### **The required relation between HABITAT and the European Urban Agenda**

In its conclusions from the Habitat III conference, which will be held in Quito next October, the Council of Europe said that by 2050, half of the urban population will live in deltas and coastal areas. In this regard, Atlantic Arc cities are directly affected since they form the interface between Europe and the rest of the world. This is why the Habitat III conference must take into account the recommendations of the European Union in conjunction with the European Urban Agenda, but also and especially **from European cities themselves, which best know the needs required by their territory**. Thus, it would be desirable to consult them in the context of this conference, or even to make them participate in the discussions. About urban development, the European Union, in line with the Council of Europe on the Habitat III document, adopted a common vision among its members according to an integrated approach adapted to the environment, so that cities are:

- Inclusive and safe,
- Green and resilient
- Innovative and prosperous,
- Guided by effective urban governance.

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<sup>8</sup> For e.g., in the transnational operational programmes

The European Agenda Urban adopts the same approach as HABITAT III, to the extent that this conference represents an opportunity to redefine urban planning and cities around sustainable development, the fight against climate change and respect for the principle of subsidiarity. Furthermore, the agenda must take into account in its development the **new objectives of the United Nations for sustainable development with an urban character**, such as the quality of water, clean energy at low prices, employment, innovation, sustainable cities, consumption and responsible production, and the reduction of inequalities.

CAAC manifests that, as a **network with a transatlantic vocation**, it can make the link between the local and European levels represented by the Urban Agenda and the global scale represented by HABITAT III, with a bottom-up perspective.