



Working Group Atlantic Port Cities

« Atlantic Port Cities, key for the European economic development »

PREAMBLE :

Port cities through their common history issued from the conquest of the “New World”, the transatlantic adventure throughout the XIX century and their role in the industrial development of Europe, truly contribute to the identity and the cultural dissemination of the whole Atlantic Arc .

Considered yesterday as peripheral, now the Atlantic Port Cities develop nowadays sustainable maritime economic sectors based on research clusters, science and maritime technologies development, thus creating employment and growth opportunities. They have become emblematic places of urban reconquest, building on renovated waterfronts. Full of maritime and port history, the cultural heritage of the Atlantic Arc cities is a factor of sustainable local development. It constitutes a definitive element, both for the industry of tourism as well as the culture.

Atlantic Port Cities have important assets

The Atlantic Arc forms the main European maritime façade; a facade bordering several towns, large or medium-sized, and multiple ports and airports. However, the deployment of the port cities of Northern Europe and their governance have historically limited the growth of Atlantic ports, which are still too far from large global business networks. For instance, even if the container traffic has doubled on average in the ports of the Atlantic Arc, their market shares have been divided by two on this European segment.

However, the development of the Port Cities in Northern Europe has not prevented the initiatives within the Atlantic Arc. The diversity of the port cities of the Atlantic seaboard offers real potentials: fishing ports, trade, civil or military naval industry, and sites dedicated to recreational and leisure activities and innovating maritime technologies.

More than ever, they enjoy an outstanding strategic position both from a geographical, linguistic and cultural point of view concerning the Americas as well as the development prospects of countries like Brazil or the enlargement of the canal of Panama. Open to the world, input and output gates of the European Union, they are the key to the corridors of exchange and trade of goods.

Obviously, Atlantic Port Cities are best located to receive ships coming from the American or the African continent. They allow to relieve the pressure on the cross-Channel and the North Sea maritime traffic, and to better respond to maritime security issues.

An integrated approach for the Atlantic port cities

In the framework of the elaboration of an Action Plan for the Atlantic Strategy, Atlantic Port Cities underline the necessity of promoting an integrated approach of the port taking into account its multiple functions, so as to boost their productive fabric in a sustainable and complementary way with their hinterlands. To that end, fostering a strong research and innovation process that includes climatic challenges, Atlantic Port Cities believe that the strategy should take into account the following priorities:

- Research and Innovation in the field of science and maritime technologies
- Sea industries: shipbuilding; renewable sea energies; deep-sea exploration and new mining energies
- Integrated transports: accessibility, contactability, mobility¹.
- Maritime safety and security
- Sustainable exploitation of the sea: bio-marine resources; sustainable fishing and aquaculture
- Practices of the sea: recreation and tourism

The Atlantic Forum, which will spread over several months, offers the opportunity to the Atlantic port cities of defending the relevance of these issues for the setting up of the Action Plan for the Atlantic strategy.

The consideration of the land-sea interface

The priorities enounced above are deeply linked to spatial planning and the promotion of the land-sea interface. To that end, cooperation and the improvement of connection networks- energy distribution, logistics supply, transports and communications... - between the port cities and their hinterland, so as to ensure feasibility and consistency of the Atlantic Strategy.

For 50 years, the use of space for the needs of real estate at the expenses of agricultural land and coastal spaces has threatened the tourism potential of the regions. The upgrade of the land-sea interface must also rely on the conservation of the coastline and its heritage by promoting the reuse of port wastelands and deserted buildings in order to:

- Preserve and reduce the pressure on the most sensitive areas of the coast;
- Facilitate the regeneration of the natural heritage;
- Build cities on themselves making the wasteland an asset for the port cities.
- Monitoring and improving port water quality

Cooperation between port cities

Promoting the port area has become an important factor of attractiveness and development. In the current context of globalization (90% of international trade by sea), the EU Atlantic seaboard lags behind its partners of Northern Europe without mentioning the ports of Asia and North America. However, the ports bring today solutions to sustainable development needs, they offer opportunities to develop offshore farms, have enough room to achieve their industrial diversification in this domain and have created new means of transport such as the motorways of the sea.

In this perspective, more attention should be paid to Atlantic ports and their cities in the frame of the Atlantic strategy. Thus it shall include several axes:

- **Cooperation between port areas** with the aim to develop continental gates and large corridors of transport (motorways of the sea, river and land transport, rail connections)...
- **The promotion of strategic infrastructure:** logistics infrastructure, storage areas, land distribution networks, docks and equipment for the reception of ships and containers (8000 TEU - twenty-foot equivalent unit – and more, new generation giant containers),...
- **Support to innovation in the maritime economy:** exchanges between clusters based on maritime science and technologies, maritime research in laboratories, development of a common transnational strategy,...
- **Engaging in Renewable Sea Energies:** promoting cohesion and local dynamics around common innovative projects thus creating economic development (training, research, employment...)

Moreover, given that the Atlantic façade - main area of European fishing - is characterized by an extensive network of cities and communities that invest in a sustainable way to support their fishing and aquaculture sector, the Port Cities stress the importance of truly involving local authorities in the definition and the implementation of a common fisheries policy.

Conclusions:

The combination of cities and ports deeply influences the destiny of the regions, their employment, their economic attractiveness so as to better shine in Europe. Ports and cities are today one of the responses to the crisis and the needs of sustainable development. They influence the image and the identity of the Atlantic Arc.

In this sense, the ports and their functions are more than ever a strong asset that should be enhanced in all their economic, cultural and environmental dimensions.

In this regard, the Atlantic Strategy must also contribute to the establishment of a multi-level governance where territorial entities will be allowed a greater role (similar to the Hanseatic cities) without leaving out the State, so as the players involved in port activity (business, communities, Regions and States) can develop together a maritime and commercial strategy articulated with the macro-regional development of the Atlantic Arc.

The emergence of the Atlantic strategy reflects the will to design a maritime and land use planning policy based on cooperation and in coordination with the development of an industrial policy adapted to the opportunities offered by the maritime economy.

Atlantic cities and agglomerations cannot be visible at European and world-wide levels without the development of their ports and vice versa. Without cities and port cities, an European viable strategy for the Atlantic Arc cannot be implemented.

Striving for the development of maritime and port activities is striving for the development of all the cities and the regions of the Atlantic Arc.

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