



CAAC is a network of territorial cooperation, based on the particular identity and challenges of the cities of the Atlantic Arc in the European Union. After fourteen years of experience, the Conference of the Atlantic Arc Cities has asserted its position as an Atlantic Urban Forum, facilitating both the cooperation among its members and with other European and Atlantic Arc actors, creating awareness in the European institutions about issues concerning the Atlantic Cities. Responding to its role to convey the voice of the Atlantic Arc Cities, CAAC is also an observing member of the Programme. In this sense, the current consultation creates the necessary space for exchange and debate so as to involve all the stakeholders concerned and reach a wide consensus as required by the regulations. Therefore, the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities salutes the work undertaken by the Working Group of the Atlantic Area Programme and would like to contribute to it through the present document, highlighting several points of interest.

## **1. General Analysis**

From the general analysis of the document, several features emerge:

- The inclusion of the Atlantic insular regions of Canarias, Madeira and Açores is consistent with the challenges and geographical scope of the Atlantic Arc.
- The perception of the Atlantic Area Programme as a successful initiative, demonstrated by the high number of applications received, with a high level of quality, in all the calls thus evidencing a significant interest from all stakeholders.
- In correspondence with the requirements settled by the regulations and the ongoing EU initiatives such as the European Urban Agenda, the role of cities and local authorities should be reinforced. The development of the Atlantic Area won't be achieved if cities are not fully recognized as engines for growth. Moreover, the descriptive part insists mainly in port cities while all local authorities should be involved. The wholesome of the Atlantic Territories must be taken into account
- A good description of the Atlantic Area characteristics and challenges, even if there is a slight contradiction between the main features identified by the description of the Atlantic Area (strong maritime dimension, underdeveloped accessibility) and the priorities chosen, that do not fully cover these features. Complementarily with other programmes such as the cross-border initiatives or SUDOE should also be mentioned.

- There is a lack of an explicit approach to manage the interlinks between the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan and the Atlantic Area Programme. As the programme is aiming for an scale of Territorial cooperation while the Strategy is only maritime, both proposals should not completely overlap, but the joint mechanisms, if any, should be clarified.
  
- The time and elements given for the consultation are incomplete if compared to other INTERREG programmes in the same geographical area. For instance, the third consultation of the Spain-Portugal POCTEP was issued the same day with a deadline on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July (a week more), while the INTERREG North West programme offered a full version of the draft programme, even if only in English. Some hints on the future governance, indicators and communication means of the programme are also missing.
  
- The emphasis on capitalisation of the potential of the Atlantic Area will give the projects to be approved a strong strategic dimension. This emphasis will also facilitate the enhancement of the OP through meaningful, tangible and sustainable results that will guarantee the maximum result of the operations, ensuring relevance, continuity and consolidation of cooperation networks.

## **2. Comments on the priorities**

Overall, the main development needs and challenges identified in the draft summary correspond to the targets of both the European 2020 Strategy and the aims of local and regional actors concerning transnational cooperation. However, as said above, the maritime dimension and the accessibility are not directly targeted by the proposals, not even transversally. Governance and cooperation (not only thematic), as key dimensions of INTERREG programmes are also to be strengthened.

### Priority Axis 1 – Stimulating innovation and competitiveness

*Specific Objective 1.1: Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness*

Instead of only creating ad-hoc structures, the aim could be widened to enhance multidisciplinary (the basis for innovation) and to reinforce dissemination of knowledge (building on the already existing results). The territorial dimension of this objective could be reinforced if initiatives like short delivery chains are included and cities, as centres of innovation and social capital are recognised as full-fledged actors.

*Specific Objective 1.2: Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes*

The results of innovation could also be strengthened by more permanent structures for cooperation and exchange and the establishment of Atlantic labels and

trademarks of excellence. Exchange with the other shores of the Atlantic and positioning of the European side in a more competitive market (should the TAFTA be approved) would have also to be taken into account

## Priority Axis 2 – Fostering resource efficiency

### *Specific Objective 2.1 Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency*

The successful local experiences of the cities of the Atlantic Arc must be capitalised. As claimed by the COP-15 conventions, local is the most suitable level to tackle the policies related to climate change. The efforts of Atlantic Cities have been recognised at EU level and their participation in the Covenant of Mayors through the Sustainable Energy Action Plans can solidly contribute to fulfil this objective.

### *Specific Objective 2.2: Fostering green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency*

Under this objective the possibilities of bridges between the actions in this programme and other related sectoral programmes such as COSME, Horizon 2020 and specific objectives 1.1 and 1.2 could be examined. Also the importance of the economy of proximity and green ISO labels could enhance the targets.

## Priority Axis 3 – Strengthening Risk management systems

### *Specific Objective 3.1: Strengthening risks management systems*

This objective should work to better identify and manage fragile environments like estuaries, rivers or forests when coming to prevention. Networking and pooling of surveillance systems should be enhanced by the cooperation with international bodies and by an improved valorisation of the functions of command, intervention and research. An special attention should be paid to activities like rescue at sea or exploration of new uses of raw materials.

## Priority Axis 4 – Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and culture assets

### *Specific Objective 4.1: Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services*

This objective will benefit from the implementation of an eco-systemic approach that takes into account geographical continuity of biodiversity across borders and migration patterns of species as well as an special regard to endangered and invasive species. The interactions inside the regions, the human intervention and the concentration of population should be also taken into account. Synergies with European initiatives such as Natura or Life+ should integrate the methodology.

*Specific Objective 4.2: Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development*

The full transformation of natural spaces as economic assets has to be tackled in combination with the principles provided in sub objectives 2.1, 2.2 and 3.1.

Moreover, the importance of creative industries and its influence on urban regeneration through creative districts should not be dismissed. At the same time, cooperation among festivals that present similarities in several regions of the Atlantic Arc (as the Celtic, Films, Books or Comic festivals) should be enhanced. In addition, as the UNESCO offers different labels on heritage, the number of awarded Atlantic sites listed by CAAC surpasses 40.