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**10<sup>th</sup> Atlantic Arc Cities General Assembly:**

**Innovative cities and the economic recession:  
a window of opportunity**

The 10th Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities General Assembly takes place this June. Reaching the tenth assembly turns out not only symbolic but also significant,

especially if we look back and recall the first meeting in the city of Rennes, where the project for a common organisation of cities and city networks in the Atlantic Arc took its first steps.

One step ahead the crisis that is currently affecting us and the solutions given to it, last year this Conference established a unique instrument, the Atlantic Charter of San Sebastián for sustainable urban development – green, attractive and solidarity-based cities, which advocates the green economy model as a model for the future of Atlantic cities.

This model proposes green, attractive and solidarity-based cities, creating a concept of sustainable urban development on its own. The Atlantic Space is thus defined as an area for co-operation among cities in key matters such as an environmental excellence, sustainable and innovative economic development, the enhancement of social cohesion and heterogeneity, the development of more open, efficient and ambitious co-operation, enhancing the shared identity of Atlantic cities and their maritime heritage; with the only goal of turning Atlantic cities into more influential and attractive places through networking.

Perceiving the recession as an opportunity for collective improvement and not as an individual failure, the time has come to start up the principles set forth in the Charter of San Sebastián. Hence, the core topic of this General Assembly, Innovative cities and the economic crisis: a window of opportunity. In the diverse sessions Atlantic cities will draw up an innovative road to mobilise local potential for creativity and innovation: defining innovative and attractive cities and, why not, a new strategy for the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities.

**Tamara Guirao-Espiñeira, CAAC General Secretariat**

## European information

### Renovation of the European Parliament

The elections to the European Parliament took place in the first week of June, characterised by a new distribution of seats (from 785 to 736), in accordance with the regulations in the Treaty of Nice, and a low voter turnout (43.07%). The new European Parliament map is provisionally as follows:

- 264 seats for the European People's Party
- 161 seats for the Party of European Socialists
- 80 seats for the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party
- 53 seats for the Green Party/EFA
- 35 seats for the Union for Europe of the Nations
- 32 seats for the European United Left/Nordic Left
- 18 seats for the Independence/Democracy Group
- 93 undetermined seats in "Others"

At present, it is important to recall the calendar that will define the near future of European institutions:

- **18 and 19 June:** Appointment of the President of the European Commission;
- **23 June:** Elections for President of European People's Party and President of European Socialist Party;
- **1 July:** Start of Swedish presidency of the Commission;
- **14-16 July:** Session to constitute the new Parliament in Strasbourg.
- **14 July:** Formal constitution of the political groups, election of president and vice-presidents of the Parliament;
- **15 July:** Election of quaestors, audition of President of the Commission appointed by members States, results of the Czech presidency, presentation of the Swedish presidency.
- **16 July:** Vote of approval for the President of the Commission, informal decision concerning the size and composition of the Parliamentary Commissions.
- **20-23 July:** Election of the presidents and vice-presidents of the parliamentary commissions
- **14-17 September:** First voting session of the Parliament in Strasbourg;
- **September of October:** Referendum in Ireland concerning the Treaty of Lisbon.
- **31 October:** The current Commission's term in office comes to an end;
- **Autumn:** Audition of candidates for the Commission before Parliament.

For further information please visit: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>

### Quality of life in European cities - European Environmental Agency

The European Environmental Agency has just published a report entitled Ensuring quality of life in the cities of Europe (European Environmental Report No. 5/2009). The report aims to raise awareness concerning current perspectives and opinions about quality of life, with special emphasis on towns and cities. It highlights the actual challenges to ensuring long-term quality of life for all social groups, and the crucial importance of sustainability and the environment as basic systems for life. The report illustrates current discussions about quality of life, such as for example the influence of the diverse concepts of quality of life compared to the level of quality of life. It also provides ideas for resolving coming challenges. It aims to provide support to discover a balanced concept of quality of life, compatible with sustainable development.

For further information please visit: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/quality-of-life-in-Europes-cities-and-towns>

## Call for projects / proposals

### Information and Communication Technology Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP) - Innovation and Competitiveness Framework Programme

On 5 June a call for proposals was published, based on the work programme for 2009 of the Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP), within the Innovation and Competitiveness Framework Programme. The call is based on Topic 3 of the programme: ICT for governments and governance, in objective 3.5: e-participation, to involve citizens in a transparent decision taking process throughout the EU. The deadline is **23 September 2009**.

For further information please visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/ict\\_psp](http://ec.europa.eu/ict_psp)

### Encouraging creativity and innovation in the youth sector: «Youth in Action» programme

Within priority 4.4 of the Youth in Action Programme, the call aims to identify projects for the introduction, application and promotion of innovative and qualitative elements in non-formal education and youth work. These elements can refer to: the content of activities proposed, and/or, the methods used to manage the activities, based on innovative points of view in non-formal education and youth. Priority under this call will be assigned to projects focusing on the following matters: media literacy of young people and / or e-youth work. The Education, Audiovisuals and Culture Executive Agency in the Field of is responsible for applications in this call for proposals, and the deadline is **30 September 2009**.

For further information please visit:

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/funding/2009/call\\_action\\_4\\_4\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/funding/2009/call_action_4_4_en.php)

### Preparatory action on an EU Rapid Response Capability: Civil Protection

The aim of this preparatory action is to test innovative instruments ensuring that key resources and essential equipment are made available during relevant periods and deployed to respond to disasters in the framework of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism at the request of the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) of the European Commission. It covers any type of natural or man-made disaster, reinforcing community prevention tools in the face of great worldwide disasters. The deadline for responding to the call for proposals is **7 August 2009**.

For further information please visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/funding/grants\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/funding/grants_en.htm)

### URBACT Programme

The first call of the European URBACT II Programme, which approved a total of 27 projects with a total of 154 European cities, was launched at the end of 2007 and the projects approved carried out a previous phase in 2008 to search for members and define content. A specific call was published in January 2009 to set up a work group focused on the execution of the Charter of Leipzig in cities. A third call for URBACT II projects is expected to take place in June. ([www.urbact.eu](http://www.urbact.eu)).

## Commissions

### «Strategy and Co-ordination»

This Commission, run by the CAAC presidency, guarantees the setting up and follow up of the Commission's strategic orientations as defined by the Charter of San Sebastián. It also defends the interests of Atlantic cities and guarantees the visibility of the CAAC in Europe by taking part in events, consultations and negotiations organised by the EU. The new CAAC **action and communication plans** will be presented at the Commission meeting held during the General Assembly in Caen.

- **Survey: the recession and Atlantic Arc cities:** This survey, sent out at the end of May, will help prepare the content of the General Assembly in Caen on 29 and 30 June. The results will be presented and debated during the Commission and Executive Bureau meetings, whose conclusions will be delivered to members the following day in the plenary session.

Contact: Tamara Guirao-Espiñeira [tamara.guirao@crpm.org](mailto:tamara.guirao@crpm.org)

## *“Sustainable Urban Development”*

This Commission, chaired by Nantes Metropole, aims to put into practice the precepts of sustainable urban development. The evaluation of resources and policies for environmental excellence through innovation, the improvement of quality of life and the protection of biodiversity should become a factor of attractiveness and consequently of development for Atlantic cities.

Contact: Benoît Cuvelier: [Benoit.CUVELIER@nantesmetropole.fr](mailto:Benoit.CUVELIER@nantesmetropole.fr)

- **Climate Change Work Group:** Cardiff is co-ordinating the Climate Change Work Group, which aims to produce a synthesis of approaches to climate change for Atlantic Arc cities. The work group wishes to define topics of common interest with a view to preparing a project. The topics proposed initially are economic impact, risk management and awareness. The idea is to share this knowledge / methodology with other Atlantic Arc cities.

Contact: Gareth Newell: [gnewell@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:gnewell@cardiff.gov.uk)

- **Urban Mobility Work Group:** AIRE 198 (Poitiers) co-ordinates this work group, whose aim is to set up a good practices network for sustainable urban mobility. The initial goal is to define / capitalise good practices in cities to establish a guide and recommendations and then identify fields for innovative action and reflection. This group is open to other players who are not members of the CAAC.

Contact: Caroline Meriaud: [c.meriaud@agglo-poitiers.fr](mailto:c.meriaud@agglo-poitiers.fr)

- **Settings Project:** This project, submitted in January and coordinated by the Union of Baltic Cities, is participated by CAAC General Secretariat, Fomento de San Sebastian and Nantes Metropole. SETTINGS pays attention to climate change through benchmarking, the critical analysis of action plans, the organisation of local round table discussions and the development or revision of action plans. The result of the candidature will be confirmed in the last quarter.

- **ANATOLE Project:** Atlantic Network's Abilities for Towns to Organise Local Economy promotes the so-called “short-circuit economies” in Atlantic cities. In Atlantic regions the overwhelming presence of the primary sector (agriculture and fishing) contrasts with the poor development of local economies, and so ANATOLE aims to focus on Atlantic cities to develop this economy. It is part of priority 1.3 in the current Atlantic Space call.

## *“Attractive and Cohesive cities”*

The Attractive and Cohesive Cities Commission, chaired by San Sebastian, aims to support sustainable and innovative economic development, encouraging the development of innovative activities with a strong added value, accompanying industrial restructuring and, making the most of the city's own resources, turning Atlantic territories into attractive places.

Contact: Lorea Hernandez: [Lorea.Hernandez@donostia.org](mailto:Lorea.Hernandez@donostia.org)

- **Creative City Group:** The project on the roving exhibition entitled "Atlantic cities, gates of globalisation" is still under construction. Rennes, the project co-ordinator, has entrusted the Museum of Europe with a feasibility study. After the first work meeting with the Museum of Europe on 19 May, a balance will be presented at the General Assembly on 30 June in Caen, with a view to submit it to European calls.

Contact: Sonia Laoubi: [slaoubi@ville-rennes.fr](mailto:slaoubi@ville-rennes.fr)

- **Renewable Energy Group:** This group, directed by Lorient, is preparing a project called BLOWER, which will be presented at the current call of Intelligent Energy Europe. BLOWER aims to promote the suppression of barriers to the development of offshore wind energy and other renewable marine energies.

Contact: Nicolas Teisseire: [n.teisseire@audelor.com](mailto:n.teisseire@audelor.com)

- **Know Cities Project:** Coinciding with the meeting of this Commission in May, San Sebastián hosted the launching of the European project Know Cities, Attractive and Cohesive Cities, financed by the European Union with ERDF resources and co-ordinated by the city of Jerez. The aim of the Know Cities, Attractive and Solidarity-based Cities project is to develop an innovative methodology to promote, boost and facilitate access to the knowledge economy, linked to sustainable urban development.

Contact: Pilar López Valenzuela: [pilar.lopez@aytojerez.es](mailto:pilar.lopez@aytojerez.es)

## Point of View: The Baltic Strategy – a mirror for the Atlantic?



EuroGeographics

On 10 June 2009, the European Commission presented a strategic proposal for the EU in the Baltic, which member states had requested in December 2007. The proposal is the result of consultations and debates in the eight member states concerned. The strategy will be one of the main priorities for the Swedish Presidency of the EU in the second half of 2009.

The Commission proposes a complete action plan for the Baltic, pointing out that better co-ordination from the entities involved is required. In the words of Commissioner Danuta Hubner, "the EU is well placed to coordinate the work that needs to be done in order to make the most of available resources to save the Baltic Sea, boost trade and improve the quality of life of everyone in the region". The strategy is based on key matters like environmental sustainability, prosperity, safety, accessibility and attractiveness.

Given that many of the problems identified correspond to EU priorities, Structural Funds programmes in the region can be used as the basis for co-operation in the Baltic. Specific projects in the proposal are the interconnection of the Baltic energy market and the Baltic railways.

This is the first time the EU has developed such a complete strategy in a «macro-region», and it should be able to inspire similar approaches in other areas, such as for example the Atlantic; as anticipated by CPMR Commission of Atlantic Arc in its latest General Assembly held in May 2009. The Operative Programme states that "The Atlantic is characterised by unequal development and territorial ruptures", and so a co-ordination method similar to that proposed for the Baltic could turn out to be fundamental when it comes to proposing actions to promote scale economies in the Atlantic area.

In the same way, a EU strategy for the Atlantic Space would exercise a beneficial influence on key matters for the area, such as the knowledge economy, maritime heritage, the threat of coastal planning, accessibility and transport. In this regard, from the CAAC, we should point out that the Charter of San Sebastián not only defends a primordial role for cities in the development of the Atlantic, but its goals can also serve as a reference point for such a strategy.

It is now up to Atlantic stakeholders to take the need for a similar plan to EU authorities. On the immediate horizon, the Spanish presidency of the EU in the first half of 2010.

**Tamara Guirao-Espineira**  
General Secretariat of the CAAC

## CAAC News

### A CORUNA: EUROPEAN TRANSPORT COUNCIL IN 2010:

Given that Spain will be president of the European Union in 2010, on 3 June Spanish Minister for Public Works José Blanco announced that the European Transport Council will be based in the city of A Coruña. The priorities to deal with will be technological innovation and safety in transport. The Mayor of A Coruña, Javier Losada, expressed his satisfaction at the decision, which will make A Coruña "the European capital of mobility".

### SAN SEBASTIAN: PLAN TO BOOST EMPLOYMENT

Fomento de San Sebastián, as the municipal company entrusted with sustainable economic development, has designed and is executing the Plan to Boost Employment, an ambitious initiative which from a local scope includes specific and exceptional steps to restrain unemployment and take on the economic recession. This Plan to Boost Employment, jointly financed by the City Council of San Sebastián, The European Social Fund and the State Employment Service, is supported by the significant involvement of a score of public and private economic agents.

The Plan to Boost Employment contemplates the following steps: hiring unemployed people through public employment programmes, direct non-returnable subsidies for SME's and companies that hire unemployed workers, broader aid programmes for setting up new companies, updated information about the city's social and economic situation, a local investment plan and 100% subsidised expert services to improve companies' competitiveness.

**Conférence des Villes de l'Arc Atlantique**  
6, rue Saint-Martin - 35700 RENNES (France)

<http://www.atlanticcities.eu> - E-mail: [tamara.guirao@crpm.org](mailto:tamara.guirao@crpm.org) - Contact: Tamara Guirao-Espineira

## SAN SEBASTIAN: TECFORLIFE

Tecforlife is the name of the project led by Fomento de San Sebastián, within the 7<sup>th</sup> European Commission Framework Programme – its aim is to set up a technological aid forum, analysing the opportunity to set up companies in this field. The forum will group together local technological centres, the local business fabric and local organisations, in such a way that there is not just a technological analysis, but also an analysis of existing needs, the productive possibilities of existing companies and those that could be set up in the future, and of course, selling products competitively.

## SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA: PUBLIC HOUSING IN EUROPE STUDY NETWORK: SUITE



Mercedes Rosón talks in Iasi, 4 March 2009

Within the setting of the URBACT II Programme, the SUITE project, led by the City Council of Santiago de Compostela Town Planning and Housing Department, officially started up on 4 March in Iasi, the historical capital of the region of Moldavia. The ten cities making up the network (Santiago, Nantes, Rennes, Tallin, Iasi, Hamburg, Krakow, Siemianowice Slaskie, Newcastle and Medway) have been working since January with the support of other European entities such as Cecodhas, IUT, Feantsa and the Eurocities Housing Group, in search of solutions for the main challenges faced by cities in the field of public housing, especially the role of housing as a factor of social and urban integration in the current context of worldwide economic and financial recession.

The main aims of the SUITE network are co-operation among members to optimise the sustainable and affordable production of housing in cities and ensuring social cohesion. These topics lead to an even greater social challenge: inequality in access to housing as part of a broader problem of social and urban exclusion. Faced with this situation, public authorities should think up innovative policies to guarantee affordable, high-quality and environmentally sustainable housing, to promote social inclusion and the urban integration of cities' neighbourhoods. Within the framework of the URBACT project, CECODHAS also proposed a European publication about housing; Councillor Mercedes Rosón, as project co-ordinator, would form part of the editorial committee, together with the project expert, Viennese planner and architect Heidrun Feigelfeld.

For further information please visit the project web site at [www.urbact.eu/suite](http://www.urbact.eu/suite)

<b>List of member cities and networks</b>		
<a href="#">AIRE 198 (Angoulême - La Rochelle - Niort - Poitiers)</a>	<a href="#">Coventry</a>	<a href="#">Limoges</a>
<a href="#">Angers</a>	<a href="#">Donostia - San Sebastián</a>	<a href="#">Lisboa</a>
<a href="#">Avilés</a>	<a href="#">Dos Hermanas</a>	<a href="#">Nantes Métropole</a>
<a href="#">Brest Métropole Océane</a>	<a href="#">Eurocité Basque Bayonne-San Sebastián (Network of French &amp; Spanish cities)</a>	<a href="#">Porto</a>
<a href="#">Caen</a>	<a href="#">Faro</a>	<a href="#">Rennes et Rennes Métropole</a>
<a href="#">Cap l'Orient</a>	<a href="#">Figueira da Foz</a>	<a href="#">Saint-Nazaire</a>
<a href="#">Cardiff</a>	<a href="#">Gijón</a>	<a href="#">Santiago de Compostela</a>
<a href="#">Chester</a>	<a href="#">Jerez de la Frontera</a>	<a href="#">Santa Cruz de Tenerife</a>
<a href="#">Conf. Villes de Bretagne (Obs.)</a>	<a href="#">La Coruña</a>	<a href="#">Sevilla</a>
<a href="#">Cork</a>	<a href="#">Las Palmas de Gran Canaria</a>	<a href="#">Vigo</a>