



ATLANTIC AREA PROGRAMME 2014-2020

Approved Cooperation Programme

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SECTION 1. STRATEGY FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNION STRATEGY FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION 10

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NUTS regions covered by the cooperation programme	Annexe V

SECTION 1. STRATEGY FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNION STRATEGY FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

1.1 Strategy for the cooperation programme's contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion

1.1.1 Description of the cooperation programme's strategy for contributing to the delivery of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and for achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion.

a) Analysis of the socio-economic situation of the Programme Area

The Atlantic Area covers the western part of Europe bordering the Atlantic Ocean. It comprises the following 37 regions from the western part UK, Ireland and Portugal as well as the northern and south western most part of Spain and western France:

- **France:** Haute-Normandie, Basse-Normandie, Pays-de-la-Loire, Bretagne, Poitou-Charentes, Aquitaine
- **Ireland:** Border Midland and Western, Southern and Eastern¹
- **Portugal:** Norte, Algarve, Centro, Lisboa, Alentejo, Região Autónoma das Açores, Região Autónoma de Madeira
- **Spain:** Galicia, Principado de Asturias, Cantabria, Navarra, País Vasco, Andalucía (Huelva, Cádiz and Sevilla), Islas Canarias
- **United Kingdom:** Cumbria, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Bristol/Bath Area, Dorset and Somerset, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Devon, West Wales and the Valleys, East Wales, South Western Scotland, Highlands and Islands, Northern Ireland

The 2014-2020 Programme will cover an expanded area compared to the previous cooperation programmes due to the inclusion of new regions: Canary Islands (Spain), the Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira (Portugal). The process of integrating new regions responds to a Member States (MS) request for the benefit of the programme area. The participation of the three insular regions will contribute to a more cohesive Atlantic Region, increase its natural and cultural heritage and enhance its comparative advantage related to its maritime perspective.

¹There are three new Irish regions resulting from the reform that came into force in 2015. An Application will have to be made to EUROSTAT by the Irish National Authorities to re-classify Ireland's new regions. The Northern and Western Regional Assembly now acts as Managing Authority for the BMW Operational Programme 2014-2020 and the Southern Regional Assembly acts as Managing Authority for the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020.

The Atlantic Area is home to almost 58.96 million inhabitants in 2012 (28.7 million male and 30.2 million female) and generates a total GDP of 1.486.301 million Euros (2011).

The primary features drawing the area together are its environmental heritage and maritime dimension as well as a territorial and urban development common pattern based on a majority of intermediate rural areas and a limited number of large metropolitan areas. The average estimated population density is 84 inhabitants per km² (2011), below the EU27 average (116.61).

Among other points of convergence of the Atlantic Area, acting as key factors for its joint development must be quoted the tradition of cooperation, the existing strong networks between relevant actors and the strong cultural heritage and cultural identity. In this framework, the territorial cooperation programme is an important means for a further development of the Atlantic Region transnational territories. However, the Programme area is in many respects diverse, while a south-north and coastal-inland gradient can often be observed, with important differences in terms of economic and demographic development.

In particular, the main features identified in the Atlantic Area with respect to its geographic specificities and accessibility, employment and social issues, economic development-competitiveness, and, finally, the environmental situation, natural resources and energy efficiency are listed below:

Geography and accessibility

- a) A heterogeneous part of Europe with an important north-south gap in terms of demography and accessibility
- b) Strong maritime dimension
- c) Rural and semirural character (intermediate, rural and areas in close proximity to cities)
- d) Large parts of the Atlantic Area with accessibility issues : accessibility continues to be the *sine qua non* condition to achieve a full and integrated development of the Atlantic Area

Employment and social

- a) Uneven demographic distribution, combining areas with strong dynamism with territories that are losing residents and population (in rural areas)
- b) Employment rate below EU 2020 Strategy targets in all Atlantic Area regions demanding extra efforts on the growth and jobs agenda
- c) Long term unemployment rates are affecting more certain parts of the Atlantic Area than others
- d) Gap again between north and south on education levels with some worrying figures in some parts of Portugal and Spain

Economic Development and competitiveness

- a) General worsening of the economic situation can be observed in the area (if compared to the previous programming period) implying a risk of a potential increase of the north-south divide
- b) Economic dynamism concentrated mostly in urban areas (with some minor exceptions)

- c) In general and aggregate terms, lower values on the Regional Competitiveness Index with respect to the rest of western Europe can be observed
- d) Level of Research & Development (R&D) expenditure is on the average or below the European values, with most of the Atlantic regions holding a share of 1% to 2%, far from the EU 2020 target of 3%

Environment, natural resources and energy efficiency

- a) Well preserved natural resources can be observed; they do not however represent a very significant share of NATURA 2000 areas
- b) High exposure to climate change due to the Atlantic region's large coastal area
- c) Climate change increases the vulnerability of the environment and communities to coastal threats by aggravating the impact of pollution deriving from industrial activities, transport as well as production and consumption patterns
- d) The Atlantic Area is the second main transnational area for wind power in Europe, and almost all the territory provides opportunities to promote wave power, although the take up of it is currently quite challenging

Below is provided a comprehensive analysis² regarding these four main aspects (geography and accessibility, employment and social, economic development and competitiveness, and environment, natural resources and energy efficiency):

1) Geography and accessibility

A heterogeneous maritime dimension

The programme area is clearly characterised by coastal areas and islands, but it also comprises a large share of mountain areas in particular in the UK, Spain and Portugal, and some sparsely populated areas.

In particular, the coastal character comes with advantages and challenges. Despite the absence of specific economic structure, it appears that a significant proportion of areas have high residential attractiveness. In the areas where natural zones dominate – Scotland, most of the Irish coast, Northern England, Wales, Aquitaine and a large part of the Spanish coastline – the global urban pressure remains moderate.

Furthermore, many coastal areas are also characterised by relatively high levels of biodiversity and protected areas.

Important regional disparities can be observed regarding the impact and importance of maritime activities measured in terms of “Environmental Pressures” (natural changes and human impacts such as nutrient and organic inputs and pollution, and incidents of invasive species introduced through shipping, coastal pollution caused by shipping accidents), “Flows” (movement of goods, data and people) and “Economic significance” (economic importance of

² ESPON Evidence Report on the Atlantic Area.

coastal areas through mapping employment clusters in different maritime sectors, such as shipbuilding, tourism, transport and fisheries).

Maritime employment has economic significance for the UK (except the Scottish Highlands), France and Algarve, Lisbon and the Basque Country, while it is less relevant in the Irish and the rest of the Atlantic coast.

Environmental pressure is intense in many coastal areas of Europe, especially around the Azores and at major ports. All areas are either influenced by invasive species or by pollution associated with farming and industrial activity.

On the other hand, seaward influences are of medium intensity, with high or very high intensity around ports (Lisbon, Porto, and Bilbao), at sea gates (Strait of Gibraltar, English Channel) and on the British and Irish coasts (except the Scottish Highlands and Islands).

Rural and semirural character of the Atlantic Area

The Atlantic Area comprises a number of metropolitan areas (such as Belfast, Dublin, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Nantes, Bordeaux, Bilbao, Porto or Lisbon) and smaller growth poles.

Nevertheless, urban zones are a minor part of the Atlantic Area, which is, in a European perspective, rather dominated by intermediate and rural areas and areas in close proximity to cities.

Furthermore, a number of remote territories, such as the Canary Islands, Azores and Madeira and some parts on Ireland and large parts of Scotland, can be found in the Atlantic Area.

Accessibility challenges can be clearly evidenced

The Atlantic coastline represents the main maritime gate to Europe; this has an impact in terms of freight and vessel traffic in front of the European Atlantic coastline.

Whilst the Atlantic Area comprises a number of larger international ports, multimodal accessibility measured by rail, road and air remains around or below European average values, like other EU areas outside the EU core area.

Above average accessibility values are mainly to be found for the metropolitan areas. Large parts of the Atlantic Area and in particular remote regions have considerably less favourable accessibility values. In addition, the possibilities for one-day business trips within the European urban network are limited to the urban centres and even in these urban areas, possibilities are often rather limited.

There is also an important North-South gap: most regions of the Iberian Peninsula west coast display values corresponding to less than 50% of the EU average in terms of accessibility, while most of the northern areas (Ireland could probably be identified as an exception) are better integrated in transnational transport systems and located closer to densely populated areas of Western Europe.

According to the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities³, the peripheral situation of the Atlantic Area within an enlarged EU is seen as a factor needing to be tackled by enhancing its role as a

³ Response from the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities to the European Commission's public consultation regarding an integrated maritime policy for the Atlantic Ocean basin
<http://atlanticcities.eu/images/pdf/contributions/arc/arcaten.pdf>

maritime gateway in a globalised world and by balancing the economic divide and lack of accessibility and interconnections between coastal and inland areas, since “accessibility continues to be the *absolute pre-condition* to achieve a full and integrated development of the Atlantic Area”.

2) Employment and social

Uneven demographic distribution

At a European level, population is particularly growing in the Mediterranean Arc and in the Atlantic Arc ranging from western France to Ireland. Thus, while population decline is concentrated in eastern Portugal and northwest Spain, coastal regions of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as most French, UK-based and Irish regions as well as Canary, Azores and Madeira Islands, experienced a population growth in the last decade. There are also important disparities between coastal regions and continental regions as population growth focuses on areas close to the sea.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of population ageing is becoming particularly relevant in southern regions, confirming the strong north-south differences also in terms of share of old people.

Finally, depopulation⁴ is a reality in certain Atlantic territories, partly due to uneven territorial development, unbalanced urbanisation (with a higher concentration along the coastline) and the existence of limited connections in the Atlantic Area, especially between coastal and inland areas.

Unsatisfactory employment rates in most Atlantic regions

Regarding the employment rate, no explicit gradient (neither north-south/east-west nor core-periphery) can be observed at European level. In general terms, the highest employment rates (above 70%) are found in the Nordic countries, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and most parts of the UK, while employment rates below 60% can be observed mainly in peripheral regions of southern, eastern and southeast Europe.

Within the programme area, the regions with the highest employment rates (up to 75%) are situated in the UK, however, no region in the programme area shows an employment rate above 75%, it means that none of them has reached the Europe 2020 target yet. North-western Spain, Andalusia (holding an employment rate below 50%) and some regions in Ireland show the lowest employment rates.

With respect to the long-term unemployment rate, a clearer pattern can be observed both in Europe and in the Atlantic Area, where peripheral regions generally have higher unemployment rates, which are primarily influenced by the national unemployment levels. In this sense, Ireland and north-western as well as southern Spain are characterised by high long-term unemployment rates, the situation worsened due to the current economic crisis.

⁴ Population growth rate - change on annual average population of previous year. Eurostat latest available data (26.06.13) - Partial coverage of UK Atlantic regions.

In the Atlantic Area, the long-term (or natural) unemployment rate is equal or higher than 4% in all Irish, Spanish and Portuguese regions. Ireland, Lisbon, Galicia and Asturias have rates above 7%; Andalusia even exceeds 10%. All French and UK-based regions of the programme area have rates below 4%. Therefore, the peripheral areas of Spain, Portugal, and Ireland seem to have structural problems in their regional labour markets while peripheral parts of the UK (Scotland and Northern England) appear to benefit from their economic linkages with other parts of the UK.

It can also be evidenced that the international economic and financial crisis that began in 2007 affected, particularly, regions in Portugal, Spain and in the western part of France, where important job cuts in the main economic sectors have occurred.

The situation of the labour market is strongly related to the economic context and educational profile of the population living in a region/country. While analysing inclusive growth, a relevant indicator is the share of population at risk of poverty.

At a European level, the countries mainly towards the north and the west show rather low shares of population at risk of poverty. In contrast, in the eastern and southern countries internal heterogeneity is more pronounced, suggesting that poverty is a territorial issue in these areas, especially the more peripheral ones.

Focusing on the Atlantic Area, it can be observed that all French regions as well as some Portuguese and Spanish regions and western Ireland show shares of 8-16%. All other regions of the area have a share of more than 16%, with Andalusia and Canary Islands showing a share of more than 24%. More updated data (after 2011) will probably display a worse scenario, especially in Southern Europe, as the consequences of the economic crisis deepen.

North-South disparities in terms of high education and early school leaving

Education also informs the socio-economic development and situation of a region or a territory. In comparison to Central and Northern Europe, most regions of the Atlantic Area show rather low shares of people with high education. Within the area, important north-south disparities can be observed, with Portuguese regions having under 50% of the population with at least an Upper Secondary level attainment while this value for Spanish regions stands between 50 and 64%. In most French, British and Irish regions, at least 72% of the population have an Upper Secondary level attainment.⁵ The Scottish highlands and islands are outstanding, being the only region in the Atlantic Area with a share above 80%.

Concerning early school leavers, by 2020 the share of young people (aged 18-24) without any degree is supposed to be fewer than 10%. In the aAnnex “Analysis of the socio-economic situation of the programme area”, a map is presented to depict the distinction between regions having already met the target and those for which this challenge will remain a persisting one for the next ten years.

⁵ Upper secondary education (ISCED 3) generally begins at the end of compulsory education. The entrance age is typically 15 or 16 years. Entrance qualifications are usually needed. The typical duration of upper secondary education varies from two to five years. It may either be ‘terminal’ (preparing for entry into working life) or ‘preparatory’ (i.e. preparing for tertiary education) but usually corresponds to the final stage of secondary education. Tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6) usually requires the successful completion of upper secondary education. According to both the OECD and EUROSTAT, tertiary education includes both programmes with a theoretical and an occupational orientation but also studies that lead to an advanced research qualification.

Within the Atlantic Area, only French regions have already met the target, while most regions of England are relatively close to the target value of 10%. The problem seems to be more relevant in Welsh regions (20-30%) and especially in Spain and Portugal where no region (except País Vasco and Comunidad Foral de Navarra) is even close to meet the target.

3) Economic development and competitiveness

Economy dynamism concentrated in the largest urban and metropolitan areas

Regarding regional economies, both at European level and in the Atlantic arc itself, a higher dynamism and competitiveness can be observed in large urban and metropolitan areas such as Lisbon, Porto, Oviedo-Gijón-Aviles, Bilbao, Bordeaux and Nantes, Cardiff, Bristol, Liverpool and Manchester, Glasgow, Belfast and Dublin. Yet, rather peripheral regions also have economies of high productivity, for example in south-western Ireland or northern Spain. Regions with lower GDP figures can be found in central and northern Portugal and peripheral parts of UK.

Moreover, a general worsening of the economic situation can be observed in the area⁶ and growth rates of the gross value added display much lower values in comparison to the beginning of the current programming period. In particular, it can be observed an important decrease of the total Atlantic Area GDP from 2007 to 2009, due mainly to the economic crisis. From that year, GDP show a slight increase although in 2011 (last available data), GDP was still considerably lower than before the crisis.

In this context, the economic and financial crisis and the related budgetary restrictions and credit crunch are some of the factors, which have determined this negative trend representing a risk with respect to the potential increase of the North-South divide in the Atlantic Area.

Clear North-South disparities in terms of competitiveness

In terms of Competitiveness, the Regional Competitiveness Index (RCI), which displays the main strengths and weaknesses of the European regions⁷, shows substantial differences when looking at the five MS of the European Atlantic Area. The North-South disparities are once again confirmed, with Spanish and Portuguese Atlantic regions displaying quite low levels, France and Ireland showing medium values and UK regions performing better. In general and aggregate terms, lower values are observed in the Atlantic Area with respect to the rest of Western Europe; this is due to a limited enhancement of entrepreneurship and business culture in some Atlantic Area territories and among its economic actors.

No outstanding level of R&D investments and limited contribution of the private sector

Expenditure on research and development is considered a driver of economic growth. Investing 3% of GDP for R&D is therefore, one of the headline targets of Europe 2020. Private business expenditures are essential to meet the target. Despite the existence of a wide array

⁶ Real growth rate of gross value added at basic prices - % change on previous year. Eurostat latest available data (26.06.13).

⁷ Based on the following variables: Basic drivers (Quality of Institutions, Macroeconomic Stability, Infrastructure, Health, Quality of Primary and Secondary Education), Efficiency pillars (Higher Education and LLL, Labour Market Efficiency, Market Size) and Innovation pillars (Technological Readiness, Business Sophistication, Innovation).

of centres of excellence, especially in maritime and marine research, the programme area mainly shows average values for both overall R&D expenditure as well as R&D expenditure in the private sector.

The overall R&D expenditure generally differs within Europe, with higher shares in the Nordic countries and in the 'pentagon' area (London-Hamburg-Munich-Milano-Paris). Concerning the Atlantic Area, the levels of R&D expenditure are equal or below the average European values. Most of the regions hold a share of 1% to 2%, and regions in southern Portugal, including Azores and Madeira, north-western Spain and Canary Islands, France and the western UK verge on falling behind (<1%). The share of R&D expenditure exceeds 3% of regional GDP only in some areas of southern UK.

The analysis of private expenditure on R&D shows the Atlantic Area is clearly below the Central and Northern Europe. Most Atlantic regions have shares of 0.6-1%, with some positive exceptions in Lisbon, Bilbao or Brittany (1-2%) and higher levels (exceeding 2%) only in the UK (Liverpool and southern England). Just a few regions like northwest Spain or western parts of the UK indicate shares below 0.5%⁸.

Only Northern European regions are categorised as "innovation leaders" or "strong innovators" hence, most of the regional innovation leaders are located in the innovation country leaders. The divide between northern and southern Atlantic regions is then confirmed, since most French, UK and Irish regions can be considered as "strong innovators" (with a performance above or close the EU28 average), while most Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic regions belong to the category of "moderate innovators" (below the EU28 average).

Low levels of patent applications

Patent applications provide an indicative measure of innovation in the region. Technological activity (based on patent applications) is mainly concentrated in the centre of the EU. In general terms, in the Atlantic Area, the level is lower, although there are a few isolated regions such as Bretagne in France and Navarra in Spain with levels similar to those of central Europe. Remaining regions in France, Spanish northern regions as well as Ireland and the UK show medium levels of patent application. The rest of Spain, Portugal and some of the UK regions show low levels of patent applications.

Tourism showing satisfactory figures but not showing a clear pattern

Tourism is a major economic activity with high importance in the region. Tourist arrivals in the Atlantic Area do not follow a clear pattern; they are neither rural-urban, nor coastal-inland nor north-south.

The region which shows the highest values is Andalusia, followed by the Canary Islands. They are followed by a number of regions in northwest Spain, France and southern Ireland. Regions in the UK and Portugal show lower levels of tourism within the area (this is surprising in the case of Portugal and might be due to the different national, regional and local systems of accounting and reporting tourists at statistical offices).

⁸ No data available for Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands.

4) Environment, natural resources and energy efficiency

Well preserved natural resources, but not a very significant share of Natura 2000 sites

The Atlantic Area has a well-preserved natural heritage. Nevertheless, only the Canary Islands show a share of more than 60% of their respective territories being NATURA 2000 sites. In most regions, less than 20% of their respective territories are NATURA 2000 sites, especially in France, the UK (except Scottish Highlands and Islands, and Northern Ireland) and Ireland. In addition, as regards connectivity of Natura 2000, the following needs and challenges have been identified for the Atlantic Area:

- Lack of joint goal setting and management of cross-boundary /connected Natura 2000;
- Lack of a common approach and communication between MS to address similar issues, especially in the field of opportunities for economic developments, leading to uneven playing field for stakeholders;
- Absence of a system to enable priority setting between MS faced with a shared responsibility for different favourable conservation Status (FCS) of species and habitats;
- Lack of joint MS policy or methodology to tackle the effect of major changes in species distribution due to climate change and autonomous changes, facilitating them by removal of barriers and development of new nature areas.

However, the State of Nature in the European Union report highlights that the Atlantic region shows one of the highest proportions of unfavourable-bad assessments for the terrestrial biogeographic regions, so a lot remains to be done. This well-preserved natural heritage is also facing important risks and threats, in particular linked to the development of human activities on land, coasts and sea (pollution of inland and coastal waters, reduction of wetlands, important pressure on marine resources, etc.).

Furthermore, a north-south divide is apparent with southern regions better positioned. In this respect, regions in Spain, Portugal and southern France (highest values in Algarve, Aquitaine and Cantabria) show much higher values with respect to Ireland, the UK and northwest France.

Climate change impacts expected in most Atlantic regions

Climate change impacts, referring to physical, environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts, are expected in most Atlantic Area regions due to its large coastal area, particularly vulnerable to climate change. As for Europe, the south-north gradient also dominates the Atlantic Area where Northern regions are characterised by low increase of vulnerability, while western France and most regions in northern Spain and Portugal expect to face medium and high impacts.

In parallel, the current exposure of the Atlantic territories to climate change effects may be increased by pollution deriving from industrial activities, transport and new production and consumption patterns.

Heterogeneous levels of capacity to adapt to climate change

This indicator corresponds to the economic, socio-cultural, institutional and technological ability of a region to adapt to the impacts of climate change, including the potential of setting up preventive measures as well as initiatives to take advantage of new opportunities derived

from climate change. In particular, the educational commitment, the attitudes towards climate change, the Government effectiveness as well as the level of democracy are taken into account.

Both at the European and the Atlantic level, important differences between north and south are observed.

In the Atlantic Area, while no region shows the highest capacity, all regions in Ireland hold medium capacity. Regions in the UK and France range from low to high capacity and in the case of Portugal and Spain, coastal areas and islands have higher capacities than inland regions.

High potential of the renewable offshore energies but not fully exploited

Regarding renewable (offshore) energies, the Atlantic Area has an advantageous situation in respect to other European region, thanks to its strong winds, waves and tides. This becomes important in the context of the Atlantic, as well as the European, energy dependence. Nevertheless, the potential has not been fully exploited and up to now, the area has been characterised by a limited efficiency in the use of natural resources and low levels of renewable energies development and exploitation, counting with only limited connections of off-shore installations to the European grid. Despite its coastal position, the Atlantic Area shows only medium wind power potentials if compared to other contexts, such as Sweden, Finland and the Baltic States, and differences in potentials can be observed between Northern Atlantic regions (Ireland and north-western Scotland), with high wind power potentials, and the regions in northern Spain and southern Portugal.

On the other hand, the whole Atlantic Area and especially western coastal areas fully exposed to the Atlantic Ocean have the greatest capacity in Europe to develop wave power, followed by open areas in the North and single areas in the Mediterranean Sea. Within the Atlantic Area, Scotland and Ireland show higher wave power potentials with respect to other regions.

b) SWOT Analysis

This section includes the SWOT analysis of the Atlantic Area.

In order to place the SWOT analysis in the context of Europe 2020 and the related Thematic Objectives (TO), the main factors identified in the analysis were confirmed and prioritised with the MS and a number of relevant stakeholders consulted during the programming process.

It is important to note that the objective was to include within the analysis all relevant topics and shared issues relevant for transnational cooperation contribution of the Atlantic Area Programme.

The main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are listed below:

STRENGTHS

- ✓ One of the oldest cooperation tradition in Europe;
- ✓ Strong networks between relevant actors of the Atlantic Area working together for over two decades;

- ✓ Maritime dimension of the Atlantic economy creating a “unique selling point” of the area, with a strong tradition of maritime industries (shipbuilding, aquaculture, fisheries, ports etc.);
- ✓ Strong dynamism of a number of urban metropolitan areas and growth poles (Lisbon, Porto, Bilbao, Oviedo-Gijon-Aviles, Bilbao, Bordeaux, Nantes, Cardiff, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Belfast and Dublin) acting as champions and drivers for growth and jobs;
- ✓ Well preserved environment in rural areas, quality of natural landscape, rich biodiversity and water and air quality are assets of the area;
- ✓ Strong cultural identity and heritage in the Atlantic Area (including the Celtic dimension-Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Bretagne, Asturias, Galicia);
- ✓ Attractive urban areas, well preserved natural landscapes and strong cultural identity render the area attractive to visitors and tourists;
- ✓ Wind and wave power potential are potential cornerstones in building a competitive low-carbon economy in the Atlantic Area;
- ✓ Well-established working structures between Atlantic port cities;
- ✓ Existence of a wide array of research poles and centres of excellence (including in marine and maritime research).

WEAKNESSES

- ✓ Partial peripheral situation of the Atlantic Area in the enlarged EU;
- ✓ The area shows a strong north-south gradient making it a heterogeneous part of Europe with regional disparities with an important north south gap, clearly evidenced on aspects such as demography, accessibility, higher education, early school leaving, economic development, competitiveness (RCI index) and Innovation regional performance (Innovation Union Scoreboard), share of NATURE 2000 sites and capacity to adapt to climate change;
- ✓ The Atlantic territory also presents strong differences in terms of economic and demographic trends between coastal-inland areas;
- ✓ Lower competitiveness levels of the Atlantic Area with respect to the rest of Western Europe;
- ✓ Limited interlinks between coastal and inland areas;
- ✓ Relatively low levels of innovation in a number of traditional economic sectors with a high potential to bring growth and jobs to the Atlantic Area;
- ✓ Stagnant or decreasing levels investment in R&D&I, partially explained by the severe economic crisis and the credit crunch;
- ✓ Low level of patent application showing a limited level of innovation and technological activity;

- ✓ Climate change increases the vulnerability of the environment and communities to coastal threats by aggravating the impact of pollution deriving from industrial activities, transport and new production and consumption patterns;
- ✓ Limited exploitation of the potential related to renewable offshore energies;
- ✓ Limited connection of off-shore installations to the European grid;
- ✓ Limited capacity to adapt to climate change due to economic, socio-cultural, institutional and technological barriers;
- ✓ Unbalanced urbanisation in the area, with a higher concentration along the coastline;
- ✓ Shortage of a suitably-skilled workforce, especially for certain sectors of the maritime industry.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Potential role for the Atlantic Area as a "Gateway to Western Europe";
- ✓ Maritime transport potential still to be developed at full extent;
- ✓ Strong European political agenda on Blue Growth and Sea Basin-related initiatives;
- ✓ Different territorial patterns of innovation in different parts of the Atlantic Area provide an opportunity for synergies between regions with different innovation profiles that can be strengthened to better exploit complementarities;
- ✓ Growth potential of the blue economy and maritime specialisation: coastal tourism, aquaculture, yachting, naval and nautical industries, renewable offshore energy, blue biotechnologies;
- ✓ High potential for renewable offshore energy: wind, wave and tidal and marine current power, ocean thermal energy, etc., the Atlantic Area being the second main transnational area for wind power in Europe, and almost all the territory provides opportunities to promote wave power, although the take up is currently quite challenging;
- ✓ Possibility of further exploiting the green economy model by profiting from the existing natural resources in the Atlantic Area;
- ✓ Potential for increasing the spin-offs coming from the tourism sector;
- ✓ Potential key role of the Atlantic metropolitan areas and growth poles (including port cities) in the internationalisation and attractiveness of the Atlantic economy;
- ✓ Opportunity to develop a dynamic area by strengthening urban networks and linkages between land and sea.

THREATS

- ✓ Economic crisis, budgetary restrictions and credit crunch;
- ✓ Risk of an increased North-South divide due to the economic and financial crisis;
- ✓ Strong competition from major ports outside the Atlantic Area;

- ✓ Technological, environmental, social and legal potential risks related to the development of blue growth technologies;
- ✓ High exposure to climate change effects, such as coastal erosion, eutrophication of the ocean, submersion and hydric stress;
- ✓ Risk of accidents related to maritime economic activities (shipwrecks, oil spills...);
- ✓ Increasing levels of depopulation in certain areas of the Atlantic territories.

c) Programme needs and challenges

The Atlantic Area Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 will contribute to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

As laid down in point (6) of the introduction of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, transnational cooperation should aim to strengthen cooperation by means of actions conducive to integrated territorial development linked to the Union's cohesion policy priorities.

In addition, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), under the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) goal, should contribute, in order to deliver on the targets and objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, to the TOs for promoting economic development. These are based on knowledge, research and innovation, promoting a greener, more resource-efficient and competitive economy, fostering high employment to deliver social and territorial cohesion, and developing administrative capacity.

However, the Programme cannot address all of the outlined challenges and the Atlantic Area Transnational cooperation programme should focus on a limited set of topics in order to maximise the resources allocated to the Programme, responding to the Europe 2020 strategy and the related thematic concentration, and providing appropriate answers to issues that cannot be solved on a regional or national basis.

Given the above, the main development needs and challenges identified to be addressed by the Atlantic Area cooperation programme 2014-2020 are the following:

Accelerating intelligent growth in key sectors of the Atlantic Area economy by stimulating cooperation and the joint development of models and solutions

At the start of the 2014-2020 programming period, the Atlantic Area Programme faces several challenges related to the capacity of the European and Atlantic Area economy to grow, innovate, increase exports and generate jobs. Expenditure on research and development is considered a driver of this economic growth. Investing 3% of GDP for R&D is, therefore, one of the headline targets of Europe 2020. Private business expenditures are essential to meet the target. Despite the existence of a wide array of centres of excellence, especially in maritime and marine research, the programme area mainly shows average values for both overall R&D expenditure as well as R&D expenditure in the private sector. In particular, the levels of R&D expenditure in the Atlantic Area are equal or below the average European values, most regions hold a share of 1% to 2%, whilst regions in southern Portugal, including Azores and Madeira, north-western Spain and the Canary Islands, France and the western UK verge on falling under

1%. The share of R&D expenditure is above 3% of regional GDP only in certain areas of southern UK.

In this respect, the Atlantic Area Programme will support the reduction of any existing innovation barriers and it will contribute to create an innovation-friendly business environment to attract new investments and activity in the research, development and innovation (R&D+I) fields and generate more exports. Therefore, the CP will seek to increase research and innovation investment and exploit opportunities, including in the domains of Blue Growth and maritime specialisation.

Furthermore, there is a need to encourage more clustering and cooperation mechanisms between complementary sectors and between research and economic actors in a transnational context. The promotion of cooperation with a view to creating and developing stronger clusters and the transfer of knowledge and technology to industry shows a significant potential for growth and will contribute to the “free movement” of knowledge in the Atlantic Area.

In addition, supporting cooperation in the exploitation of new ideas and research results and the creation of more knowledge-intensive businesses able to access the market is also regarded as a major priority for the Programme. In this respect, the conversion of basic research into technological and applied research, pilot lines or early product validation will also be supported.

Finally, this facilitation and stimulus to cooperation in the innovation field will be structured around those sectors where the Atlantic regions have a greater potential for development, where a real critical mass can be created and where significant opportunities can be identified, in line with the Regional Smart Specialisations Strategies (RIS3) that have been developed by all the Atlantic regions.

Fostering renewable energy in the Atlantic Area

The Atlantic Area, as the rest of Europe, is facing important challenges related to the pressure that the industry, economy and society are exerting on the environment. In the case of Europe’s Atlantic façade, these challenges are of particular relevance due to its large coastal line, which renders the area highly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.

In this context, the Atlantic Area needs to intensify existing efforts to promote a shift towards a low carbon economy by increasing the production, distribution and use of renewable sources of energy. This shift towards a low carbon economy will contribute not only to tackle the environmental challenges, but it will also have an important potential to enhance economic growth and employment creation in the Atlantic Area.

In this respect, the share of renewable energy sources in the MS’ energy mix (biomass, wood, energy crops, biogas and solar and offshore: wind, waves and tides) should be increased and the Atlantic Area Programme can assist in the process through the development of institutional, social and technological cooperation able to facilitate the above mentioned shift.

This triple dimension will mean, in practice, that the Programme will focus on three different strands: a policy-driven strand, working with institutions, regional and local authorities, a social-driven strand, raising awareness about renewable energies and the important

opportunities that their deployment could imply for the local economies (in addition to the obvious benefit to the environment) and a technological-driven strand, working with the industry in structuring the sector.

Further to this, the Atlantic Area is a privileged space for the development of marine renewable energies (MRE), with favourable environmental conditions and a high potential that still needs to be fully exploited. Installed and planned MRE capacities show that MRE is “real” in the area, the existing technological development capacities in some parts of the Atlantic are significant, there are many active investors, enterprises and public authorities in the sector and a good deal of progress has already been made with the preparation of studies and adoption of MRE and global strategies and targets. The priority nonetheless looks at all forms of renewables in the Area where there is considerable experience to be shared and deepened through cooperation.

The Programme will give priority to the support of renewables’ development, able to provide relevant energy opportunities for these highly energy-dependant peripheral territories as well as economic opportunities for this area, profiting from its considerable assets in terms of industrial fabric, renowned training and research centres, and collaboration experience in the uses of inland, coastal and marine areas.

Fostering a resource-efficient economy: Green Growth

Eco-innovation is the creation of new products, services and systems that reduce resource use and harmful environmental impacts. It has recently gained importance as a key factor to help direct business and economic systems towards ideas and solutions addressing climate change and resource use challenges. The European Union and the OCDE have been at the forefront of efforts to promote eco-innovation at different levels over recent years.

Eco-innovation and green growth might come in many forms including novel or improved products, technologies, services, management, organisational structures, institutional arrangements and lifestyle or behavioural changes.

The introduction of eco-innovations and the green growth economy (which includes blue economy) can open up in the Atlantic Area new market opportunities that create jobs and strengthen SMEs in the regions by providing them with competitive advantages.

Green growth can bring wide-ranging potential benefits to both the environment and the local economy in the Atlantic Area; eco-innovation should therefore be at the core of sustainable and smart growth in the regions. The European Commission (EC) argues that regional and local authorities are in a good position to promote transformative eco-innovations and systemic change. This is linked with their policymaking powers, their control over public resources and the important role that they can play in facilitating links between business, research and civil society. Thus, by supporting innovation, by promoting projects that advance environmental technologies and eco-efficiency or by engaging in systemic eco-innovation, Atlantic Area regional and local authorities can help transform the way in which local actors consume resources, interact with local ecosystems and bring value to the local economy.

Regional and local authorities are well positioned to facilitate changes by supporting various eco-innovations and involving different actors in development and implementation of eco-

innovative strategies; especially under the framework of regional policy and RIS3, there are major opportunities for transnational cooperation in many fields, including R&D, studies, strategies, smart specialisation, target setting and institutional solutions. Cooperation can, therefore, become a major contributory factor in progressing and progressing faster in those areas.

The need to secure an improved capacity of the Atlantic territories to manage the existing risks

Complex and rich natural marine systems as well as the presence of wetlands, estuaries and lagoons, mountains and varied hinterlands gives the Atlantic Area its distinctive appearance and contribute to the attractiveness of the countryside.

However, the Atlantic Area is exposed to several threats and pressures and important demographic contrasts between depopulated areas and areas, which are experiencing rapid development, to strong pressure on coastal systems due to increasing levels of tourism and urban development, maritime transport, coastal erosion, risks created by natural conditions. There are also strong pressures on river and estuary water quality resulting from agricultural, demographic and industrial activity, as well as pollution deriving from industrial activities, transport and new production and consumption patterns. These are also affecting cities of all sizes and the inland territories.

Moreover, the exposure of the Atlantic Area to those natural and anthropic threats is amplified due to its large coastal area that renders the region particularly sensitive to coastal environment risks and to those specific conditions, as well as to maritime-related activities.

Furthermore, this vulnerability is also exacerbated by climate change. In fact, in the Atlantic territories (both coastal and hinterland) the natural phenomena have been increased in both their frequency and their extension by climate change. The Xynthia windstorm in February 2010 illustrates the importance of this phenomenon, which touched different European countries, including the Atlantic Areas, causing serious material damage and the death of several dozen people. Examples of forest fires in Spain and Portugal or recent floods in the UK can also illustrate this phenomenon.

Finally, and as it is the case for the whole European continent, a South-North gradient also dominates the Atlantic Area, where Northern regions are characterised by low increase of vulnerability, while western France and most regions in northern Spain and Portugal are expected to face medium and high impacts.

Despite the fact that the Atlantic Façade regions share common characteristics and are exposed to similar potential risks and threats, contrary to Europe's other seas, limited regional policy initiatives and cooperation can be observed in the Atlantic coast to cope with these important challenges.

Therefore, the similarity of situations and the importance of potential impacts, particularly on densely populated coastal areas, justify the development of common transnational initiatives within this context in the field of risk knowledge and identification, as well as in the definition, dissemination and adoption of joint methodologies for risk management and prevention directed at the Atlantic territories (namely as concerns submersion and the evolution of the

coastline and the hinterland, or even the quality of coastal waters and their impact on economic activities).

In this regard, a holistic protection of the Atlantic territories, both coastal and hinterland areas, including a support to the adaptation to climate change and a support to a better-coordinated answer to potential risks, are considered relevant issues that could benefit from a transnational approach.

Finally, the cooperation programme also identified the need to reduce flood risks. In line with the provisions of the Flood Directive (Directive 2007/60/EC).

Improving the protection and management of the environment and the Atlantic Area's natural resources

The Atlantic Area is home to natural ecosystems of particular importance both from the point of view of their geographical dimension and their rich biodiversity. Of particular importance are the marine and coastal areas, which cover a great density and diversity of human maritime activities, critically depending on the quality of natural resources and with potential impact on them.

Biodiversity and the relatively good ecological status according to the Water Framework Directive WFD, and good environmental status in accordance with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive-MSFD, of the Atlantic environmental systems, are assets providing specific opportunities, particularly the marine and coastal ecosystems, in terms of territory attractiveness and quality of life and economic enhancement. The development of emergent sectors based on the coastal ecosystems such as biotechnologies, biomaterials, seaweed farming, etc. shows the importance of this natural asset.

However, natural heritage is facing important risks and threats, particularly those linked to the development of human activities on land, coasts and sea such as pollution of inland and coastal waters, the reduction of wetlands, and important pressure on marine resources. Moreover, the share of NATURA 2000 areas in the Atlantic Area is insufficient to compensate the ecological tensions that can be observed.

The wealth, potentialities, common character and fragilities of natural resources justify an approach dedicated to the management of ecosystems, resources and natural areas in order to contribute to ensure a balance between economic development activities and environmental protection, thus guaranteeing a long-term sustainable development

The Atlantic Area Programme will contribute to design and implement management methods to promote a concerted preservation approach, so that measures taken in certain territories are not incompatible with other measures taken somewhere else concerning common or naturally articulated ecosystems; this is relevant for the management of certain habitats or species, for instance.

Finally, the implementation of this common preservation management approach will be mainly focused on those areas and ecosystems, which face higher risks and threats while having important potentialities from the economic and environmental point of view. Special attention will be devoted to the coastal and maritime ecosystems in line with the Atlantic Action Plan.

Exploit and enhance the natural and cultural assets involving local communities

The common and shared natural and cultural heritage give the Atlantic Area its unique and unmistakable character, it is an essential asset for a sustainable socio-economic development, contributing to the improvement of the quality-of-life in the region. The degradation of marine ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity due to increasing human interventions, climate change and natural and anthropic risks are some of the most pressing problems faced by authorities from the Highlands in Scotland to the Cadiz bay in Southern Spain. Preserving and enhancing the European and Atlantic cultural identity also needs to be placed at the heart of the political agenda in the context of an increasingly globalised world.

An adequate response to these challenges and the promotion of the Atlantic Area identity is the exploitation of the natural and cultural assets, particularly with the close involvement of local communities. This calls for concerted actions and for a reinforcement of knowledge and expertise on a transnational level in order to protect and exploit the cultural and natural identity of the region.

Transnational cooperation in this field will help to achieve a direct local impact and contribute, not only to the reinforcement of the attractiveness of the area (enhancing the ability of the Atlantic Area to attract more visitors and tourists), but also to boost local economies.

d) Programme Strategy

The European Territorial Cooperation Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, in its point (6) of the introduction, states that transnational cooperation should aim to strengthen cooperation by means of actions conducive to integrated territorial development linked to the Union's cohesion policy priorities, and should include maritime cross-border cooperation not covered by cross-border cooperation programmes. It also states that the Programme is required to focus on a limited number of TOs, corresponding to the needs of the programme area where the programme can make the most relevant contribution.

Finally, it also indicates that, where MS and regions participate in macro-regional and sea-basin strategies (as it is the case of the Atlantic Area Programme), the cooperation programmes concerned should set out how interventions could contribute to such strategies.

From all the above, and on the basis of the main identified needs, challenges and funding priorities, the strategy of the Programme is structured around four different Priority Axes addressing four different TO as established in the thematic menu of the Common Provisions Regulation (Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013).

To focus the programme implementation on the selected four TO, 6 Investment Priorities (IP) are selected out of the available options as set out under Article 5 of the Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013. From these IP selection, 7 Specific Objectives (SO) for the Programme have been defined, translating the broad EU objectives into the Atlantic Area context, taking into account the specific circumstances and development needs of the programme's area.

The Programme's strategy for the Atlantic Area in the 2014-2020 is set up as follows:

Priority Axis 1: Stimulating innovation and competitiveness (Thematic Objective 1)

- Specific Objective 1.1: Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness
- Specific Objective 1.2: Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes

Priority Axis 2: Fostering resource efficiency (Thematic Objective 4 and Thematic Objective 6)

- Specific Objective 2.1: Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency
- Specific Objective 2.2: Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency

Priority Axis 3: Strengthening the Territory's resilience to risks of natural, climate and human origin (Thematic Objective 5)

- Specific Objective 3.1: Strengthening risk management systems

Priority Axis 4: Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and cultural assets (Thematic Objective 6)

- Specific Objective 4.1: Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services
- Specific Objective 4.2: Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development

Priority Axis 1: Stimulating innovation and competitiveness

Priority Axis 1 will serve the identified need of accelerating intelligent growth in the Atlantic Area and interventions, it will be structured to support to the creation of the right environment to stimulate innovation and increase trade and exports, working in accordance with the Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) concept, combining strengths, competences, R&D+I. It will, therefore, support cooperation among actors to work on new product and service development, technology transfer and access to the market.

All the above will be done in those areas in which Atlantic regions have competitive advantages (in line with the RIS3 strategies).

The Priority will be implemented through two different SO:

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

Under this specific objective, the Programme is meant to contribute to the creation of an innovation-friendly business (but also public and social) environment, encouraging more clustering, cooperation and skills development mechanisms between complementary sectors linked to the regions' smart specialisation and between research and economic, public and social actors in a transnational context.

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

Under this specific objective, the Programme will be tackling the identified need of supporting the exploitation of new ideas and research results and the creation of more knowledge-intensive businesses to generate new products, services and processes, especially for emerging and growth sectors in the Atlantic Area (according to smart specialisation strategies in regions), and also with a view to intensify trade and exports. This specific objective will, therefore, contribute to address the common place difficulty of transforming research and innovation into high profit products, processes and services able to reach the market or to be used in the public and social sectors.

This specific objective will be very much aligned to the previous specific objective on capacity, and is intended to take things one step forward, trying to support the transition of those new innovative services and products from a given research centre or a company's innovative department to the market.

Priority Axis 2: Fostering resource efficiency

Priority Axis 2 will serve the identified needs and challenges of supporting the development - including the social acceptance and use- of renewable sources of energy, especially those deriving from the sea and promoting the transition to a resource-efficient society. Low carbon economy is a key issue for territorial sustainable development and for EU objectives (reduction of GHG, increase energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy). It is especially important for the mitigation of climate change that has strong consequences in Atlantic regions, that will be working together to introduce an efficient policy mix of supply and demand measures to stimulate research and innovation in sustainable energy, and also to ensure favourable framework conditions and efficient governance in this area.

Priority Axis 2 will contribute to promote resources efficiency in the Atlantic Area through two different SO:

Specific Objective 2.1: Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency

With this objective, the programme will contribute to foster renewable energy and the adoption of energy efficiency patterns in the Atlantic Area, by assisting the process in the development of an adequate institutional, social and technological environment.

Transnational cooperation will, therefore, be structured around a triple dimension, and it will include types of actions addressed to local and regional governments (institutional dimension), actions for the local communities (social dimension) and actions to support the industrial sector (market dimension). In this way, the CP will contribute to the Clean Air Package of 18 December 2013, especially regarding the Clean Air Programme for Europe.

Specific Objective 2.2: Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency

With this objective, the programme will support transnational cooperation initiatives devoted to the introduction of eco-innovations and the green growth economy, contributing to support innovative production and consumption patterns that could help to minimise the

negative impact on the environment, bringing also new market opportunities and potential new jobs to the Atlantic Area.

According to the EC, rather than focusing on individual one-off support measures, regions and MS should develop a comprehensive policy mix to support both the demand and supply of eco-innovation.

Consequently, the Programme will be supporting cooperation in a wide range of activities that go from state-of-the-art R&D to innovative ideas in construction, mobility, design, energy management and business models, not limiting actions to specific industries and sectors, but rather supporting eco-innovations introduced into any field *via* novel or improved products, technologies, services, management and organisational structures, institutional arrangements and lifestyles and social behaviour.

Priority Axis 3: Strengthening the Territory's resilience to risks of natural, climate and human origin

Priority Axis 3 will serve the identified development need of supporting a better management of the environment so that regional authorities and relevant stakeholders are better prepared to adapt to climate change and to potential risks occurring in the Atlantic territory.

Furthermore, this Priority Axis will also have an integrated territorial management focus incorporating aspects related to the prevention and management of those common risks that Atlantic regions face and will continue to face in the future, deriving from both natural and human activities including maritime economic activities.

The Priority will be implemented through one specific objective:

Specific Objective 3.1: Strengthening risk management systems

The Programme under this specific objective should be addressed to take advantage of transnational cooperation to strengthen risks prevention, emergency and crisis management planning, monitoring, surveillance, exchange of know-how, improving operational capabilities, information systems and mapping, data dissemination, training and guidance material.

This support will have a threefold dimension: a first dimension (1) devoted to bring together local and regional authorities, a second one (2) that will be targeting the civil society (awareness raising), and a third one (3) encouraging the industry to work together on how to develop the most efficient solutions to prevent and to manage risks.

Priority Axis 4: Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and culture assets in the Atlantic Area

Priority Axis 4 will serve the identified need of protecting the environment and promoting cultural identity in order to make the Atlantic region a more attractive place for local communities and visitors. Securing its vast natural heritage and the richness of the existing natural resources, as well as further protecting the cultural heritage that gives the Atlantic Area its unique character will be key for promoting a sustainable economic and territorial development.

The Priority will be implemented through two SO. The first one will be more focussed on the direct enhancement and capitalisation of the cultural and natural heritage as a basis for

improving the attractiveness of the area and, therefore, create new sources of wealth and economic activity. The second specific objective will promote the protection of the environment and biodiversity as an attempt to secure and preserve the natural ecosystems, understood as assets required for the future development of the region.

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

Under this specific objective, the Programme supports cooperation in the field of environmental and natural resources management. The common challenges to tackle here are the following: acquiring an in depth knowledge of the Atlantic ecosystems, their wealth and their vulnerability, and the conditions for their preservation in connection with the development of new marine and land activities.

The development of initiatives within a transnational framework will help to develop a more integrated environmental approach, considering economic and social issues in the management of resources and natural spaces.

Within this specific objective, the Programme is looking at the environment as a fundamental asset for the future development, and its adequate protection will have positive economic and social impacts in the future.

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

The specific objective explores the ways to exploit and preserve the natural and cultural heritage as a key element of the Atlantic Area identity. The intention is to promote cooperation in order to generate new sources of wealth and a sustainable development of the area. A specific emphasis is placed on locally based actions, with the involvement and empowerment of local communities and local authorities, therefore playing a key role in bringing concrete benefits to their territories.

1.1.2 Justification for the choice of thematic objectives and corresponding investment priorities, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework, based on an analysis of the needs within the programme area as a whole and the strategy chosen in response to such needs, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross- border infrastructure, taking into account the results of the ex-ante evaluation

Table 1 below presents an overview of the IP that have been selected for the Atlantic Area cooperation programme 2014-2020, including a brief justification for their selection.

Table 1 - A synthetic overview of the justification for the selection of thematic objectives and investment priorities

Selected thematic objective	Selected investment priority	Justification for selection
1 - Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	b) promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies	<p>Stagnant or decreasing investment in R&D&I, partially explained by the crisis and credit crunch</p> <p>Challenge to improve innovation standards in established economic sectors</p> <p>Need to boost public private cooperation</p> <p>Challenge to increase the level of patents applications</p> <p>Opportunity for synergies between regions with different innovation profiles that can be strengthened to exploit complementarities</p> <p>Need to concentrate innovation support in key areas with high innovation potential identified by the RIS3 strategies</p> <p>The unique nature of the programme is derived from the Atlantic Ocean which has the potential to drive economic growth through the green and blue economy</p> <p>All MS Commission' Position Papers (UK and Ireland in an explicit manner) reflect the convenience of implementing actions to foster innovation under ETC Programmes</p> <p>Contribution to the implementation of Atlantic Ocean Strategy Action Plan: Priority 1</p>
4 - Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	(a) promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources	<p>Limited exploitation of the potential related to renewable offshore energies</p> <p>Growth potential of the blue economy and maritime specialisation: renewable offshore energy</p> <p>Need to establish public strategies to promote renewable energies to reduce CO2 emissions, also contributing to limit air pollutants such as PM and NO2, and promote low-carbon technologies</p> <p>High potential for renewable offshore energy, the Atlantic Area being the second main transnational area for wind power in the EU, and almost all the territory provides opportunities to promote wave power, although the take up is currently quite challenging</p> <p>Limited capacity to adapt to climate change due to economic, cultural, institutional and technological barriers</p> <p>All MS Commission' Position Papers (UK and Ireland in an explicit manner) reflect the convenience of implementing actions to promote the production and use of renewable energies under ETC Programmes</p> <p>Contribution to Atlantic Ocean Strategy Action Plan: Priority 2 - SO 3</p>

Selected thematic objective	Selected investment priority	Justification for selection
5 - Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	(b) promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems	<p>The maritime character renders the Atlantic Area sensitive to coastal environment and maritime-related activities risks</p> <p>The Atlantic coast is particularly sensitive to natural phenomena that climate change and pollution deriving from industrial activities has increased in their frequency and their extension. This challenge jumps the borders of the MS calling for transnational solutions</p> <p>Need to tackle maritime and coastal risks in order to secure the good status of the maritime environment which is key for the development of sea-related activities</p> <p>Already existing tradition of cooperation on this field</p> <p>All MS Commission' Position Papers (UK and Ireland in an explicit manner) reflect the convenience of implementing actions to address shared risks under ETC Programmes</p> <p>Contribution to the Atlantic Ocean Strategy Action Plan: Priority 2 – SO 1</p>
6 - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	(c) conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	<p>Well preserved environment in rural areas, quality of natural landscape, rich biodiversity and water and air quality that can be presented as an asset of the area</p> <p>Strong cultural identity and heritage are considered as assets</p> <p>The Atlantic territories heritage can be considered an asset which may be globally enhanced: attractive urban areas, well preserved natural landscapes and strong cultural identity render the area attractive to local communities, visitors and tourists</p> <p>Growth potential of the blue economy and maritime specialisation: coastal tourism, aquaculture, yachting, naval and nautical industries, renewable offshore energy, blue biotechnologies</p> <p>Potential for increasing the revenues coming from the tourism sector</p> <p>All MS Commission' Position Papers reflect the convenience of implementing actions to preserve and promote the Atlantic's cultural heritage under the ETC Programmes</p> <p>Contribution to the implementation of Atlantic Ocean Strategy Action Plan: Priority 4 – SO 2</p>

Selected thematic objective	Selected investment priority	Justification for selection
	(d) protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures	<p>The Atlantic Area is home to marine and coastal ecosystems of particular importance from the point of view of their geographical dimension and biodiversity</p> <p>Human maritime activities critically depending on the quality of natural resources</p> <p>Need of promoting and protecting the common natural ecosystems in order to improve the territory attractiveness, quality of life and economic enhancement and development of emergent sectors based on those resources</p> <p>The wealth and common character of these resources justify the development of management modalities to promote their concerted preservation, so that measures taken in certain territories are not incompatible with other measures taken somewhere else concerning common or naturally articulated ecosystems</p> <p>All MS Commission' Position Papers (UK and Ireland in an explicit manner) reflect the convenience of implementing actions to promote environmental protection under ETC Programmes</p> <p>Contribution to the Atlantic Ocean Strategy Action Plan: Priority 2 – SO2</p>
	(g) supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors	<p>Possibility of further exploiting the green economy model profiting from the existing natural resources in the Atlantic Area</p> <p>Challenge for the Atlantic Area regions to create a resource-efficiency economy and promote eco-innovation to generate sustainable growth and decrease ecological foot-print</p> <p>UK and Ireland Commission Position Papers reflect the convenience of implementing actions to foster eco-innovation under ETC Programmes</p>

1.2 Justification of the financial allocation

The total ERDF allocation to the Programme amounts to 140,013,194 Euros as defined in Annex II of the Commission Implementing Decision setting up the list of cooperation programmes and indicating the global amount of total support from the ERDF for each programme under the ETC goal for the period 2014 to 2020.

Based on a needs analysis and strategic considerations about the key opportunities and the development needs of the Atlantic Area, the Programme allocates the largest share of the budget to Priority Axis 1 'Stimulating Innovation and Competitiveness' (based on Thematic Objective 1 defined in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013). In this way, Priority Axis 1 represents a 33.65% of the total ERDF contribution. Priority Axis 1 is followed by Priority Axis 4 'Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and cultural assets' (based on Thematic Objective 6 defined in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013), representing a 28.20% of the Union support to the Programme. Thirdly, Priority Axis 2 based on TO 4 and 6 (as defined in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) takes over 21% of the available ERDF funds, contributing to the development of renewable energies and supporting transnational cooperation in the field of green growth and eco-innovation. With just over 10% of the Union support funds, Priority Axis 3 is devoted to strengthening the territory's resilience to risks of natural, climate and human origin (based on Thematic Objective 7 as defined in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013).

This allocation of funding reflects a focus on the Growth & Jobs Agenda, the contribution to the Europe 2020 targets and the priorities set in strategic policy documents for the Atlantic Area, namely the Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic and its Action Plan.

Finally, priority 5 'Technical Assistance' has been allocated with 6 % of the total available ERDF in line with Article 17 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

In the context of the 2014-2020 period, public-private partnerships can be an effective means of delivering operations to achieve public policy objectives by bringing together different forms of public and private resources.

Moreover, the actual implementation of a number of SO, and in particular of Priority Axis 1, should ensure a strong private sector involvement in the Programme, including profit and non-profit making organisations. For this purpose, the Programme will set up a system for the effective tracking of private contributions, able to provide an indicative breakdown of private funding of profit and not-for-profit organisations. This will allow during programme's implementation to monitor the participation of private organisations and, in particular, to stimulate the commercial sector to be more active.

In accordance with point (d)(ii) of Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, where the national co-financing is made up of public and private co-financing, the Programme financing table shall give the indicative breakdown between public and the private components (Information provided under Table 3.2).

Table 2 - Overview of the programme investment strategy

Priority Axis	ERDF support (in EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme (by Fund)			Thematic objective	Investment Priorities	Specific Objectives corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective
		ERDF	ENI	IPA				
1 - Stimulating innovation and competitiveness	47 117 240	33.7%			1 - strengthening research, technological development and innovation	1b - promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies	1.1 - Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness	1.1 -Comprehensiveness of public policies in the development of the Atlantic Area innovation systems
							1.2 - Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes	1.2 - Financing effectiveness for the diffusion of innovation results
2 – Fostering resource efficiency	29 744 404	21.2%			4 - supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	4a - promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources	2.1 - Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency	2.1 - Degree of political commitment to foster local dynamics aiming to increase energy efficiency and develop renewable energy sources
					6 - preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	6g - supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors	2.2 - Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency	2.2. - Comprehensiveness of public policies for eco-innovation and green growth

Priority Axis	ERDF support (in EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme (by Fund)			Thematic objective	Investment Priorities	Specific Objectives corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective
		ERDF	ENI	IPA				
3 – Strengthening the territory's resilience to risks of natural, climate and human origin	15 267 039	10.9%			5 - promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	5b - promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems	3.1 - Strengthening risk management systems	3.1 - Comprehensiveness of public policies in view of improving the resilience of land and maritime areas to climate and nature changes
4 – Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and culture assets	39 483 720	28.2%			6 - preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	6d - protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures	4.1 - Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services	4.1 - Comprehensiveness of public policies in view of improving the biodiversity and the ecosystems services
						6c - conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	4.2 - Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development	4.2 - Comprehensiveness of public policies valuing the cultural and natural assets in view of local economic development
5 – Technical Assistance	8 400 791	6.0%			N/A	N/A	5.1 - Ensure an efficient and effective Programme management and enhance the visibility and capitalisation of Programme results	N/A

Priority Axis	ERDF support (in EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme (by Fund)			Thematic objective	Investment Priorities	Specific Objectives corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective
		ERDF	ENI	IPA				
							5.2 - Guarantee an effective support to project applicants and beneficiaries and enhance the visibility and capitalisation of projects results	N/A

SECTION 2. PRIORITY AXES

SECTION 2.A. Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance

PRIORITY AXIS 1 – STIMULATING INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS

2.A.1 Priority Axis

ID of Priority Axis	1
Title of the Priority Axis	Stimulating innovation and competitiveness
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented through community- led local development	

2.A.2 Justification for the establishment of a Priority Axis covering more than one thematic objective

Not applicable

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for the Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

2.A.4/1b - Investment Priority 1b

Investment Priority 1b	Promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies
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2.A.5/1b - Specific Objectives corresponding to the investment priority 1b and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 1.1
Specific Objective	Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness
Results sought	<p>The main change sought will be the achievement of an improved cooperation to support linkages such as clusters and networks between public, private and research actors, to foster innovation and trade in key regional areas of smart specialisation and to support capacity building to upgrade innovation skills and knowledge in public, social and business sectors.</p> <p>To achieve an improvement of relevant sectors of the Atlantic Area in a reference situation with relatively low innovation standards, networking and co-operative activities between research centres, higher education, business and the social and public sectors in the five MS are meant to create those favourable circumstances which can allow the upgrade in their innovation capacity.</p> <p>The CP can help to achieve this objective of improving the general conditions to encourage innovation in the Atlantic business community, the public sector, and among social actors, by contributing to transnational collaboration between businesses/social sector/public sector and research/higher education institutions, by facilitating transnational clustering of businesses, by facilitating cooperation with public and social actors and by facilitating transnational business networks. These transnational cooperation links will also contribute to improve the access to technological core facilities in various sectors for researchers and firms working in the respective fields, and to offer technological and knowledge-based services accessible to the private, social and public sectors. As a result of transnational cooperation, the CP seeks to contribute to the creation of better cooperation between firms/social organisations/public institutions and R&D related bodies across the Atlantic in a number of sectors showing clear potential and where significant opportunities can be identified. Cooperation will therefore foster private, public and social innovation, and trade/exports.</p>

Table 3 – SO1.1: Programme specific result indicators for specific objective 1.1

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
1.1	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for the development of regional innovation systems	Index 0-100	57,76	2016	58,15	Survey (to AA regional authorities)	2019, 2021 and 2023

ID	Specific Objective 1.2
Specific Objective	Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes
Results sought	<p>The main change sought is an improved cooperation linking research organisations, industry, social, and public sector entities in order to improve the existing mechanisms for knowledge transfer. This will contribute to enhance the uptake of all types of innovation (social innovation, product innovation, service innovation, public sector innovation, etc.), facilitating the joint development of activities leading to new products, processes and services in those domains of smart specialisation shared between the regions.</p> <p>The CP will be making a contribution to a reference situation whereby companies and firms, social and public organisations are experiencing the common difficulty of transforming European research into high value added and high profit products and services, and more competitive processes.</p> <p>The CP will facilitate the internal and external market access of innovation results by contributing to the creation of spin-offs and to the consolidation of existing niches of excellence linked to those sectors and fields of activity having a high potential, but also to implement social and public innovation results aimed at developing new solutions to address social and public needs. The CP will contribute to enable companies, public services institutions and third sector organisations to work together and cooperate with research institutions to facilitate the transfer of knowledge with a view of accessing and using innovation results. This activity will mean, in practice, that through transnational cooperation, a better knowledge of the existing market, business opportunities and social needs in a number of key area and market niches will be achieved and the exploitation of research outcomes for the development of new technologies, products and services will be enhanced. In addition, the Programme will be supporting firms and the public and third sector to work closer with end-users, to know their needs and limitations, connect with sources of knowledge and promote the uptake of all types of innovation and strategic processes.</p> <p>As a result of transnational cooperation, the CP seeks to contribute to reduce the gap between the existing innovation potential and the actual innovation undertaken in certain public and social areas or high potential market segments, by supporting the development of business/social/public support strategies and solutions to overcome these challenges, and to raise exports and trade.</p>

Table 3 – SO1.2: Programme specific result indicators for specific objective 1.2

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
1.2	Financing absorptive capacity index addressing the access of business, social and public organisations to innovation results	Index 0-100	54,53	2016	66,35	Existing databases (EC Data warehouses of DG Regio and E-CORDA)	2019, 2021 and 2023

2.A.6/1b - Actions to be supported under the investment priority 1b

2.A.6.1 Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported under Specific Objective 1.1

The Programme aims to support actions that bring the most relevant partners together to improve innovation capacity and cooperation in Atlantic Area regions in those sectors linked to the regions' smart specialisation strategy. **Examples of actions** to be supported include:

- ✓ Establishment and further strengthening of transnational and, when relevant, international innovation networks, SME networks and clusters, also supporting their internationalisation
- ✓ Development of cooperation schemes contributing to organising the development of scientific resource centres, business incubators, clusters, business networks, centres of expertise, research and innovation infrastructures and regional poles of excellence
- ✓ Stimulation of regional triple helix (public sector/university and research/enterprise) and quadruple helix cooperation (public sector/university and research/enterprise/ end-users)
- ✓ Support for Cross-Sectoral supply chains and collaborative innovative initiatives
- ✓ Development of pilot actions on knowledge exchange and collaboration tools: e.g. social innovation platforms, social innovation clusters, observatories, web-based platforms
- ✓ Development of social enterprises and social incubators in transnational collaborative networks
- ✓ Development of public-private partnerships to work in smart specialisation areas, setting up of transnational frameworks and platforms for the coordination of innovation policy, including the coordination of regional RIS3 strategies, innovation governance initiatives, competence networks, resources pooling structures or integrated supply chains
- ✓ Increasing skills of employees and unemployed people in the business social and public sector regarding innovative technologies, products, services or processes, taking into account the need to tackle current e-skills deficit

- ✓ Development of Programmes to increase technological skills and awareness raising on the sea-related careers
- ✓ Support of programmes for training for trainers and curricula development, and adapt education and training systems for the uptake and diffusion of innovation and the provision of capacity development mechanisms
- ✓ Development of technology transfer initiatives
- ✓ Development of innovative based strategies and tools to improve creativity and entrepreneurial mind-sets.
- ✓ Development of innovative competitiveness and trade facilitation tools to speed up trade processes and exports, such as e-cataloguing, e-tendering, e-invoicing, e-transit/import/export tracking, e-government and related actions, etc.

The actions undertaken will **contribute to the specific objective** by promoting transnational cooperation in the field of innovation in order to consolidate a transnational ecosystem to favour the scientific excellence and upgrade the innovation capacity and performance.

Cooperation in projects of this nature will increase joint transnational cooperation to build up skills and capacities of key stakeholders, having an effect on the infrastructures and capacities for innovation in the participating regions. With this purpose, the Programme expects to generate a critical mass of projects to promote the development of common scientific and innovation centres, solutions, and collaboration platforms. The actions undertaken will also ensure that the results of this cooperation practices are integrated in regional policies and actions contributing to improving the implementation of regional development policies and programmes in the field.

Moreover, a special emphasis will be placed in promoting partnerships involving a high diversity of actors covering the triple helix and the quadruple helix approach, and the relevant social and civil society actors, in order to achieve better linkages between public, private and research actors and, therefore, contribute to the enhancement of the innovation ecosystem and improving the existing capacities.

Actions and projects will take into account the role of ICTs to stimulate innovation and foster their support as appropriate, notably in the modernisation of industrial, business, research and public administration processes.

Additionally, the operations undertaken under this Priority Axis, will also contribute to fostering competitiveness and trade in the Atlantic Region given that the activities will be concentrated on those sectors in which Atlantic regions have competitive advantages.

The main **types of beneficiaries** will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public authorities
- ✓ Transnational, regional and local development agencies and organisations
- ✓ Universities and training centres/organisations
- ✓ Research institutes, innovation centres and sanitarian health centres
- ✓ Science and technology parks
- ✓ Business incubation services

- ✓ Business support centres and agencies
- ✓ Chambers of commerce
- ✓ Clusters
- ✓ Business networks and associations, SMEs and social enterprises
- ✓ Third sector organisations

Target groups will comprise the direct beneficiaries as well as the civil society and the private sector as a whole, which will benefit from the improvements in the innovation ecosystem.

Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported under Specific Objective 1.2

The Programme aims to support actions that enhance the links between research and industry actors in order to accelerate the market access of new products, services and processes, notably in those sectors identified in the framework of Smart Specialisation Strategies

In particular, **examples of actions** to be supported include the following:

- ✓ Development of common mechanisms to ensure cost-efficient exploitation of resources and best use of research results
- ✓ Designing and demonstrating new products and services addressing social needs (social innovation)
- ✓ Designing and demonstrating new processes and tools addressing the efficiency of public services
- ✓ Development of knowledge and information tools addressed to business internationalisation
- ✓ Development of networking mechanisms and platforms for the generation of business consortia
- ✓ Development of data sharing and market information systems
- ✓ Realisation of focused market watch and gap analysis
- ✓ Development of intelligence and strategic scoping tools for transnational innovation partnerships
- ✓ Development of knowledge intensive services, products and processes
- ✓ Development of innovative products through cooperation approaches (end-user-involvement, co-design, open innovation, etc.)
- ✓ Transfer and development of models or solutions enabling R&D support for SME demand-driven innovation
- ✓ Development of demonstration projects to test the market readiness
- ✓ Supporting the development of different ways of financing innovation such as venture capital mechanisms and other relevant financial instruments
- ✓ Development of innovative competitiveness and trade facilitation tools to speed up trade processes and exports, such as e-cataloguing, e-tendering, e-invoicing, e-transit/import/export tracking, processing methods, process control, transport organisation; and the development of processes and strategies to optimise time-to-market (TTM) in connection with developments processes.

The actions undertaken will **contribute to the specific objective** by promoting a more proactive cooperation among relevant actors that will allow the knowledge transfer and the exploitation of innovation results in order to accelerate the market access of new products, services and processes to generate trade and exports.

The implementation of actions aimed at promoting collaboration between relevant actors taking into account consumer's needs and interests will contribute to address the identified gap between the supply and demand of technology, favouring the development of applied innovation and accelerating the market access of new high added value products and services.

The main element that will contribute to the achievement of the Specific Objective will be the industrial and productive fabric, which would need to broaden its involvement in the innovation process and increase its participation in public-private cooperation schemes in order to be able to produce and bring to the market new products and services.

As in the case of the Specific Objective 1.1, the operations undertaken under this Specific Objective will be focused on those sectors in which Atlantic regions have competitive advantages; they will therefore contribute to foster the competitiveness of the Atlantic Region as a whole.

The main **types of beneficiaries** will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public authorities
- ✓ Transnational, regional and local development agencies and organisations Universities
- ✓ Research institutes and innovation centres
- ✓ Science and technology parks
- ✓ Business incubation services
- ✓ Technology intermediaries and technology/ knowledge transfer institutions
- ✓ Testing labs
- ✓ Business support centres and agencies
- ✓ Chambers of commerce
- ✓ Clusters
- ✓ Business networks and associations, SMEs and social enterprises
- ✓ Private and public investors
- ✓ Third sector organisations
- ✓ Consumers and end-users organisations

The **target groups** will comprise the direct beneficiaries as well as the civil society and the private sector as a whole, which will benefit from the improvements in the innovation ecosystem.

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

The seven key principles that will guide the selection of operations are:

1. **Contribution to the expected result of the corresponding SO:** Operations selected shall contribute to the expected result of one SO and to the change sought in the reference situation. Projects that demonstrate cross-cutting synergies with other SO will be highly encouraged.
2. **Level of transnational cooperation achieved/intensity of cooperation achieved:** Transnational cooperation is about tackling common challenges that jump the borders and affect the whole or part of the Atlantic Area. In order to work together towards the achievement of a common goal, selected projects should demonstrate high levels of transnational cooperation able to produce measurable results. The different degrees of cooperation, that can coexist in the same operation, are identified below ranked by increasing order of cooperation intensity:
 - ✓ Transnational exchange of knowledge to learn from each other (mutual learning and exchange of experiences)
 - ✓ Transfer of know-how between territories (individual and organisation learning and capacity building)
 - ✓ Common development of problem-solving capacity, arriving to the creation/enhancement of new/existing tools and solutions
 - ✓ Implementation of joint transnational responses to transnational issues focused on developing common planning and solutions
3. **Consistency and Quality of Partnership:** the partnership should be representative of the part of the Atlantic Area where that particular challenge or problem is taking place and well balanced in terms of MS included in it. It has also to cover the right mix of organisations according to the subject, specific channels with the private sector, if required, and organisations and entities with proved experience in the sector and in international project management.
4. **Innovative aspects implied for the Atlantic Area:** projects must go beyond the state-of-the-art in their territories tackling the identified challenge or problem and should develop new or add ups/follow ups to existing activities.
5. **Tangible outcomes:** operations have to lead to the achievement of a number of concrete and tangible results and prove its usefulness, value for money and problem solving capacity, such as Thematic networks, Clusters, tools, Information Platforms, management techniques, Plans, etc.
6. **Sustainability of the outcomes and capitalisation of the results:** The problem solving capacity developed by projects should be elaborated with a clear view to be sustainable in time through adequate channels such as the development or enhancement of new/existing policy strategies, programmes, projects and conventions, protocols or formal agreements that take up the project outcomes.
7. **Territorial and environmental impact:** Transnational cooperation is a soft approach generating direct effects in the area, helping to solve problems or contributing to better addressing joint development issues or opportunities. This dimension provides evidence that transnational cooperation is not limited to individual or organisation capacity building, but goes beyond by generating economic activity and creating new solutions to tackle the challenges faced by the territories and creates to a certain degree a limited number of jobs. As for the environmental impact, projects contributing to a decarbonated society, promoting savings of raw materials,

encouraging marine co-activities and having other positive impacts on the environment will be valued favourably.

8. **Coherence with relevant European, national and regional strategies:** projects should prove the coherence with the policy context and the link between their objectives and the relevant European and participating regions' strategies. In particular, in the framework of the Priority Axis 1 the selected projects should prove their link with specific Smart Specialisation Strategies. Moreover, when applicable projects should show how they link to the Atlantic Action Plan of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy.

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects

Not applicable

2.A.6.5 Output indicators for investment priority 1b

Table 4 – 1b: Common and programme specific output indicators for investment priority 1b

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
CO01	Number of enterprises receiving support	Number	30	Programme monitoring	Annual
CO28	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	Number	10	Programme monitoring	Annual
CO29	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	Number	10	Programme monitoring	Annual
CO41	Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Number	30	Programme monitoring	Annual
CO42	Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Number	30	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	33	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI02	Number of technical and scientific publications produced	Number	132	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	66	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI04	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	165	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI05	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	10725	Programme monitoring	Annual

2.A.7 Performance framework for Priority Axis 1

Table 5 – PA1: Performance framework of the Priority Axis 1

PA	Indicator type	ID	Indicator of key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
1	Output indicator	PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	3	33	Programme monitoring	
1	Output indicator	PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	6	66	Programme monitoring	
1	Financial indicator	PI06	Total eligible expenditure certified and submitted to EC	Euros	5 564 628	62 822 988	Programme monitoring	

Additional qualitative information on the establishment the performance framework

Details are provided in Annex VI “Output and Result indicators – conceptual framework”

2.A.8 Categories of intervention for Priority Axis 1

Table 6 – PA1: Dimension 1 - Intervention field for Priority Axis 1

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 1	001 - Generic productive investment in small and medium –sized enterprises ('SMEs')	1346207
	002 - Research and innovation processes in large enterprises	0
	056 - Investment in infrastructure, capacities and equipment in SMEs directly linked to research and innovation activities	4038620
	057 - Investment in infrastructure, capacities and equipment in large companies directly linked to research and innovation activities	0
	058 - Research and innovation infrastructure (public)	2692414
	059 - Research and innovation infrastructure (private, including science parks)	2692414
	060 - Research and innovation activities in public research centres and centres of competence including networking	6731034
	061 - Research and innovation activities in private research centres including networking	6731034
	062 - Technology transfer and university-enterprise cooperation primarily benefiting SMEs	6731034
	063 - Cluster support and business networks primarily benefiting SMEs	4038620
	064 - Research and innovation processes in SMEs (including voucher schemes, process, design, service and social innovation)	4038620
	066 - Advanced support services for SMEs and groups of SMEs (including management, marketing and design services)	2692415
	067 - SME business development, support to entrepreneurship and incubation (including support to spin offs and spin outs)	1346207
	072 - Business infrastructure for SMEs (including industrial parks and sites)	1346207
	073 - Support to social enterprises (SMEs)	2692414

Table 7 – PA1: Dimension 2 - Form of finance for Priority Axis 1

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 1	01 - Non-repayable grant	47117240

Table 8 – PA1: Dimension 3 - Territory type for Priority Axis 1

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 1	07 - Not applicable	47117240

Table 9 – PA1: Dimension 6 - Territorial delivery mechanism for Priority Axis 1

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 1	07 - Not applicable	47117240

2.A.9 Summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes

Not applicable

PRIORITY AXIS 2 – FOSTERING RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

2.A.1 Priority Axis

ID of Priority Axis	2
Title of the Priority Axis	Fostering Resource Efficiency
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented through community - led local development	

2.A.2 Justification for the establishment of a Priority Axis covering more than one thematic objective

Two TO have been selected for the Priority Axis 2:

- ✓ Thematic objective 4 - supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors, Investment Priority (a) promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources
- ✓ Thematic objective 6 - preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency, Investment Priority (g) supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient

economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors

The adoption of a Priority Axis covering these two TO will permit an integrated approach to address in a holistic manner the challenge of promoting a resource efficient economy based on both the use of renewable energies and an efficient use of resources by the industry.

Natural resources are key assets to achieve sustainable development and to guarantee the quality of life. However, European countries and in particular the Atlantic Area, are facing important challenges related to the pressure that the industry, the economy and the society is putting on the environment. In this context, continuing the current patterns of resource use is not advisable and a shift towards a new economic, industrial and social environmentally friendly and resource-efficient model is required.

For this purpose, the Atlantic Area cooperation programme propounds an integrated approach to promote resource efficiency based on two complementary pillars. First, a specific objective (2.1) designed to promote the distribution and use of renewable energies through the improvement of the general institutional, technological, industrial and social framework. However, an increase in the use of renewable energies would be insufficient if it does not come along with a paradigm shift to transform the way in which the industrial sector consumes resources, interacts with local ecosystems and brings value to the local economy and society as a whole. To contribute to this industrial transition, a second specific objective (2.2) is proposed to foster green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency.

In fact, this holistic approach is aligned with the *Flagship initiative for a resource-efficient Europe* under the EU 2020 which supports the shift towards a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy by providing a long-term framework to promote actions in a wide range of policy areas and sectors including, among others, climate change, energy, industry or raw materials.

Therefore, the expected results can only be achieved if the challenge of promoting resource efficiency is tackled in a balanced manner, promoting both an efficient energy and industrial model. Moreover, an integrated approach will also permit obtaining synergies and complementarities in this field and putting forward coordinated regional policies to promote resource efficiency in the Area.

Finally, establishing a Priority Axis covering more than one thematic objective will contribute to speed up the management and control tasks in line with the reduction of the administrative burden principles.

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for the Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

2.A.4/4a - Investment Priority 4a

Investment Priority 4a

Promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources

2.A.5/4a - Specific Objectives corresponding to the investment priority 4a and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 2.1
Specific Objective	Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency
Results sought	<p>The main change sought is a generally improved cooperation contributing to an adapted institutional and technical environment to enable the development of favourable conditions for the sector of local renewable energy leading to a better position of the Atlantic Area and the adoption of energy efficiency patterns and policies.</p> <p>The common reference situation is the important challenge that the territories are facing due to the pressure that industry, economy and society are exerting on the environment while having an abundance of natural resources (sea -wave, tides and currents- , rivers/estuaries, wind, biomass, biogas, solar, etc.), with already installed and/or planned wind, wave and current energy production capacities and existing energy efficiency strategies and policies, and with a solid number of potential investors and enterprises already operating in the area. Energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy are the main pillars of sustainability in the energy sector. In the present scenario, most of the Atlantic regions have still a long way to go before they can claim to have significant renewable energy capacities installed in the foreseeable future and before adequate energy efficiency patterns are adopted.</p> <p>In this context, the main efforts of the Programme will be concentrated to support three different aspects: a policy-driven strand, a social-driven strand, and technological-driven strand. As far as the institutional environment is concerned, the Programme will contribute to enable the development of favourable conditions for the rise of the local renewable energy sector, through promoting exchanges on local policies for the development of renewable energies with regard to research, resource mapping (joint mapping projects of renewable energy resources, structuring of centres of excellence), sharing of reference as concerns clusters, and the legal framework provided for the sector, as well as for the promotion of ultra-low energy buildings, high energy savings and super-efficient appliances. The Programme will contribute to joint work on the development of common local policies supporting all renewable energy market actors in overcoming their many barriers, in establishing governance frameworks for energy efficiency and defining training standards, identifying of specific competences, and promoting the ex-change of know-how. Transnational cooperation will also contribute to develop common methodologies concerning social acceptability (ways of engaging in dialogue with the different categories of users and consumers) and the involvement of coastal communities concerning the development of offshore renewable energies. Cooperation could also contribute to the development of social driven and technological-driven instruments like those related to the provision of information addressed to the industry and end-users about energy saving opportunities and about technical assistance to help making choices on energy efficiency options.</p> <p>As a result of transnational cooperation, the Programme seeks to contribute to improve the institutional, technical and social framework to promote favourable conditions for the sector of local renewable energy and for the adoption of energy</p>

efficiency strategies, including R&D, technology transfer, cluster building, demonstrators, testing and dissemination of results.

Table 3 – SO2.1: Programme specific result indicators for specific objective 2.1

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
2.1	Percentage of population covered by local sustainable energy action plans	Index 0-100	5,77	2016	43,89	Existing databases (Covenant of Mayors committed to local sustainable energy and Eurostat)	2019, 2021 and 2023

2.A.6/4a - Actions to be supported under the investment priority 4a

2.A.6.1 Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

The actions under this priority will aim to foster the development of favourable conditions to the development of renewable energies contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gases and also of other emissions such as PM and NO₂, through transnational cooperation.

Even if heavy investments fall outside of the cooperation programme, if investments in hydropower projects are made, they will comply with Art. 4.7 of the Water Framework Directive, that indicates that an appropriate analysis has to be carried out as early as possible in the planning process for any project modifying the hydromorphological characteristics of a water body causing deterioration of the status. This would entail the analysis of alternatives (better environmental options), setting-up the necessary mitigation measures, and a justification of the importance of the project for overriding public interest.

Furthermore, energy related measures supported by the CP should show their coherence with local and regional Air Quality plans under Directive 2008/50/EC. The potential promotion of the use of solid biomass will need to be accompanied by strict emission standards and abatement measures reducing emissions, especially of PM, and particularly in the participating regions with PM hotspots such as France, Portugal and Spain.

Examples of actions to be supported include the following:

- ✓ Development of technological, legal, educational/training, financial and organisational solutions in the field of renewable energy, including economic appraisals and business cases to quantify social, community and environmental benefits and value
- ✓ Identification of existing and potential local value chain and key differentiators in the renewable energy sector

- ✓ Development of joint mapping of competencies versus expected needs from renewable energy project developers and technology suppliers
- ✓ Enhancement of cooperation between private, public and research actors throughout the whole value chain related to energy (R&D demonstration, feasibility & project planning, manufacturing, installation, operation & maintenance, distribution, environmental impact assessment, etc.)
- ✓ Renewable energies outreach and dissemination - capacity building to coordinate both the supply and value chains for marine renewable energies (MRE), coordinating the supply chain expertise and promotion to device developers
- ✓ Creating an Energy Vision for the area, based on an assessment of the current use, and including targets for the reduction of energy consumption in the area, and the use of increased amounts of regional renewable energy, the development of networks of clusters on (marine) renewable energies in the Atlantic Area
- ✓ Improvement of spatial management to enhance the use of offshore and onshore renewable energies
- ✓ Development of peer reviews and networking of regions, economic agencies and organisations specialised in the development of renewable energies to support the delivery of existing low carbon emission strategies
- ✓ Practical 'on-the-ground' demonstrations of new techniques and processes and of best practices
- ✓ Enhancement of coordination and integration of the production and distribution systems of different kinds of renewable energy
- ✓ Joint actions to support the grid integration of offshore renewable energies
- ✓ Integrate renewable power generation with the regions existing natural carbon sinks to avoid remobilising stored carbon into the environment
- ✓ Joint actions to support solutions of multiple use of energy
- ✓ Improve the awareness and uptake by firms on the business opportunities of renewable energy development, of information; communication and awareness raising campaigns as well as consultation methodologies to increase social acceptance of renewable energy
- ✓ Supporting a sound energy management through consumer and local communities empowerment (micro-generation, smart metering)
- ✓ Development of local policies and tools for the promotion of ultra-low energy buildings, high energy savings and super-efficient appliances

The actions undertaken will **contribute to the specific objective** by developing and consolidating an adequate institutional, social and technological framework that will promote energy efficiency and stimulate the production and distribution of renewable energies.

With this purpose, projects aiming at creating new joint solutions to address the technological, legal, educational, financial and organisational barriers to the development of such energies will be promoted under this specific objective. The actions undertaken will also ensure that these common practices are integrated in regional policies and actions contributing to improving the implementation of regional development policies and programmes in this field.

The involvement and the increased cooperation between the institutional, social and industrial/market dimension would be a way to promote joint responsibility for sustainable development and a shift towards a resource efficient economy contributing increase the use and the awareness on the renewable energies.

The main **types of beneficiaries** will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public energy and transport related authorities
- ✓ Transnational, regional and local development agencies and organisations
- ✓ Regional and local energy agencies
- ✓ Regional and local environmental agencies
- ✓ Research institutes and innovation centres
- ✓ Science and technology parks
- ✓ Universities
- ✓ Public and private energy suppliers
- ✓ Business networks and associations operating in the renewable and energy efficiency sector
- ✓ Private and public investors
- ✓ Local communities
- ✓ Consumers organisations
- ✓ Civil society associations promoting renewable and energy efficiency

Target groups will comprise the direct beneficiaries as well as the civil society as a whole, which will benefit from the improvements in the sustainable energy ecosystem.

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Please see, 2.A.6.2 from Priority 1 – Investment Priority 1b Section

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects

Not applicable

2.A.6.5 Output indicators for investment priority 4a

Table 4 – 4a: Common and programme specific output indicators for investment priority 4a

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
CO30	Additional capacity of renewable energy production	Mw	10	Programme monitoring	Annual

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
CO34	Greenhouse gas reduction	Tons of CO2 equivalent	80000	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	10	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI02	Number of technical and scientific publications produced	Number	40	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	20	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI04	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	50	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI05	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	3250	Programme monitoring	Annual

2.A.4/6g - Investment Priority 6g

Investment Priority 6g

Supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental

2.A.5/6g - Specific Objectives corresponding to the investment priority 6g and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 2.2
Specific Objective	Fostering green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency
Results sought	<p>The main change sought is a strengthened cooperation to facilitate awareness raising on eco-innovation/eco-efficiency, the promotion of efficient organisation of businesses/organisations to include the two concepts, and an enhanced response to market/public demand of green products and services, to support the introduction of an efficient policy mix of supply and demand measures stimulating research and innovation favourable to green growth (including blue growth). The reference situation features a fragile environmental balance with several threats resulting from anthropic activities, including economic activities. Approaches able to contribute to minimizing environmental impacts can provide some relief to the Area while contributing to reduce the use of resources, limit pollution, optimise the use of eco-system services and raise the general public, local communities and businesses awareness on the need to make a more efficient and sustainable use of our territorial resources. Promoting green growth and eco-innovation is also an efficient way to contribute to smart and sustainable growth. There is also a growing demand for environmental products and services, a strong natural resource base (particularly sea-based), consolidated environmental research groups, proximity of knowledge structure and existing mainstream policy support for sustainable development in AA regions. However, uncertainty surrounding market demand and the profitability of investments, market prices not exactly reflecting environmental costs and benefits, and the rigidity of economic structures, are major barriers.</p> <p>In this context where a wide range of aspects constrain the development of environmentally friendly technologies and the adoption of more sustainable production and consumer patterns, there is no single policy measure able to support eco-innovation and eco-efficiency. The Programme will contribute to the promotion of</p>

a comprehensive policy mix addressing the development of innovative products and processes reducing environmental impacts (producers' view), it will also focus on the social and cultural acceptance of environmental efficiency as a main principle of usage (consumers' view). The Programme will promote joint work supporting the definition of local strategies and policies for a sustainable production and consumption (SPC), the creation and dissemination of consumer information tools on eco-efficiency, the development of instruments and guidelines facilitating the implementation of cradle to cradle/circular economy initiatives, building an eco-innovation triple helix, pilot and demonstration projects, dissemination of eco-efficiency analysis tools allowing companies to assess and improve the environmental performance of products and services, adopting management tools like environmental management systems, life cycle management, design for environmental supply chain management.

As a **result of transnational cooperation**, the Programme seeks to contribute to better directing investments in eco-innovation and promote favourable conditions for the reduction of the material intensity of goods/services and waste, promoting recyclability and improving the durability and service intensity of goods/services, boosting business cooperation in the area, and contributing to the creation of better and more efficient transnational support networks/structures to inform, promote and foster eco-innovation, eco-efficiency and green growth in the AA.

Table 3 – SO2.2: Programme specific result indicators for specific objective 2.2

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
2.2	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for eco-innovation and green growth.	Index 0-100	53,48	2016	57,23	Survey (to AA regional Authorities)	2019, 2021 and 2023

2.A.6/6g - Actions to be supported under the investment priority 6g

2.A.6.1 Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Examples of actions to be supported are:

- ✓ Development of mechanisms to convey the information on the need of eco-innovation products and services to the relevant actors of the sector
- ✓ Development of measures and tools to stimulate the adaptation of policies and behaviours supporting green growth and eco-innovation
- ✓ Development of awareness-raising policies, strategies and plans fostering a positive eco-innovation behaviour

- ✓ Development of business management support instruments, such as analysis tools for the assessment of the environmental performance of products and services, and environmental management, life cycle management, design for environment and environmental supply chain management tools
- ✓ Promoting the adoption of the Agenda 21 in the private sector
- ✓ Development of circular economy / cradle-to-cradle principles that deliver new products or ways-of-working to achieve sustainable economic growth
- ✓ Development of mechanisms to reduce the amount of resources (e.g. land, water, minerals) used in industrial processes
- ✓ Development of solutions to reduce, recycle and valorize the waste outputs of industrial or domestic processes
- ✓ Development of actions to reduce the use of resources in businesses, administrations and organisation of major events such as festival and large conferences
- ✓ Developing policies and strategies to support eco-innovation and generate demand for eco-innovative products and services
- ✓ Development information systems addressed to consumers on the eco-efficiency performance of products and services
- ✓ Promoting Carbon and Hydric Footprint Labeling
- ✓ Promotion of eco-innovation solutions related to maritime and land activities, water and air quality including in transport and renewable energy (control for vessels, clean port infrastructure, low emission renewable energy from biomass etc.).

The actions undertaken will **contribute to the specific objective** by fostering the status of linkages, working structures and interaction between relevant actors to promote eco-innovation and green growth. Moreover, this stimulus of networking and collaboration and the support to the development of the cradle-to-cradle principles should contribute to a better quality of governance for a more dynamic, greener and more circular economy in the Atlantic Area.

Finally, policy instruments such as green procurement, awards, and awareness raising campaigns or direct business support instruments should also ease the way towards the specific objective of fostering green growth, eco-innovation and energy efficiency in the Atlantic Area

The **main target groups** and types of beneficiaries will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public dealing with eco-innovation and environmental efficiency
- ✓ Transnational, regional and local development agencies and organisations
- ✓ Regional and local energy agencies
- ✓ Regional and local environmental agencies
- ✓ Research institutes and innovation centres
- ✓ Science and technology parks

- ✓ Universities
- ✓ Business networks, organisation, associations and chambers of commerce operating in the sector
- ✓ Private and public investors
- ✓ Local communities
- ✓ Civil society associations and NGOs
- ✓ Living labs and User Groups

Target groups will comprise the direct beneficiaries as well as the civil society as a whole, which will benefit from the improvements in the green growth ecosystem.

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Please see, 2.A.6.2 from Priority 1 – Investment Priority 1b Section

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects

Not applicable

2.A.6.5 Output indicators for investment priority 6g

Table 4 – 6g: Common and programme specific output indicators for investment priority 6g

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	11	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI02	Number of technical and scientific publications produced	Number	44	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	22	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI04	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	55	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI05	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	3575	Programme monitoring	Annual

2.A.7 Performance framework for Priority Axis 2

Table 5 – PA2: Performance framework of the Priority Axis 2

PA	Indicator type	ID	Indicator of key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
2	Output indicator	PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	2	21	Programme monitoring	
2	Output indicator	PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	4	42	Programme monitoring	
2	Financial indicator	PI06	Total eligible expenditure certified and submitted to EC	Euros	3 825 436	39 659 206	Programme monitoring	

Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework

Details are provided in Annex VI “Output and Result indicators – conceptual framework”

2.A.8 Categories of intervention for Priority Axis 2

Table 6 – PA2: Dimension 1 - Intervention field for Priority Axis 2

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 2	003 - Productive investment in large enterprises linked to the low-carbon economy	632860
	009 - Renewable energy: wind	3164298
	010 - Renewable energy: solar	3164298
	011 - Renewable energy: biomass	3164298
	012 - Other renewable energy (including hydroelectric, geothermal and marine energy) and renewable energy integration (including storage, power to gas and renewable hydrogen infrastructure)	1898579
	056 - Investment in infrastructure, capacities and equipment in SMEs directly linked to research and innovation activities	632860
	057 - Investment in infrastructure, capacities and equipment in large companies directly linked to research and innovation activities	0
	058 - Research and innovation infrastructure (public)	632859
	059 - Research and innovation infrastructure (private, including science parks)	632859
	060 - Research and innovation activities in public research centres and centres of competence including networking	632859
	061 - Research and innovation activities in private research centres including networking	632859
	062 - Technology transfer and university-enterprise cooperation primarily benefiting SMEs	1898580
	063 - Cluster support and business networks primarily benefiting SMEs	1898580
	064 - Research and innovation processes in SMEs (including voucher schemes, process, design, service and social innovation)	632859

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
	065 - Research and innovation infrastructure, processes, technology transfer and cooperation in enterprises focusing on the low carbon economy and on resilience to climate change	1898580
	068 - Energy efficiency and demonstration projects in SMEs and supporting measures	3164298
	069 - Support to environmentally-friendly production processes and resource efficiency in SMEs	3164298
	071 - Development and promotion of enterprises specialised in providing services contributing to the low carbon economy and to resilience to climate change (including support to such services)	1898580

Table 7 – PA2: Dimension 2 - Form of finance for Priority Axis 2

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 2	01 - Non-repayable grant	29744404

Table 8 – PA2: Dimension 3 - Territory type for Priority Axis 2

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 2	07 - Not applicable	29744404

Table 9 – PA2: Dimension 6 - Territorial delivery mechanism for Priority Axis 2

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 2	07 - Not applicable	29744404

2.A.9 A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes

Not applicable

PRIORITY AXIS 3 – STRENGTHENING THE TERRITORY’S RESILIENCE TO RISKS OF NATURAL, CLIMATE AND HUMAN ORIGIN

2.A.1 Priority Axis

ID of Priority Axis	3
Title of the Priority Axis	Strengthening the territory’s resilience to risks of natural, climate and human origin
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented through community- led local development	

2.A.2 Justification for the establishment of a Priority Axis covering more than one thematic objective

Not applicable

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for the Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

2.A.4/5b - Investment Priority 5b

Investment Priority 5b	Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems
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2.A.5/5b - Specific Objectives corresponding to the investment priority 5b and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 3.1
Specific Objective	Strengthening risks management systems
Results sought	<p>The main change sought will be an improved cooperation contributing to reduce risks and their impact, to reinforce the safety of the population and the environment, by strengthening the resilience and planning capacity of Atlantic Regions at local and regional level for the management of natural and climatic risks as well as those derived from human activities.</p> <p>This positive change will be attained from a reference situation whereby the Atlantic façade is exposed to several threats and pressures characteristic of its large coastal area and the effects of climate change. Moreover, a limited regional policy initiatives and cooperation to cope with these important challenges can be observed and the adaptive capacity differs between the regions of the programme area while no region is among those holding the highest capacity.</p> <p>This positive contribution of the Programme will be an increased capacity and the production of enhanced risk management action plans and strategies of the Atlantic territories in order to provide an adequate and coordinated answer to potential arising risks. Thus, the programme will contribute to develop and improve Integrated management plans, local risk management, prevention and mitigation plans the preparation of efficient surveillance, assessment, warning, reporting, planning, coordination and response mechanisms to threats, the development, testing and deployment of new risk management tools and the development and dissemination of awareness raising tools directed at local communities on the benefits of the prevention and management of risks such as coastal erosion, submersion, flooding, marine, coastal and inland water pollutions, land pollutions, eutrophication, drought, fires etc.</p> <p>As a result of transnational cooperation, the Atlantic Area 2014-2020 seeks to contribute to a better cooperation and to an increase in the number and quality of action plans and coordinated strategies for the prevention and management of risks deriving from several threats as those related to climate change and economy related activities.</p>

Table 3 – SO3.1: Programme specific result indicators for specific objective 3.1

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
3.1	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for the resilience of land and maritime areas	Index 0-100	45,73	2016	56,88	Survey (to AA regional Authorities)	2019, 2021 and 2023

2.A.6/5b - Actions to be supported under the investment priority 5b

2.A.6.1 Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

The **actions to be supported** under this specific objective will aim to strengthen the capacity and systems of the Atlantic Area for the management of risks deriving from climate change and human activities.

Examples of actions to be supported include the following:

- ✓ Development of actions to prevent risks (environmental monitoring and prevention systems; tools to improve governance and coordination, crisis and emergency management and responses; tools for early detection; early warning systems; mapping; risk assessment, including transnational actions in the framework of the Flood directive (Directive 2007/60/EC) i.e. on emergency plans, flood risk assessment, and flood risk management plans looking at prevention, protection and preparedness, etc.
- ✓ Coordination of the use of Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and surveillance systems to support threat and emergency response, coordinated use of IT infrastructure necessary to allow information sharing and interoperability between national surveillance networks and the Common Information sharing Environment at EU level
- ✓ Development of education and awareness-raising tools related to prevention and management of risks
- ✓ Development of local community and business leaders empowerment to risk prevention, and recovery and regeneration actions
- ✓ Development and implementation of environmental management systems by the private sector and companies
- ✓ Networking of technical and scientific resources available in the European Atlantic Area: joint production of data on the evolution of the coastline to facilitate its measurement along the Atlantic coast, based on comparable data

- ✓ Development of capacity-building initiatives directed at actors involved in managing and preventing risks
- ✓ Dissemination of data and risk management tools
- ✓ Promote the interlinking of regional, coastal and ocean observation and maritime safety and coastal structures and their forecasting models
- ✓ Development of methodologies and technologies for the study, procedures, evaluation and compensation of damages linked to risks under this objective
- ✓ Practical 'on-the-ground' demonstrations of new techniques and processes

The **contribution to the specific objective** will be derived from the implementation of operations oriented to address the effects of climate change and human activities on the Atlantic territories through a strengthened an integrated territorial risk prevention and resilience management system.

The operations will aim to raise awareness and to put in place common surveillance, prevention and risk management strategies and tools contributing to improve Atlantic territories' awareness and preparedness to cope with threats and risks derived from climate change and economic activity. The actions undertaken will also ensure that these common practices are integrated in regional policies and actions contributing to improving the implementation of regional development policies and programmes in this field.

Moreover, actions aiming at empowering the local communities will also allow improving risk prevention, recovery and regeneration actions and strategies contributing to reinforce the safety and security of the population and ecosystems, strengthening resilience and planning capacity of Atlantic Regions for the management of natural risks and the consequences deriving from climate change and economic activities.

The main **types of beneficiaries** will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public authorities and communities dealing with risk issues
- ✓ Transnational, regional and local development agencies and organisations
- ✓ Regional and local environmental agencies
- ✓ Universities, research institutes and innovation centres
- ✓ Environmental protection organisations and NGOs
- ✓ Local communities
- ✓ Civil society associations
- ✓ Economic sectors related to risks and risk management

Target groups will comprise the direct beneficiaries as well as the local communities and the civil society as a whole, which will benefit from an enhanced integrated territorial management and risk prevention and resilience strategies.

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Please see, 2.A.6.2 from Priority 1 – Investment Priority 1b Section

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects

Not applicable

2.A.6.5 Output indicators for investment priority 5b

Table 4 – 5b: Common and programme specific output indicators for investment priority 5b

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
CO20	Population benefiting from flood protection measures	Number	500 000	Programme monitoring	Annual
CO21	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures	Number	500 000	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	9	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI02	Number of technical and scientific publications produced	Number	36	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	18	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI04	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	45	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI05	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	2925	Programme monitoring	Annual

2.A.7 Performance framework for Priority Axis 3

Table 5 – PA3: Performance framework of the Priority Axis 3

PA	Indicator type	ID	Indicator of key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
3	Output indicator	PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	1	9	Programme monitoring	
3	Output indicator	PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	2	18	Programme monitoring	
3	Financial indicator	PI06	Total eligible expenditure certified and submitted to EC	Euros	2 259 385	20 356 053	Programme monitoring	

Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework

Details are provided in Annex “Output and Result indicators – conceptual framework”

2.A.8 Categories of intervention for Priority Axis 3

Table 6 – PA3: Dimension 1 - Intervention field for Priority Axis 3

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 3	021 - Water management and drinking water conservation (including river basin management, water supply, specific climate change adaptation measures, district and consumer metering, charging systems and leak reduction)	0
	087 - Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks e.g. erosion, fires, flooding, storms and drought, including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures	4362011
	088 - Risk prevention and management of non-climate related natural risks (i.e. earthquakes) and risks linked to human activities (e.g. technological accidents), including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures	10905028

Table 7 – PA3: Dimension 2 - Form of finance for Priority Axis 3

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 3	01 - Non-repayable grant	15267039

Table 8 – PA3: Dimension 3 Territory type for Priority Axis 3

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 3	07 - Not applicable	15267039

Table 9 – PA3: Dimension 6 - Territorial delivery mechanism for Priority Axis 3

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 3	07 - Not applicable	15267039

2.A.9 A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes

Not applicable

PRIORITY AXIS 4 – ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY AND THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS

2.A.1 Priority Axis

ID of Priority Axis	4
Title of the Priority Axis	Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and cultural assets
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire Priority Axis will be implemented through community- led local development	

2.A.2 Justification for the establishment of a Priority Axis covering more than one thematic objective

Not applicable

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for the Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

2.A.4/6d - Investment Priority 6d

Investment Priority 6d	Protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures
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2.A.5/6d - Specific Objectives corresponding to the investment priority 6d and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 4.1
Specific Objective	Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem services
Results sought	<p>The main change sought will be the attainment of a better-protected and preserved biodiversity while enhancing environmental resources through improved cooperation able to better coordinate environmental management systems. As a result, measures adopted in the various Atlantic Area territories will be made more compatible. Cooperation will therefore contribute to improved management capacities in the territories both as concerns the environmental protection and the preservation of biodiversity and the enhancement of ecosystem services.</p> <p>The impact of the current expanding and increasingly diversified human activities on similar or shared natural ecosystems, in particular marine and coastal ones, and the evolution of physical conditions in a climate change context, which constitutes the reference situation, justify the development of common methodologies for surveillance, monitoring, learning and management adapted to the preservation of this common natural asset.</p> <p>The Programme will contribute to achieve this objective of promoting and protecting the biodiversity and the sustainable management of ecosystems through more intensive cooperation. This will support the improvement of the state of conservation of natural habitats and terrestrial, aquatic and marine species, contributing to stopping the extinction of endangered species, develop, and valorise ecosystem services, including those of the marine environment. It will also help to improve the acquisition, organisation and dissemination of knowledge on biodiversity: support to research, facilitation, management, training and awareness raising schemes.</p> <p>As a result of transnational cooperation, the Atlantic Area Programme 2014-2020 seeks to contribute to a long-term sustainable development by improving the preservation and the compatibility with human use of natural ecosystems, in particular regarding marine, coastal and river basin areas through strengthening and/or enlargement of protected areas. The development of initiatives within this</p>

transnational framework will help to achieve a more integrated environmental approach, considering economic and social issues in the management of resources and natural spaces.

Table 3 – SO4.1: Programme specific result indicators for specific objective 4.1

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
4.1	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for the improvement of biodiversity and ecosystems services.	Index 0-100	45,73	2016	57,10	Survey (to AA regional Authorities)	2019, 2021 and 2023

2.A.6/6d - Actions to be supported under the investment priority 6d

2.A.6.1 Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

The **actions** implemented under this specific objective could help develop ecosystem protection and biodiversity preservation actions aimed at providing a better knowledge of habitats and species and defining of better-adapted management rules and procedures. The planned actions have to (as appropriate) contribute to the Biodiversity Strategy (target 2 on ecosystems) and Natura 2000 network implementation including the establishment of transnational exchanges and links.

Examples of actions to be supported include the following:

- ✓ Actions to identify, assess and develop ecosystem services and green infrastructures
- ✓ Development of coordinated initiatives to better understand the conservation status of ecosystems or species in geographical areas that are beyond the competence of a single country
- ✓ Harmonisation and coordination of environmental management strategies in the Atlantic (e.g. implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework, Natura2000 networks, Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems-FAO International Guidelines, Marine Protected Area-OSPAR, Ecologically or Biologically significant areas-CBD, etc.) to protect natural and deep-sea ecosystems.
- ✓ Development of initiatives to preserve and protect the Atlantic natural species, landscapes and sites of major natural interest of Atlantic Area regions
- ✓ Development of concerted management procedures concerning emblematic species or species with strong economic interest (fisheries resources, migratory species) and combating invasive species

- ✓ Development of pilot actions to test new solutions and methods concerning the preservation and restoration of biodiversity
- ✓ Development of initiatives aiming at mapping natural species habitats and the seabed
- ✓ Promote marine biotechnology and biomaterials derived from the sustainable exploitation of the seabed and the assessment of their genetic structure, and strengthening links between research and industry in the area of the Atlantic, in order to develop biobanks and identify innovative marine bioproducts markets
- ✓ Development of management and enhancement methods concerning natural Atlantic Areas (including the assessment of the ecosystem services provided)
- ✓ Development of methods for quality monitoring and enhancement of the coastal and inland waters
- ✓ Development of collecting and disseminating natural environmental data (environmental observatory network), modeling aimed at improving forecasts and environmental management
- ✓ Development of joint or comparative methodologies for defining and managing environmental natural protected areas (considering economic activities)
- ✓ Assessment of marine/coastal areas management modalities and of the impact of new maritime economic activities
- ✓ Development of concerted strategies to combat macro waste
- ✓ Development of technological, legal, educational/training, financial and organisational solutions in the field of ecosystem and biodiversity protection and conservation, including economic appraisals and business cases to quantify social, community and environmental benefits and value
- ✓ Practical 'on-the-ground' demonstrations of new techniques and processes and best practices
- ✓ Supporting process innovation to promote a more sustainable use of the natural resource, i.e. traditional farming and land management practices
- ✓ Development of education and awareness-raising tools related to protection of biodiversity
- ✓ Development of cooperation procedures and protocols with existing initiatives such as the OSPAR Convention (Protection of the Marine Environment for the North-East Atlantic)

The above operations will **contribute to the specific objective** by developing and improving joint environmental management systems and solutions to protect and preserve the Atlantic biodiversity and natural ecosystems.

Training and awareness raising activities in this direction as well as the coordinated participation of the key relevant stakeholders will also contribute to the protection of the biodiversity and natural ecosystems of the region by promoting a more integrated and sustainable environmental approach which considers economic and social issues in the management of resources and natural spaces.

The actions undertaken will also ensure that these common practices are integrated in regional policies and actions contributing to improving the implementation of regional development policies and

programmes in this field. Furthermore, the outcomes and the priorities identified through the New Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process for the Atlantic region and the conclusion of the Marine biogeographical seminar will be taken into account for the identification of actions under this specific objective.

Any new seabed exploitation will need to undergo appropriate Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment that shall take full account of the need to achieve Good Ecological Status (GES) under the MSFD (Marine Strategy Framework Directive). The latter would need an assessment of the cumulative impacts of all activities, including bottom fishing, per MSFD habitat type (predominant, special) in the subregion (or a subdivision of this). Such assessments would determine whether further impacts to a particular habitat type could be permitted and still achieve GES.

The **main types of beneficiaries** will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public authorities responsible for environmental biodiversity protection
- ✓ Transnational, regional and local development agencies and organisations
- ✓ Regional and local energy agencies
- ✓ Regional and local environmental agencies
- ✓ Research institutes and innovation centres
- ✓ Science and technology parks
- ✓ Universities
- ✓ Local communities
- ✓ Civil society associations promoting environmental protection
- ✓ Economic sector actors related to the sustainable exploitation of natural resources and ecosystem services.

Target groups will comprise the direct beneficiaries as well as the visitors and the civil society as a whole, which will benefit from a better-protected and concerted environmental ecosystem.

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Please see, 2.A.6.2 from Priority 1 – Investment Priority 1b Section

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects

Not applicable

2.A.6.5 Output indicators for investment priority 6d

Table 4 – 6d: Common and programme specific output indicators for investment priority 6d

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
CO22	Total surface area of rehabilitated land	Hectares	1	Programme monitoring	Annual
CO23	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	Hectares	2500	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	12	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI02	Number of technical and scientific publications produced	Number	48	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	24	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI04	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	60	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI05	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Number	3900	Programme monitoring	Annual

2.A.4/6c - Investment Priority 6c

Investment Priority 6c Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage

2.A.5/6c - Specific Objectives corresponding to the investment priority 6c and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 4.2
Specific Objective	Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development
Results sought	<p>The main change sought is an improved cooperation in view of a better exploitation and preservation of the Atlantic natural and cultural assets leading to an enhanced attractiveness of the Area allowing the region to attract new visitors and to generate new products and services contributing to develop economic activities, create new local jobs, fix and attract people and create synergies contributing to the improvement of the social well-being of populations.</p> <p>The main challenge, due to a reference situation where key assets of the area -a well preserved and quality natural landscapes, rich biodiversity and important cultural heritage, with around 30 UNESCO world heritage sites, are confronted to natural, climate change, demographic, economic and urban pressures, and pollutions , will be to enhance the Atlantic Area identity and improve its attractiveness.</p> <p>The Programme will provide the framework for the exchange and interaction of local communities and authorities and organisations involved in the protection and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage in order to develop adapted and joint strategies and measures, tools and models. Joint sustainable actions should be designed in view of promoting and developing the Atlantic territories and natural landscapes (marine and coastal environments, geoparks, forestry resources, green areas, inland waterways, cycle</p>

tracks and footpaths, etc.) as well as the cultural heritage (tradition, history, gastronomy, cultural industries, etc.) and identity with a sought economic and social impact on local communities. Common strategies will be promoted in order to direct the sustainable exploitation of the cultural and natural heritage towards higher added value products and services, including sustainable tourism. The Programme will also facilitate the valorisation of local traditional economic and productive activities, services and sectors, and increase the economic return of cultural and environmental based economic activities.

As a **result of transnational cooperation**, the Atlantic Area 2014-2020 seeks to achieve an enhancement and sustainable capitalisation of its vast natural and cultural assets to create new sources of wealth. Improving the attractiveness of the territories will contribute to generate more visits and tourists coming to the Atlantic Area, develop new local economic activity and jobs and increase the well-being of citizens.

Table 3 – SO4.2: Programme specific result indicators for specific objective 4.2

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
4.2	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for cultural and natural assets as factor of local economic development.	Index 0-100	56,68	2016	65,27	Survey (to regional Authorities)	2019, 2021 and 2023

2.A.6/6c - Actions to be supported under the investment priority 6c

2.A.6.1 Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

The **actions** to be implemented under this priority will aim at a better exploitation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Atlantic Area in order to improve the attractiveness of the area and contribute to attract new visitors, to develop new products and services and develop new local jobs and economic activity. **Examples of actions** to be supported are:

- ✓ Development of strategies, policies and initiatives capitalising on the Atlantic cultural and natural heritage by public institutions, enterprises, NGOs and local population. The objective is to convert natural resources and the cultural heritage into a territorial marketing asset of the Atlantic Area, with a view to generate specific new products, services and tools having an economic impact at local and regional level
- ✓ Development of joint actions to preserve the cultural and natural heritage
- ✓ Development of cultural activities and events
- ✓ Development of cultural tourism and industries

- ✓ Enhance the competitiveness of small and medium sized cultural enterprises
- ✓ Development of marketing and promotion strategies for cultural activities
- ✓ Value the existing cultural and sustainable heritage tourist attractions
- ✓ Initiatives to value cultural creation in other sectors
- ✓ Development of joint initiatives to promote a transnational identity of the Atlantic cultural heritage Development of the creative and craft industries sector in the Atlantic Area
- ✓ Enhancement of the attractiveness of traditional economic and productive activities, jobs and services
- ✓ Development of subsectors and sustainable touristic products: coastal activities and sports, nautical activities, cruises; coastal, rural and farm products; gastronomy, wellness, cultural products, pilgrimage and religious events and business tourism
- ✓ Development of nautical activities, marine leisure (integrated development of a nautical sector, promoting the growth of economic activities in coastal areas, job creation, social integration and coastal zone preservation)
- ✓ Development of management tools and exchange of know-how on the economic enhancement of protected site/areas
- ✓ Development of training and up-skilling in the tourism sector to help coastal community representatives to become ambassadors and champions for their areas
- ✓ Improving Information and Communication Technologies and Digital Skills to promote accessible online content on areas of heritage and culture in tourism
- ✓ Practical on-the-ground demonstrations of new techniques and processes and of best practices
- ✓ Establishment of common indicators and analysis systems to measure the impact of tourism on growth of Atlantic territories
- ✓ Development of education and awareness-raising related-tools
- ✓ Development of ecotourism projects
- ✓ Development of management tools for protected sites allowing for the reconciliation of conservation objectives and economic activities.

The **contribution to the specific objective** will result from the implementation of operations aiming at preserving and valorising the rich cultural and natural heritage of the Atlantic Area in order to enhance the attractiveness of the region to attract new visitors and develop new local jobs and economic activity.

With this purpose, operations to preserve capitalise and improve the management of the natural landscapes and cultural identity will be promoted. The Programme will also contribute to the specific objective of enhancing the attractiveness of the Atlantic region through actions to enhance traditional economic and productive activities in order to increase its economic return. Finally, projects developing niche tourist attractions and products will also contribute to the capitalisation of the Atlantic natural and cultural heritage and the enhancement of the attractiveness of the area.

The actions undertaken will also ensure that these common practices are integrated in regional policies and actions contributing to improving the implementation of regional development policies and programmes in this field.

The **main target groups** and types of beneficiaries will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public authorities responsible for the management, exploitation and promotion of natural areas and/or cultural heritage
- ✓ Transnational, regional and local development agencies and organisations
- ✓ Regional and local environmental agencies
- ✓ Regional and local tourism agencies
- ✓ Business networks and associations
- ✓ Chambers of commerce
- ✓ Local communities
- ✓ Civil society associations promoting natural and cultural heritage

The **target groups** will comprise the direct beneficiaries as well as the visitors and the civil society as a whole, which will benefit from a more attractive and better positioned Atlantic territory to attract visitors and develop new local jobs and economic activity.

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Please see, 2.A.6.2 from Priority 1 – Investment Priority 1b Section

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects

Not applicable

2.A.6.5 Output indicators for investment priority 6c

Table 4 – 6c: Common and programme specific output indicators for investment priority 6c

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
CO09	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	visits/year	3000	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	number	14	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI02	Number of technical and scientific publications produced	number	56	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	number	28	Programme monitoring	Annual

PI04	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	number	70	Programme monitoring	Annual
PI05	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	number	4550	Programme monitoring	Annual

2.A.7 Performance framework for Priority Axis 4

Table 5 – PA4: Performance framework of the Priority Axis 4

PA	Indicator type	ID	Indicator of key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
4	Output indicator	PI01	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	2	26	Programme monitoring	
4	Output indicator	PI03	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	4	52	Programme monitoring	
4	Financial indicator	PI06	Total eligible expenditure certified and submitted to EC	Euros	3 983 889	52 644 961	Programme monitoring	

Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework

Details are provided in Annex “Output and Results indicators – conceptual framework”

2.A.8 Categories of intervention for Priority Axis 4

Table 6 – PA4: Dimension 1 - Intervention field for Priority Axis 4

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 4	074 - Development and promotion of tourism assets in SMEs	596126
	075 - Development and promotion of tourism services in or for SMEs	596126
	076 - Development and promotion of cultural and creative assets in SMEs	596126
	077 - Development and promotion of cultural and creative services in or for SMEs	596126
	083 - Air quality measures	596126
	084 - Integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC)	1788381
	085 - Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure	12009633
	086 - Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites	7205778
	090 - Cycle tracks and footpaths	1788381
	091 - Development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas	1788381
	092 - Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets	2980634
	093 - Development and promotion of public tourism services	2980634
	094 - Protection, development and promotion of public cultural and heritage assets	2980634
	095 - Development and promotion of public cultural and heritage services	2980634

Table 7 – PA4: Dimension 2 - Form of finance for Priority Axis 4

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 4	01 - Non-repayable grant	39483720

Table 8 – PA4: Dimension 3 - Territory type for Priority Axis 4

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 4	07 - Not applicable	39483720

Table 9 – PA4: Dimension 6 - Territorial delivery mechanism for Priority Axis 4

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 4	07 - Not applicable	39483720

2.A.9 A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes

Not applicable

SECTION 2.B. A description of the Priority Axis for technical assistance

PRIORITY AXIS 5 – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

2.B.1 Priority Axis

ID of Priority Axis	5
Title of the Priority Axis	Technical assistance

2.B.2 Fund and calculation basis for the Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

2.B.3 Specific Objectives and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 5.1
Specific Objective	Ensure an efficient and effective Programme management and enhance the visibility and capitalisation of Programme results
Results sought	The main result sought is to deliver a sound and simplified management and control system, with effective monitoring, accounting and progress evaluation of both programme and projects, regular coordination and exchange of know-how and

experience with other ETC programmes and the relevant communication and publicity strategy in view of improving the visibility and capitalisation of results for both programme beneficiaries and stakeholders.

The reference situation is the Atlantic Area Programme 2007-2013, with a management, communication and control system tuned to the achievement of significant results thanks to a good level of interaction with all beneficiaries, MS and Programme bodies supported by a communication platform, adapted to Programme stakeholders' needs and a quick dissemination of data and information. The creation of an articulated Information System with a web collaborative communication platform facilitating collaboration, while ensuring an adequate level of data safety and confidentiality protection, was instrumental to the success of the management and control system.

To build on these achievements and bring improvements, the **Programme will continue** to strengthen linkages among Programme bodies, implementing a communication strategy that will be designed to promote funding opportunities, the visibility of the Programme and the capitalisation of Programme and project results. A consensual decision making process will ensure appropriate fairness, transparency and accountability; coordination with other ETC programmes will facilitate joint work addressed to common issues and to foster the exchange of experience and know-how. The Monitoring system will be upgraded whilst an evaluation plan for the follow-up of Programme progress will be implemented.

As **result of all the above**, Programme management bodies will work closely to guarantee, in full independence and accountability, the sound delivery of the Programme. The coordination with other ETC Programmes, policies and Community instruments will be key in view of fostering generating synergies with other programmes being implemented in the different Atlantic territories. The Programme will be made visible not only for direct beneficiaries, but also for public, social and business decision makers, as well as for European organisations, public opinion and citizens. Programme communication will be more pertinent, regular and accessible. Capitalisation will be more effective with tangible impacts of Programme results.

ID	Specific Objective 5.2
Specific Objective	Guarantee an effective support to project applicants and beneficiaries and enhance the visibility and capitalisation of projects results
Results sought	<p>The main result sought is a strengthened capacity of project applicants to submit project proposals with high potential to contribute to the programme goals, as well as an enhanced ability of beneficiaries to implement successfully high quality transnational projects. Programme bodies will work closely in view of reducing the administrative burden, through the simplification of rules and procedures and to facilitate the capitalisation of project deliverables and of their contribution to Programme results.</p> <p>The reference situation is the existing support available in the 2007-2013 Programme, where an appropriate framework for the effectiveness of project calls, ensuring transparency in the selection procedures, an efficient management and control and</p>

high performance in the achievement of project results already exists. However, experience requires on-going efforts to improve the quality in the support provided to project applicants and beneficiaries with the objective of ensuring a smoother implementation of the projects supported by the Programme. Accordingly, the **Programme will address** the need to further build capacity of applicants and beneficiaries to participate in operations and to take up existing results by means of guidance, trainings and seminars for Lead Partners of approved projects, and other consultations and support offered by the Managing Authority (MA), the Joint Secretariat and the National Correspondents. Besides, project selection criteria will be further perfected and adapted to the new Programme requirements while an independent selection will continue to be provided. Harmonisation and simplification of control procedures, appropriate technical documentation and training for management controllers will also be supplied, as these are key success aspects regarding high performance control procedures. Communication and publicity to projects will be framed by a specific scheme. Thematic seminars addressed to the exchange of experience, best practices and knowledge between projects will be carried out -in this context, a database with the technical and scientific documents produced by projects, properly catalogued, will be made available.

As a **result of all the above**, it is expected that an increased capacity of applicants and beneficiaries to participate in the programme with high quality projects will be achieved, contributing with tangible and visible outcomes to the attainment of Programme results. More harmonised and simplified procedures and rules will reduce the administrative burden, guarantee lower operating costs and improve time efficiency in project implementation, while ensuring reporting validation, funds reimbursements and audits at the right time and with absolute transparency.

2.B.4 Result indicators

Table 10 - Programme-specific result indicators for Priority Axis 5 (Technical Assistance)

Not applicable

2.B.5 Actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objective

2.B.5.1 Description of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives

Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported under Specific Objective 5.1

The Programme aims to support actions to intensify cooperation between Programme bodies, to strengthen a sound management and control system, and to enhance the visibility and capitalisation of Programme results.

The principal actions to be carried out in the framework of this specific objective include the following:

- ✓ Setting-up a Joint Secretariat (JS) adapted to the challenges and ambition of the new programme with a structure, composition and in conditions established by Programme Member-States.
- ✓ Designing, approval and implementing procedural rules for a sound and efficient decision-making process and an effective follow-up and implementation of decisions.

- ✓ Designing, approval and implementing a Programme Communication Strategy and a Programme Communication Plan, complemented by Marketing and Communication Annual Actions Plans.
- ✓ Implementing a clipping system to monitor the references to the Programme in the Atlantic Area media.
- ✓ Designing and implementing a user-friendly collaborative communication platform, providing easy access to information and allowing easy exchange of information between Programme structures.
- ✓ Designing and implementing a programme management information system and electronic forms for projects application, reporting and amendment.
- ✓ Preparing and implementing calls for proposals, including the development of guidance documents setting out the conditions for the support of operations.
- ✓ Preparing eligibility rules to be observed in project applications budget proposals.
- ✓ Setting-up and implementing procedures for the quality assessment, monitoring and control of implemented projects.
- ✓ Designing and implementing a monthly follow-up system with relevant information about Programme and projects implementation.
- ✓ Designing and implementing procedures for the quality assessment, monitoring and control of projects, having in consideration the objectives of harmonisation, simplification and reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries.
- ✓ Designing and implementing rules and procedures for the certification of expenditure and for submitting payments claims to EC.
- ✓ Collecting and reporting data concerning indicators and milestones and the progress of the Programme in achieving its objectives.
- ✓ Establishing an IT system to record and store project data necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit.
- ✓ Designing and implementing the Programme evaluation plan and follow-up on the findings of the independent Programme evaluations.
- ✓ Designing and organising regular information dissemination and result capitalisation events, calls for projects and Programme annual events, and the relevant tools
- ✓ Designing, promoting and implementing a coordination plan addressed to other ETC Programmes in view of developing joint work covering common issues and exchange of experience and know-how.
- ✓ Designing and implementing an audit strategy, setting-up a group of auditors and organizing group of auditors meetings, implementing system and operations audits and the follow-up of recommendations, submitting to EC an annual audit report and participating on transnational and EC meetings related to audits.
- ✓ Establishing and implementing a plan for projects close follow-up and in situ visits.

Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported under Specific Objective 5.2

The Programme aims to support actions to strengthen the support to project applicants and beneficiaries, and to enhance the visibility and capitalisation of projects results.

The principal actions to be carried out in the framework of this specific objective include the following:

- ✓ Designing and developing guidance documents for applicants and beneficiaries for the preparation of project proposals, the implementation, evaluation, control, communication and capitalisation of approved operations.
- ✓ Organising information and training events to strengthen the capacity of applicants to develop project proposals contributing to the Programme SO and expected results.
- ✓ Organising information and training events to strengthen the capacity of beneficiaries to the sound implementation of projects, covering issues like project and financial management, reporting, monitoring, control, audit, communication and capitalisation.
- ✓ Designing guidance, and organising information and training events concerning the take up of results and achievements into policies, strategies and investment plans.
- ✓ Designing guidance, and implementing information and training events for management controllers in view of supplying them with the relevant and precise information on control procedures.
- ✓ Designing and implementing a database of technical and scientific knowledge containing technical and scientific papers produced by projects, properly catalogued and accessible online to all interested users.
- ✓ Designing and implementing a collaborative network of thematic seminars addressed to the exchange of experiences, good practices and knowledge between projects with similar scope of action.
- ✓ Designing and implementing a project web forum to foster the development of new networks of cooperation and of new project ideas.
- ✓ Designing guidance concerning communication and publicity rules and of related monitoring requirements applied to beneficiaries.
- ✓ Designing and implementing an IT monitoring system allowing for a sound follow-up of: i) the progress of projects and facilitating performance evaluation of , ii) corrective actions
- ✓ Designing and implementing a knowledge base for projects aiming to streamline simplified information to projects and feedback covering relevant issues detected by Programme bodies on all aspects of project implementation.

2.B.5.2 Output indicators expected to contribute to results

Table 11 - Output indicators for Priority Axis 5 (Technical Assistance)

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
5.1.1	Number of managing documents, instruments and services developed and implemented	Number	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.1.2	Number of meetings organized by Programme bodies	Number	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.1.3	Number of participants in meetings organized by Programme bodies	Number	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.1.4	Number of information and capitalisation seminars and conferences organized by Programme bodies	Number	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.1.5	Number of participants in information and capitalisation seminars and conferences organized by Programme bodies	Number	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
5.1.6	Number of studies, surveys and evaluation actions implemented	Number	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.2.1	Number of workshops and training events organized by Programme bodies	Number	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.2.2	Number of participants in workshops and training events organized by Programme bodies	Number	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.2.3	Average time delay of projects' reporting and payment claims	Days	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.2.4	Average time for the validation of projects' reporting and payment claims	Days	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.2.5	Average time of project partners reimbursements	Days	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.2.6	Number of system and operations audits performed	Number	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual
5.3.1	Number of employees whose salaries are co-financed by TA	FTE	-	Programme monitoring system	Annual

2.B.6 Categories of intervention

Table 12 - Dimension 1 - Intervention field for Priority Axis 5 (Technical Assistance)

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 5	121 - Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection	6000565
	122 - Evaluation and studies	1200113
	123 - Information and communication	1200113

Table 13 - Dimension 2 - Form of finance for Priority Axis 5 (Technical Assistance)

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 5	001 - Non-repayable grant	8400791

Table 14 - Dimension 3 - Territory type for Priority Axis 5 (Technical Assistance)

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount
Priority Axis 5	07 - Not applicable	8400791

SECTION 3. THE FINANCING PLAN OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

3.1 Financial appropriation from the ERDF

Table 15 - ERDF per year

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
ERDF		17 085 055	14 480 980	26 311 857	26 838 094	27 374 856	27 922 352	140 013 194

3.2.A Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing

Table 16 - Financing plan

PA	Fund	Basis for the calculation of the EU support	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)	Co-financing rate (f) = (a)/(e)
					National Public (c)	National private (d)		
PA1	ERDF	Total eligible costs	47 117 240	15705 748	12 564 598	3 141 150	62 822 988	75%
PA2	ERDF	Total eligible costs	29 744 404	9914802	7931 842	1 982 960	39 659 206	75%
PA3	ERDF	Total eligible costs	15 267 039	5089014	4071211	1 017 803	20 356 053	75%
PA4	ERDF	Total eligible costs	39 483 720	13161 241	10528993	2 632 248	52 644 961	75%
PA5	ERDF	Public eligible costs	8 400 791	1482493	1482493	0	9 883 284	85%
Total	ERDF		140 013 194	45353298	36 579 137	8 774 161	185 366 492	76%

3.2.B Breakdown of the financial plan per Priority Axis and thematic objective

Table 17 - Breakdown of the financial plan per Priority Axis and thematic objective

Priority Axis	Thematic Objective	Union Support	National Counterpart	Total funding
Priority Axis 1	TO1 b)	47 117 240	15 705 748	62 822 988
Priority Axis 2	TO4 a)	15 530 264	5 176 755	20 707 019
	TO6 g)	14 214 140	4 738 047	18 952 187
Priority Axis 3	TO5 b)	15 267 039	5 089 014	20 356 053
Priority Axis 4	TO6 d)c)	39 483 720	13 161 241	52 644 961
Priority Axis 5	N.A	8 400 791	1 482 493	9 883 284
TOTAL		140 013 194	4 535 3298	185 366 492

Table 18 - Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives

Priority Axis	The indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives (EUR)	Share of the total allocation to the cooperation programme (%)
Priority Axis 1	0.00	0.00 %
Priority Axis 2	19 871 794.20	14.19 %
Priority Axis 3	8 724 022.2	6.23 %
Priority Axis 4	7 332 689.80	5.24 %
Priority Axis 5	0.00	0.00 %
TOTAL	35 928 506.20	25.66 %

SECTION 4. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Community-led local development

Not applicable

4.2 Integrated actions for sustainable urban development

Not applicable

4.3 Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI)

Not applicable

4.4 Contribution of planned interventions to Sea basin strategies

The Atlantic regions are covered by the Atlantic Action Plan, which follows the Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic Area.

The Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Ocean Area proposes “a coherent and balanced approach that is consistent with the EU 2020 agenda and its flagship initiative that promotes territorial cohesion and that takes into account the international dimension”. This strategy will be a reference in the context of the European policy and initiatives until 2020 and its implementation will be strictly linked to existing programmes (among which the Atlantic Area has a crucial role), through which the proposed actions are to be financed and implemented, ensuring that the Strategy *per se* will not create any additional impact on the EU budget.

The Action Plan explicitly mentions the Atlantic Programme as a way to foster joint projects and actions: “European Territorial Cooperation (for example through the Atlantic Area Programme), which will be funded through the ERDF, provides a mechanism for neighbouring regions and cities from different EU MS to work together and learn from each other through projects that explore options to cooperate on common challenges”. In this context, the Atlantic programme’s MA, the five MS as well as other key partners, which have participated in the cooperation programme drafting process agreed on the relevance and appropriateness of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy. As a result, the Atlantic Action Plan has been taken into account in the assessment of the needs and challenges, definition of SO and elaboration of types of actions to be supported. The Atlantic Action Plan has also served as a guide for the selection and prioritisation of the sectors and specific territories where the Programme will be focussed on.

First, a clear coherence can be observed between the **needs and challenges** identified in the Maritime Strategy and the cooperation programme. On one hand, the Atlantic Action Plan identifies five priority challenges, which constitute the umbrella under which the actions have been defined and targeted. They are the challenges of delivering growth, reducing the carbon footprint, using the sea's natural resources sustainably, responding effectively to threats and emergencies and implementing an "ecosystem" management approach in Atlantic waters. On the other hand, the needs and challenges which the present cooperation programme seeks to address are related to the necessity of accelerating intelligent growth in the Atlantic Area, the promotion of a resource-efficient economy, the need to

increase the preparedness and provide a better response to risks derived from climate change and human activities, a better management of the environment and the Atlantic Area's natural resources and the exploitation of the natural and cultural assets by local communities.

Furthermore, and in line with the above, the path of the cooperation programme drafting has been defined by taking into account the four overarching priorities and the series of SO set up by the Atlantic Action Plan. The description below demonstrates the **contribution of the Atlantic Area Cooperation Programme's SO to the Atlantic Action Plan**.

The Priority Axis 1 of the Atlantic Area cooperation programme is clearly coherent and will contribute to the PA1 of the Action Plan as both of them aim at promoting innovation by enhancing capacities, encouraging networking and cooperation between the institutional, research and private actors and promoting knowledge transfer.

The contribution of the Atlantic Area cooperation programme to the second Priority Axis of the Action Plan, will come through operations financed under Priority Axis 3.1, providing territorial management and risk prevention tools for climate change adaptation and risk prevention, specific objective 4.1 to enhance the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services and Priority Axis 2 seeking to contribute to a better resource efficiency in the Atlantic Area.

Actions to improve accessibility and connectivity have not been prioritised under the Atlantic Area cooperation programme since the ongoing evaluation of the Atlantic Area Transnational cooperation programme 2007-2013 showed a very scarce demand of projects under former Priority 3 related to accessibility and transport.

Finally, operations under Specific Objective 4.2 will seek to enhance the natural and cultural heritage leading to an enhanced attractiveness of the Area allowing the region to attract new visitors and develop new local jobs, economic activity, therefore contributing to the fourth Priority of the Action Plan, which aims at creating a socially inclusive and sustainable model of regional development.

In order to **ensure the complementarity and the contribution** of the Atlantic Area Cooperation Programme to the Atlantic Area Maritime strategy a series of mechanisms will be implemented:

- ✓ The guiding principles for the selection of operations foresee that, when applicable, projects should show their coherence with and contribution to the Atlantic Area Maritime Strategy. Both the projects' intermediate and final reports will have a specific section where, if relevant, projects would need to explain how the activities and results achieved contribute to the Atlantic Area Maritime Strategy's Action Plan;
- ✓ Similarly, and build on the contributions reported by projects, the Programme Annual Implementation Report will describe how the Programme as a whole contributes to the Atlantic Area Maritime Strategy. A list of projects contributing to the strategy with the relevant information will also be provided;
- ✓ Complementarity with geographically and thematically overlapping programmes in the Atlantic area, such North–West Europe, SUDOE, North Sea, Northern Periphery and Arctic transnational programmes and the relevant cross-border programmes, national programmes/regional programmes, will be sought to ensure the exchange of experience and best practices.
- ✓ Close links between the CP and DG MARE, REGIO and other relevant DGs, national representatives and stakeholders of the Atlantic Strategy, national focal points of the Atlantic Strategy will be

established, to ensure a quality information flow, mutual consultations and cooperation on the organisation of events.

SECTION 5. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies

Table 21 - Programme authorities

Authority/body	Name of the authority/body	Head of the authority/body
Managing Authority	Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte (CCDR-N) Rua Rainha D. Estefânia, 251 4150-134 Porto, Portugal ma@atlanticarea.eu	Fernando Freire de Sousa President of the CCDR-N
Certifying Authority	Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão, I.P. (AD&C) Avenida 5 de Outubro, n.º 153 1050-053 Lisboa, Portugal Presidente@adcoesao.pt	Duarte Rodrigues Vice-president of the <i>Conselho Diretivo da AD&C</i>
Audit Authority	Inspeção-Geral de Finanças Rua Angelina Vidal, 41 1199-005 Lisboa, Portugal viagasribeiro@igf.min-financas.pt	José António Viegas Ribeiro Subinspetor Geral

The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is:

<input type="checkbox"/>	the Managing Authority
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	the Certifying Authority

Table 22 - Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks

Authority/body	Name of the authority/body	Head of the authority/body
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks		
France	Préfecture de la région Pays de la Loire david.rousseau@pays-de-la-loire.pref.gouv.fr Secrétariat général pour les affaires régionales 6, quai Ceineray - BP 33515 44035 Nantes Cedex 1 France	Nicole Klein Préfète de la région Pays de la Loire
Ireland	Northern and Western Regional Assembly, dminton@nwra.ie The Square, Ballaghaderreen County Roscommon Ireland	David Minton Director of the NWRA
Portugal	Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão presidente@adcoesao.pt Av. 5 de Outubro, n.º 153 1050-053 Lisboa - Portugal	Luis Castilho Vogal of the Conselho Diretivo da AD&C

Spain	D.G. Fondos Comunitarios Secretaria de Estado de Presupuestos y Gastos Ministerio de Hacienda y Administraciones Públicas MCHernandez@sepg.minhap.es Paseo de la Castellana 162 28071 Madrid - España	María del Carmen Hernández Martín Vocal asesora
United Kingdom	Department for Communities and Local Government Sam.lucas@communities.gsi.gov.uk 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF United Kingdom	Sam Lucas Head of Territorial Cooperation
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks/		
Audit Authority and Group of Auditors	Inspeção-Geral de Finanças viegasribeiro@igf.min-financas.pt Rua Angelina Vidal, 41 1199-005 Lisboa Portugal	José António Viegas Ribeiro Subinspector Geral

5.2. Procedure for setting up the Joint Secretariat

In accordance with Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the Managing Authority (MA), after consultation with the MS participating in the Programme, shall set up a transnational JS based in Porto, Portugal. It will be hosted on the premises of the MA at the address mentioned above.

The JS shall have an adequate size and profile regarding the envisaged tasks and responsibilities. The Director has a key role in motivating and coordinating JS work towards programme implementation and results delivery and coordination with MS representatives, particularly National Correspondents and management controllers. The Director shares with the MA representative the key role of establishing the strategic relation with MS, for this purpose he/she will hold adequate Member State policy knowledge and will establish regular contacts at the relevant level with Programme stakeholders. The JS shall have relevant technical expertise and knowledge on programme/project management and monitoring and adequate acquired specialist knowledge on the relevant thematic areas. The MA shall ensure that the necessary training to enhance knowledge and build on existing capacities is provided to JS staff. The JS composition and staff recruitment procedure shall be approved by the MS participating in the Programme following a proposal of the MA.

The possibility to reappoint some members of the JS staff of the 2007-2013 Programme is envisaged by MS, following evaluation of the existing profiles and programme's needs in the future. For the remaining posts, an open public competitive recruitment procedure shall be organised.

5.3. A summary description of the management and control arrangements

5.3.1. Joint implementation structure and division of tasks

The management structure of the Programme is composed of the following bodies:

- ✓ Managing Authority (MA),
- ✓ Joint Secretariat (JS),

- ✓ Certifying Authority (CA),
- ✓ Audit Authority (AA),
- ✓ Group of Auditors,
- ✓ Monitoring Committee (MC),
- ✓ Network of National Correspondents (NC)

Their main tasks and functions of the Programme bodies are described below:

Managing Authority

The MS participating in the programme have reconducted the CCDR-N as MA; it will fulfil the functions laid down in Article 125 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013. Pursuant to those regulatory provisions, the MA, assisted by the JS, is responsible for delivering a sound and efficient management and implementation of the Programme, Including ensuring a wide and effective promotion and visibility of the Programme in the Atlantic Area Programme regions.

The MA representative has a key role in the programme in particular as regards the interaction with CCDR-N, the JS and the MS. A strong commitment to relate with MS therefore needs a good knowledge of MS national policies, regular contacts with MS representatives and stakeholders shall be undertaken by the MA representative.

As far as the management of the cooperation programme is concerned, it is the MA's responsibility to collect, store and make the required information available to the MC, beneficiaries and intermediate bodies for them to carry out their tasks. In particular, the MA will provide the MC with data related to the progress of the cooperation programme in achieving its objectives, financial data and data on indicators and milestones. With this purpose, the MA will establish a system to record and store data in a computerised form on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, including data on individual participants in operations. The MA is also responsible for drawing up and submitting to the Commission the annual and final implementation reports.

Regarding the selection of operations, the MA shall draw-up and propose for approval by the MC the selection criteria and procedures. Furthermore, it shall verify the sound application of approved selection criteria and procedures in order to ensure that selected operations fall within the scope of the Atlantic Area cooperation programme, contribute to the expected result of the corresponding specific objective and meet the administrative and financial requirements.

Finally, and related to the financial management and control of the cooperation programme, the MA shall satisfy itself that the expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been verified by a designated controller. The MA will not proceed with management verifications; each MS will set up its own system for the beneficiaries located on its territory. Putting in place effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures and setting up procedures to ensure an adequate audit trail will also be the responsibility of the MA. In addition where public procurement actions are planned, national authorities will have to respect EU public procurement rules and in particular (i) Directives 2004/18/EC and 2004/17/EC, (ii) Directives 2014/23/EU, 2014/24/EU and 2014/25/EU once transposed into national legislation, (iii) Directives 89/665/EEC and 92/13/EEC and (iv) the general public procurement principles derived from the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

Joint Secretariat

The Joint Secretariat will be set up by the MA (see 5.2).

Under the supervision of the MA, the JS shall be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the Programme. It shall assist the monitoring committee, the MA and, where appropriate, the Audit and Certifying Authorities in carrying out their respective functions.

The functions of the JS shall include the closure of the 2007-2013 programme, in articulation with the MA.

In particular, the JS shall provide information and assistance to potential beneficiaries, issue periodic calls for project proposals, register the applications received and conduct the application assessment procedure in view of the Monitoring Committee sessions dedicated to project selection, assist beneficiaries in the implementation of operations, check implementation reports and payment claims, monitor the progress of operations, their communication and capitalisation plans, assess projects results and assist on operations' closure process.

Certifying Authority

The Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão, I.P (former IFDR) was reconducted as Certifying Authority by the MS participating in the programme.

The Certifying Authority will fulfil the functions laid down in Article 126 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. In particular, the CA will be responsible for drawing up and submitting payment applications to the Commission, and certifying that they result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents, and have been subject to verifications by the MA.

Note that the programme will not submit payment applications in relation to any priority axis before the modification of the programme to include the required adjustments to the result indicators and their baselines and targets.

It will also be responsible for drawing up the annual accounts, certifying the completeness, accuracy and veracity of the accounts, maintaining in a computerised form accounting records of expenditure declared to the Commission and of the corresponding public contribution paid to beneficiaries and keeping an account of amounts recoverable and of amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation.

Audit Authority and Group of Auditors

Pursuant Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the Audit Authority shall be assisted by a group of auditors composed of a representative from each Member State participating in the cooperation programme and carrying out the functions provided for in Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The group of auditors shall be set up within three months of the decision approving the cooperation programme. It shall draw up its own rules of procedure and be chaired by the Audit Authority for the cooperation programme.

The Audit Authority shall ensure that audits are carried out on the proper functioning of the management and control system of the cooperation programme, on an appropriate sample of operations based on the declared expenditure and taking into account internationally accepted audit standards.

The audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on operations and the planning of audits will be established in an audit strategy to be elaborated by the Atlantic Area within eight months of the adoption of the cooperation programme and to be updated annually, from 2016 until and including 2024.

Finally, the Atlantic Area will be responsible for drawing up an audit opinion in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation, a control report covering the main findings of the audits carried out.

Monitoring Committee

Pursuant to Articles 47, 48 and 49 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, MS participating in the Programme, in agreement with the MA, shall set up a Monitoring Committee (MC) within three months from the date of notification of the Commission decision approving the cooperation programme.

The MC is the key decision making body of the Programme, it is composed of representatives of the relevant MS authorities and of representatives of the partners referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The Delegated Regulation 2640 of 7 January 2014 shall frame MC Rules of procedure and participating members.

The Commission shall participate in the work of the Monitoring Committee in an advisory capacity. The list of monitoring committee members shall be published. The MC shall draw up and adopt its rules of procedures in accordance with the institutional, legal and financial framework of the Member State concerned. The rules shall contain a detailed description of the composition, the functioning and tasks as well as the decision-making processes of the MC.

Article 11 of the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds, shall be followed concerning the relevant elements to be taken into account when formulating the MC internal rules.

It shall meet at least once a year. The MC Presidency will be established on a rotating basis, while decisions shall be made by consensus. Each MC meeting shall be preceded by a preparatory meeting between National Correspondents and the MA allowing all needed clarifications and coordination on the items to be decided, in order to ease the decision making process. The main responsibility of the MC is reviewing the actual implementation of the programme and the progress made towards achieving its objectives, including monitoring financial data, common and programme-specific indicators and the milestones defined in the performance framework.

According to Article 110 of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the MC shall also examine progress made in the implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to findings of evaluations, the implementation of the communication strategy and the actions to promote equality between men and women, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination, and sustainable development.

The MC shall examine and approve the methodology and criteria used for the selection of operations, the annual and final implementation reports, the evaluation plan for the cooperation programme, the communication strategy for the cooperation programme and any proposal by the MA for any amendment to the cooperation programme.

It may also make observations to the MA regarding implementation and evaluation of the programme including actions related to the reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries.

Network of National Correspondents

The competent authorities in Spain, France, Ireland, Portugal and the United Kingdom shall appoint a National Correspondent (NC) of the Programme in their respective countries.

National Correspondents will ensure a wide dissemination of the programme information. They will also support the programme promotion and communication activities.

National Correspondents will provide MA and JS, where necessary, with national specific information on potential beneficiaries and relevant information on any specificities of national laws, regulations and policies that should be taken into consideration for programme implementation. NCs may also provide a point of contact for potential applicants.

Each year, meetings between MA/JS and National correspondents to discuss programme issues shall be promoted. Meetings shall be coordinated by the MS holding the Programme MC presidency with the support of the MA.

Contacts between MA/JS and National Correspondents and feedback to them on a regular basis shall be guaranteed.

5.3.2. Assessment and selection of operations

Project generation

The MA, the JS and National Correspondents shall take all appropriate steps to widely publicise and promote the programme strategy, providing information and support to mobilise key players at an early stage, including those relatively unaware of transnational territorial cooperation so far, through communication campaigns and events. Innovative project ideas will be identified and made accessible allowing partner searches and the generation of new partnerships.

Transnational Cooperation Projects will be selected through relevant calls for proposals. Programme authorities may decide to have different arrangements for calls, which may be either open or thematically targeted, or specifically addressed to the capitalisation of results, or other arrangement considered adequate to framework conditions and programme needs at a given moment.

According to the specific characteristics of each call for proposals, an appropriate application pack will be prepared containing all procedures, guidance and manuals and adequate templates to assist partnerships. It will be widely circulated and made public through the Programme's Web Platform.

Project application procedure

Under the supervision of the MA, the JS is responsible to manage dematerialised application procedures and assist projects applicants

The JS shall elaborate and publish the information and application pack, downloadable from the Programme website. The pack shall include the necessary guidance to assist project partnerships in the preparation of their application, including an indicative model of the contract between project partners. The pack shall also include a standard application form, the use of which shall be mandatory for all applicants. Detailed information about the calls for project proposals, the content of the information and application pack, the project application procedure and the arrangements for its implementation will be available to all applicants through the programme manual.

Assessment and selection of project applications, resolution of complaints

The detailed assessment procedure, including the set of admissibility conditions and selection criteria, as well as specific provisions possibly applying to project proposals submitted following the launch of targeted, specific call for proposals or a strategic framework, will be defined by the Programme Monitoring Committee.

Project applications shall be submitted by the Lead Partner to the JS within the deadline specified in the call for project proposals.

The JS shall acknowledge receipt of project applications and coordinate the procedure leading to the submission of project assessment reports to the Monitoring Committee. Thereafter, the JS will carry out the eligibility assessment, including compliance with admissibility conditions, compatibility with national laws, regulations and policies following consultation of National Correspondents. Eligible projects will be assessed by the JS on the basis of the predefined technical selection criteria, with the assistance of independent evaluators when required, should the Monitoring Committee so decide. The proposed projects shall be scored against the agreed set of selection criteria and ranked on a transnational basis.

On the basis of the assessment reports, the Monitoring Committee shall consider in due course all the applications received by the JS and make a decision on the selection of the project to be financed.

Project applicants will be informed in writing about the reasons why an application was not eligible or approved. Complaints related to the selection process will be examined according to the specification of the call for projects and the complaint procedure to be established by the MC without prejudice of the right of unsuccessful candidates to administrative and judicial review in compliance with article 74 (3) CPR

Complaints related to MC, MA or JS decisions and to management controls and supervisions performed at national level throughout project implementation shall be handled according to the rules to be established by the MC in the framework of the complaint procedure.

5.3.3. Signature of the document setting out the conditions of support of operations

The MA shall prepare and issue a Subsidy contract to confirm the decision of the Monitoring Committee; it will set out the conditions of funding as well as the project beneficiaries' financial and legal responsibilities. The subsidy contract will also clearly state that the Lead Partner and the project partners will produce and make available all documents to any authorised body of the EU, the Member State or to the Audit Authority, the Certifying Authority, the MA or Joint secretariat, for control and audit purposes, in compliance with Article 140 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The contract will also refer to the control systems set up by the Atlantic Area Programme. Provisions for the right to administrative and judicial review in compliance with article 74 (3) CPR will be included in the subsidy contract.

5.3.4. Arrangements for management verifications and related quality controls

In compliance with Article 23 (4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, each Member State or, where it has accepted the invitation to participate in the cooperation programme, each third country or territory shall designate the body or person responsible for carrying out verifications under point (a) of the Article 125(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 in relation to beneficiaries on its territory (the 'controller(s)'). Such verifications, as well as quality controls, shall be carried out according to national control systems.

The national control system adopted for each MS shall be fully described using a template provided by the MA and to be included in the description of the Programme Management and Control System in accordance with Article 72 of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013. When assessing the document containing the description of management and control system the Audit Authority is authorised to request complementary information from Programme MS. In case of changes in the responsible body or on the control system description Programme MS shall inform the MA without delay.

In view of ensuring an adequate level of harmonisation and simplification, standard templates (such as control declarations, list of documents controlled, checklists and control reports), technical procedure to access and use through programme tools and minimum of control requirements shall be proposed by the MA for approval by the Monitoring Committee and included in the Programme Management and Control System.

The MA with support of JS in accordance with the rules and procedures for verifications under their responsibilities, which shall be included in the Programme Management and Control System, shall verify that the expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been verified by a designated controller and in compliance with the corresponding national control system. The MA will also be responsible to set up effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures and procedures to ensure an adequate audit trail.

The result of any verification of the proper functioning of the management verification system carried out by the Programme MS shall be communicated to the MA using the required form. The MA supported by the Joint Secretariat will also inform the Programme MS and the concerned beneficiaries of the results and follow-up of any checks carried out under the responsibility of the MA, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority, EC or European Court of Auditors.

5.3.5. Organisation of audits

In accordance with Article 25(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 the Audit Authority will be assisted by a group of auditors composed by a representative of each Programme MS carrying out the duties provided for in Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. Each MS representative in the Group of Auditors shall be responsible for the audits carried out on its territory.

The Audit Authority (AA), in agreement with the group of auditors, may decide to contract an external audit firm to carry out audits on the proper functioning of the management and control systems and on an appropriate sample in compliance with Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

In line with the same article, paragraph, 5 the AA shall draw up: (a) an audit opinion in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation; (b) a control report setting out the main findings of the audits carried out in accordance with paragraph 1, including findings with regard to deficiencies found in the management and control systems, and the proposed and implemented corrective actions.

The exchange of information and documentation concerning the organisations of audits shall be ensured through the Programme Web Platform for Collaborative Communication. The MA supported by JS shall supply the information needed to support the definition of audit samples, the access to certified information stored in the MA/JS information system, the clarification of unclear situations detected in operations audited. The MA supported by JS shall also ensure the coordination and control of the actions addressed to the implementation of recommendations resulting from the audit processes.

The quality and completeness of the audit work carried out will be ensured by the Audit Authority together with the group of auditors, with the administrative support of the JS. The monitoring

committee will be regularly informed of the results of the audit work and necessary follow-up. The coordination among the members of the group of auditors with regard to the above will be formalised in the rules of procedure of the group of auditors, in the audit strategy and in the management and control system description.

5.4. Apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the Managing Authority or the Commission

In compliance with Article 27(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the MA shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead or sole beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall repay to the lead beneficiary any amounts unduly paid. In case of justified impossibility of the lead beneficiary to recover from a beneficiary any unduly paid amounts, the MA may assume the responsibility for recovering such amounts directly from the concerned beneficiary.

If the lead beneficiary does not succeed in securing repayment from other beneficiaries or if the MA does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead beneficiary or directly from the beneficiary concerned, according to Article 27(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the Member State or third country on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located shall reimburse the MA any amounts unduly paid to that beneficiary.

In compliance with point (a)(vi) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the Member State (MS) and third countries (TC) will bear liability in connection with the use of the programme ERDF funding as follows:

- ✓ For project-related expenditure granted to project partners located on its territory, liability will be born individually by each MS/TC;
- ✓ In case of a systemic irregularity or financial correction, the MS/TC will bear the financial consequences in proportion to the relevant irregularity detected on the respective MS territory. Where the systemic irregularity or financial correction cannot be linked to a specific MS territory, the MS shall be responsible in proportion to the ERDF contribution paid to the respective national project partners involved;
- ✓ For the technical assistance expenditure :
 - MS will bear joint liability for decision of the monitoring committee in proportion to their respective share in the technical assistance budget. If technical assistance is used directly by a MS, this MS will bear full liability for this expenditure.
 - Being responsible for the day-to-day implementation of technical assistance, the MA bears full responsibility for consequences of any decision made on its behalf.

If the MA/JS, or any MS, becomes aware of irregularities, it shall inform without any delay the liable MS or the MA/JS. The latter will ensure the transmission of information to the Certifying Authority, Audit Authority and Group of Auditors, where relevant.

In compliance with Article 122 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, each MS is responsible for reporting irregularities committed by beneficiaries located on its territory to the EC and at the same time to the MA. Each MS shall keep the EC as well as the MA informed of any progress of related administrative and legal proceedings. The MA will ensure the transmission of information to the Certifying Authority and Audit Authority.

If a Member State does not comply with its duties arising from these provisions, the MA is entitled to suspend payments to all project partners located on the territory of this Member State.

5.5. Use of the Euro (where applicable)

In accordance with Article 28 b) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, and by way of derogation from Article 133 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro shall be converted into euro by the beneficiaries in the month during which the expenditure was submitted for verification to the managing authority or the controller in accordance with Article 23 of this Regulation;

The conversion shall be verified by the controller in the Member State or third country in which the beneficiary is located.

5.6. Involvement of partners

5.6.1 Role of partners in the preparation of the cooperation programme

In accordance with the multi-level governance approach, the involvement of partners has been a central component throughout the development of this cooperation programme. Besides, in line with the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds, the involvement of partners both at programme preparation and implementation phases was taken into consideration.

Therefore, emphasis was placed on guaranteeing both national and regional level participation in the drafting process. The participation of relevant specialised organisations, transnational organisations and think tanks has also been fundamental to ensure full coherence between the cooperation programme strategy and the common and pressing needs and challenges of the cooperation area. This multi-governance approach has also been key to ensure effective coordination between the cooperation programme and other relevant strategies and initiatives, which are happening in the Atlantic Area in the targeted fields of intervention.

Finally, the open public consultation process involving 87 participants has also been key to the cooperation programme drafting process and has contributed to enhance the ownership of the Programme among the participating MS and regions, target groups and potential beneficiaries.

As regards the actual programme preparation process, in July 2012, the five MS of the Atlantic Area decided to entrust the “Working Group 2014-2020” (WG 2014-2020) with the task of drawing up this cooperation programme.

In accordance with the mandate conferred upon it, the WG 2014-2020 had the authority and final responsibility for the decisions to be taken regarding the Programme, including the ex-ante evaluation.

The WG consists of representatives of national authorities from the five participating MS, the MA, the JS, representatives of the CCDR-N (Portugal) and the EC. The external technical assistance hired to assist in the elaboration of the cooperation programme and the ex-ante evaluators took part in the process of the cooperation programme preparation. The WG 2014-2014 met on 13 occasions before the formal submission of the cooperation programme to the EC.

Within the cooperation programme drafting process, a combination of sources and documents have been analysed and a number of organisations and partners have been consulted with the aim of identifying the main internal and external variables and factors, which will characterise the design of the Programme's strategy.

First, a socio-economic and SWOT analysis was carried out in order to identify the current and most relevant trends and features of the Atlantic Area. This analysis was complemented through a wider study of the preliminary needs and positions stated by the Atlantic Area MS, the main programme stakeholders and the EC. Similarly, this analysis was framed in the context of the Common Strategic Framework, including the Atlantic Strategy and its related Action Plan. The main conclusions and recommendations derived from the Ongoing Evaluation of the Atlantic Area Transnational cooperation programme 2007-2013 also served as a guide for the drafting of the 2014-2020 cooperation programme.

In parallel, a consultation process was carried out among the 2007-2013 Atlantic Programme's stakeholders and beneficiaries. The survey, launched by the Programmes Authorities in 2012 and closed on 15 February 2013, registered 62 answers from public and private Programme stakeholders, from which 42 were coming from Atlantic Area projects partners.

Moreover, a two-round expert consultation has been conducted with a number of actors and organisations that were considered to be key for the Programme, on a series of topics related with the relevance and lessons learnt from the Atlantic Area cooperation programme 2007-2013, the main needs and challenges, the Programme intervention logic, as well as potential actions or projects to be supported by the new Programme in the Atlantic Area.

The following organisations, among others, have been consulted for the purpose of drafting the Atlantic Area cooperation programme strategy:

Atlantic Area organisations:

- ✓ CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission
- ✓ Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities
- ✓ INTERACT
- ✓ Eixo Atlântico do Noroeste Peninsular
- ✓ EGTC Galicia –Norte Portugal
- ✓ Atlantic Transnational Network of Economic and Social Committees (ATN),

National organisations:

- ✓ Commissariat général à l'égalité des territoires CGET (ex Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale (DATAR), France
- ✓ Irish Marine Institute, Ireland
- ✓ Science and Technology Foundation (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia), Portugal
- ✓ DG Maritime Affairs, Portugal
- ✓ Turespaña, Spain
- ✓ Ministry of Agriculture, Spain

Regional Governments and organisations:

- ✓ Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo (CCDR LVT), Portugal
- ✓ Economic and Social Council, Basque Country, Spain
- ✓ Eixo Atlântico, Galicia, Spain
- ✓ Welsh Government – Departments of Natural Resources, Energy, Innovation and Marine affairs, United Kingdom
- ✓ Scottish Government – Department of Marine affairs, United Kingdom
- ✓ North Ireland Government, United Kingdom
- ✓ Aquitaine, Poitou Charentes, Pays-de-la-Loire, Bretagne, Basse Normandie, Haute Normandie Regions

Moreover, additional inputs for the new programme were collected, in a more informal way, at Atlantic Area annual events and at national or regional events organised by the MS.

On the basis of all the above, the TO and the IP were selected, laying the foundations for the definition of the cooperation programme Strategy including priority axes and SO, types of actions and indicators.

The Working Group 2014-2020 also discussed the future programme structures, procedures and implementation tools. Lessons learnt and recommendations from evaluations carried out for the 2007-2013 Programme were taken into account in order to improve programme management and procedures.

Finally, the draft cooperation programme went through a public consultation process from 30 May 2014 to 4 July 2014, in parallel with the consultation on the environmental report. As a result, 87 actors participated and 87 contributions were received. Inputs from this consultation process were assessed, discussed in the framework of the Working Group, and eventually integrated in the final Atlantic Area programme 2014-2020.

5.6.2. Role of partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme (including their involvement in the MC)

Taking into account the recommendations of the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds, the relevant partners may be represented as appropriate in the MC, directly or through umbrella organisations.

The value of a stakeholders' participation in the Programme implementation is recognised as it enhances programme ownership among partners, allows to use existing and wider knowledge and expertise, increases transparency in the decision-making processes, allows progress in the coordination with other programmes and strategies, namely the Strategy for the Atlantic Ocean and grants regional actors the possibility to convey their points of view and needs to the MC on a regular basis.

For this purpose, economic and social actors, civil society, universities and research centres may be involved in the decision making procedures of the Programme as appropriate. Moreover, and taking specifically into account the growth and jobs focus of the programme and the innovative approach

conveyed, in particular but not exclusively, by SO1.1 and 1.2 and SO 2.2., the business community may also play a role in the MC.

In addition, beneficiaries showing best practice or model projects may be invited as appropriate to participate in MC sessions to demonstrate their results to programme stakeholders and official bodies.

Taking into account the context of the maritime strategy for the Atlantic Ocean area and its Action plan it is also necessary to involve actors having an Atlantic Area vision to inform the Committee on the ongoing developments and needs of regions in the five MS.

In line with this approach, the Committee will seek to involve the relevant institutions, organisations, experts and stakeholders in the appropriate moments, to contribute to a better programme implementation, by providing the Committee with the relevant information and points of view to achieve Programme goals and targets.

Other transnational organisations having a strategic relevance to the Programme as well as organisations from the areas of environment, equality between men and women and equal opportunities, the Atlantic Strategy Forum and others, may also be invited as MC observers.

The involvement in the MC may have a permanent or temporary character, depending on the needs of the programme.

SECTION 6. COORDINATION

Coordination is intended as the set of mechanisms ensuring an effective coordination between the Funds, the EAFRD, the EMFF and other Union and national funding instruments, including the coordination and possible combination with CEF, ENI, EDF and IPA and with the EIB taking into account the provisions laid down in the CSF as set out in Annex I of the CPR. Where Member States and third countries participate in cooperation Programmes that include the use of ERDF appropriations for outermost regions and resources from the EDF, coordination mechanisms at the appropriate level to facilitate effective coordination in the use of these resources.

ETC programmes have a great potential for territorial development, allowing tackling common challenges and needs beyond administrative borders. Therefore, coordination and complementarity with other EU funds is key to exploit synergies, capitalize and scale up results, thus contributing to maximise the impact of the funds. For this reason, relevant links to EU and relevant National Funding Instruments have been considered through the cooperation programme drafting process. Moreover, mechanisms to ensure an effective coordination with such programmes will be implemented throughout the programming period.

6.1. Coordination with other ESI Funds and other Union Instruments

The list presented in this Section, although not exhaustive, show the high correspondence between the Atlantic Area Programme strategy and the following EU funds and instruments:

- ✓ **Cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes** aim to tackle common challenges identified in border and transnational regions. Regions in the Atlantic Area overlap with other cross-border and transnational programme areas, namely: Spain –Portugal, Madeira-Azores-Canarias, South-West Europe, France-Spain-Andorra, North West Europe, Ireland-Wales, Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland, Northern Periphery and France (Channel) – England and the 2 Seas programme. In line with the Atlantic Area programme, in most of those programmes, the themes innovation, low-carbon economy and the promotion of the biodiversity and the cultural and natural heritage, plays a fundamental role. The Atlantic Programme will encourage cooperation among those programmes in order to seek and exploit synergies and stimulate an exchange and transfer of experience and best practices on specific topics.
- ✓ **Interregional programmes'** objective is to build networks to develop good practices and facilitate the exchange and transfer of experiences by successful regions. It includes the following programmes with which the Atlantic Area cooperation programme shows a certain level of correspondence:
 - **INTERACT III**, which directly contributes to the coordination between funds and supports ETC Programmes in implementing their activities, would provide guidance and specific expert input to the Atlantic Area Programme in the fields of management and control, results capitalisation and coordination with other funds.

- **ESPON** is aimed at supporting policy development, institutional capacity, effective policymaking and efficient public administration by providing European comparable, systematic and reliable territorial evidence. In this context, the Atlantic Area cooperation programme may benefit from the ESPON Programme by making use of this territorial data and information to assess and evaluate project and programme developments and results.
- ✓ The **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)**, given the importance of the Atlantic maritime and coastal areas, will clearly complement the Atlantic Area cooperation programme, especially related with the Blue Growth agenda activities. Both the EMFF and the Atlantic Area under its Priority 3, will among other activities, promote cooperation between MS to improve data collection and strengthen control, mainly on those priorities set up in the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), such as marine knowledge, maritime spatial planning, integrated coastal zone management, integrated maritime surveillance and the adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change on coastal areas. Moreover, the EMFF will protect the marine environment and biodiversity while the Atlantic Area programme will contribute to enhance its biodiversity and natural and culture assets, in particular those with a maritime dimension.
- ✓ **The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)** which aims to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of the EU's marine waters by 2020 and to protect the resource base upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend, finds its matching with a number of SO in the Programme, especially SO4.1 and SO4.2 under Priority Axis 4: Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and cultural assets.
- ✓ **The Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive** is also an important legislation to the Atlantic Area, particularly relevant in the context of transnational cooperation. Competition for maritime space – for renewable energy equipment, aquaculture and other growth areas – has highlighted the need for efficient management, to avoid potential conflict and create synergies between different activities. In this regard, SO2.1, SO 4.1 and especially SO 3.1 can be identified as key parts of the cooperation programme that will contribute to the attainment of the Directive's objectives.
- ✓ **Horizon 2020** is the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation to promote a European world-class science, removing barriers to innovation and making it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation. Horizon 2020 will support research and innovation to tackle societal challenges for a better society in the field of energy, resource efficiency or SMEs support, among others. Therefore, coherence with the Horizon 2020 programme exists in the majority of the SO in the Atlantic Area programme (SO1.1, SO1.2, SO2.1, SO2.2, SO3.1 and SO4.1) which will seek to contribute to stimulate applied innovation and to enhance the uptake of new technologies.
- ✓ **LIFE + programme** covers a series of areas, which are relevant for the Atlantic Area Programme activities under the Priority Axis 2 and 4. First, the LIFE+ sub programme for climate action which focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing resilience to climate change and increasing awareness, communication, cooperation and dissemination on climate mitigation and adaptation actions, will complement the Atlantic Area Programme on its attempt to foster renewable energies and energy efficiency (SO 2.1 and 2.2). Secondly, the sub-programme for Environment will support along with the Atlantic Area Priority Axis 4, the implementation of environment policy, the development of best practices for biodiversity challenges, focusing on

Natura 2000, and the promotion of knowledge sharing, dissemination of best practices, and better compliance, in addition to awareness raising campaigns.

- ✓ **COSME**, the EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs, addresses research and innovation challenges faced by the Union's enterprises, presents relevant links with Priority Axis 1 that seeks to stimulate innovation and competitiveness in the Atlantic Area.
- ✓ **European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)** supports self-employment, entrepreneurship, business creation and social enterprises under its microfinance and social entrepreneurship axis. The Atlantic Area programme will complement the EaSI programme by supporting actions to enhance social innovation and social enterprises under the SO1.1, SO1.2 and SO2.2.
- ✓ **Creative Europe**, the programme for European cultural and linguistic diversity, will complement other EU programmes, such as the Atlantic Area Programme (SO 4.2) in supporting heritage restoration and cultural infrastructure and services.

In addition, as far as the **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARDF)**, **URBACT III** and **European Social Fund (ESF)** are concerned; the Atlantic Area programme is not supporting activities directly related neither to agriculture and urban development nor to employment. However, the objectives of sustainable urban development and the protection of the natural environment and the improvement of Europe's human capital (cross-cutting priorities for URBACT III, EARDF and ESF respectively) constitute relevant issues for Atlantic projects.

The **Cohesion Fund** aims to reduce economic and social disparities and to promote sustainable development in those MS whose Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is below 90 % of the EU average. Given that the Cohesion Fund only concerns Portugal, the coordination mechanisms are expected to be related only with relevant initiatives to be undertaken in this country.

Finally, and considering the thematic focus selected for the Atlantic Area, the overlapping areas between the projects co-financed by this programme and European Initiatives such as **Erasmus for All**, **Asylum and Migration Fund** and **Connecting Europe Facility** will be limited.

The above information demonstrates that overlaps and complementarities with other Funds have already been taken into account during the 'cooperation Programme drafting process. Moreover, a series of mechanisms to promote and ensure an effective coordination between the Atlantic Area Programme and relevant EU initiatives will be implemented throughout the programme:

- ✓ Thematic links and synergies with other relevant programmes, instruments and policies will be regularly assessed and reviewed throughout the programme,
- ✓ National correspondents shall contribute to the disseminating of information about the calls for proposals to assure complementarity within initiatives being undertaken by organisations in their regions and MS,
- ✓ The Programme bodies will also seek active cooperation with other EU Programmes. In particular, actions like organising joint dissemination and capitalisation events, creating cooperation networks or establishing information exchange platforms will be encouraged,
- ✓ The MA, assisted by the JS, will make available and widely communicate information on project specific outputs with the aim to capitalise and scale up Atlantic Area results,

- ✓ Beneficiaries will be asked to identify and exploit links with other relevant EU programmes, both at application stage and throughout the project implementation. Project exchanges between the beneficiaries of the different programmes will be promoted,
- ✓ In order to promote coordination as well as avoid overlaps and double financing of activities, potential beneficiaries will have to include in their application forms information on their participation in other EU projects as well as describe how coordination and articulation with other programmes will be undertaken. A specific selection criterion for this will be established.
- ✓ As far as overlapping transnational programmes, such as South-West and North-West Europe, exchanges will be organised firstly through the existing coordination hub that is the INTERACT programme, able to disseminate information and best practice of programmes and projects,
- ✓ The CP will also intensify cooperation with the above programmes through more exchanges of electronic information and through meetings,
- ✓ Website facilities will identify CP and project activities and results, while the relevant Union instruments and funds will be signposted to foster coordination between them and the CP

6.2. Coordination with relevant National Funding Instruments

The Atlantic Area Transnational cooperation programme will seek to complement and contribute to the implementation of national, regional and local initiatives, which are pursuing the same or similar objectives.

In order to foster the coordination between the Atlantic Area Programme and the relevant National Funding Instruments, MS through the relevant structures will disseminate information on the Atlantic Area Programme to the organisations within their countries, and will make the information about the most relevant national and regional funding instruments, available to the Monitoring Committee.

Finally, and in order to avoid overlaps, the added value of transnational cooperation within projects, will need to be demonstrated by the potential beneficiaries of the Atlantic Area Programme. A specific selection criterion will be set up to assess this aspect.

6.3. Coordination with EIB

The use of EIB Financial Instruments is not foreseen in the framework of the Atlantic Area cooperation programme. However, the Programme will facilitate the exchanges with and advice from the EIB on the possibility for beneficiaries to possibly receive EIB funding as a means of capitalizing Atlantic Area projects' results.

SECTION 7. REDUCTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR BENEFICIARIES

An efficient programme administration is a driving force for beneficiaries to be in a position to achieve results in their projects contributing to a measurable impact on the Atlantic Area.

Reducing the administrative burden is a key objective to achieve by means of more simplified rules and administration procedures while ensuring an effective control, based on lessons from the 2007-2013 period, including the ongoing evaluation; using as much as possible new simplified cost options and harmonised implementation tools developed by INTERACT Programme and ETC programmes.

Reducing the administrative burden of beneficiaries is envisaged mainly in the following fields:

Application and selection procedures

Despite assumptions that both call for proposals and selection procedures were highly fair and transparent, in the 2007-2013 period the number of calls launched (only 4) was considered insufficient while the application procedure in most calls was considered to some extent too long and time consuming.

In order to improve calls for proposals (including targeted calls), a holistic plan will be prepared, including a forecast timing for the launch of calls, a more user-friendly application procedure and the sources of information to be used to design and launch subsequent calls for proposals. This action shall start as from 2015.

Harmonised budget lines and eligibility rules

Even if the effectiveness of eligibility rules has been recognised, differences between MS eligibility rules remain one of the main causes of high administrative burden on beneficiaries and also a source of disparities among partners.

Action will therefore be taken to simplify projects' budget structure and, in line with Articles 67 and 68 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 to adopt simplified costs options, the use of standard scales of unit costs, and the use of lump sums and flat-rate.

Reviewing and streamlining eligibility rules for shared costs, in-kind contributions and other specific items related to project budgets will also be needed. These actions will all be undertaken from the outset of the Programme.

Streamlined monitoring of operations' progress

Despite the progress made on the AA reporting system, complexity and difficulty of use remain issues to be tackled in the 2014-2020 programming period.

Reducing the excessive financial focus in favour of reporting on the attainment of the projects' objectives, results and outputs; minimising the quantity of information required and simplifying the handling of reporting forms are all actions to undertake. In addition, organising regular and enhanced training sessions for beneficiaries on reporting of operations, modification claims, control and audit procedures will happen during programme implementation.

Harmonising and simplifying control and payment systems

Despite their effectiveness, differences and duplications in MS' control systems increase the administrative burden. A too small initial cash advance facility for projects produced a weak impact on project performance and hampered a quick start up. Moreover, payments to Lead Partners caused significant delays in reimbursements to beneficiaries.

Some improvement actions should be carried out from the start of programme, namely: MS agreement on the simplification, harmonisation and the greatest possible integration of control procedures; the implementation of an on-line knowledge base of best practices in expenditure reporting and common errors detected in the control system, accessible to Programme bodies, controllers and project partners; direct payments to beneficiaries, avoiding unnecessary monetary flows and speeding up reimbursements; to consider at the first MC meeting the amount of the cash advance facility for new projects, if/where feasible and appropriate.

E-cohesion tools

E-cohesion began with the 2007-2013 Programme, through the implementation of the AA Information System with three components:

The Platform for Collaborative Communication (PCC), Offline management tools (e-forms), the Management Information System (SIGEA) and e-form applications, reports and reimbursement claims and amendments. Despite its robustness and capacity to ensure full coverage of Programme procedures, its functionalities need to be further improved and simplified to become more user friendly, integrated and fully automated from the beginning of the programme, foreseeing all necessary updates whenever necessary. Generally, a better service to beneficiaries and programme bodies will be sought.

Actions to make the Information system more user-friendly and more interactive will be undertaken, namely:

- ✓ The **PCC** will be improved as the main communication and management tool of Programme structures and projects; it will become quicker and will include features like FAQ sections, live chat sessions and webinars, a roadmap for the project lifecycle and facilities for the development of project ideas, partner search and networking;
- ✓ The centralised Programme database, **SIGEA**, will ensure full coverage of information needs giving on line and real-time information on project and Programme implementation for all Programme bodies;
- ✓ Guidance and training on software for all staff involved in programme management will be provided to be able to fully operate and take advantage of Information Systems;
- ✓ **E-forms** will be improved to easily assist projects on applications, reporting and amendments,
- ✓ Finally the **e-monitoring system** will include new features like those related to the quality of decisions and documentation, performance control system, automatic warning of beneficiaries on relevant issues and automatic pre-filling of project e-forms.

Information and Communication

Important efforts to improve the Programme's Communication and publicity activities are foreseen by the 2014-2020 cooperation programme such as, the capacity to relate with the media, the dissemination

of project and programme results, and the participation of the Programme in different transnational and European events in order to further promote both programme and projects.

In addition, the Programme will provide project partners with greater capacity and improved tools to manage their own communication.

A number of actions are therefore to be carried out right from the beginning of the Programme:

- ✓ Creation of standard tools and provision of guidance for the harmonisation of communication;
- ✓ Introduction of Website facilities for the dissemination of projects publications and results;
- ✓ Introduction of joint media clipping solutions helping projects to monitor references in the media;
- ✓ Provision of online training of project partners and information sessions.

SECTION 8. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

8.1 Sustainable development

The common and shared natural landscapes and the rich biodiversity can be considered as the basis and the “engine” of the Atlantic territories’ growth. Important economic activities in the Area, such as many maritime economic activities, renewable energies or tourism depend on the quality and sustainability of these natural resources. However, the region is exposed to several threats and vulnerabilities heightened by its large coastline and the effects of climate change. Therefore, promoting measures to guarantee a sustainable development will be a cornerstone of the Programme along the Programming period 2014-2020.

In line with this, at a programme level, specific attention has been devoted to choosing specific thematic objective and IP clearly focussed on sustainable development.

In this respect, the Atlantic Area programme supports six SO (out of seven) under which transnational cooperation projects will address environmental needs and challenges, and will contribute to improve and enhance regional policies and strategies related to sustainable development. In particular, the Programme seeks to promote resource-efficiency regions and territories by enhancing renewable energy (specific objective 2.1) and fostering green-growth and eco-innovation (specific objective 2.2), to improve the environmental management for climate change adaptation and risk prevention by strengthening integrated territorial management and risk prevention and resilience (specific objective 3.1) and to capitalise on the attractiveness of the Atlantic natural and cultural heritage through the enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage exploitation (specific objective 4.1) and the promotion of biodiversity protection and ecosystems’ services (specific objective 4.2).

The cooperation programme through its targeted actions on the reduction of greenhouse gases to promote a low carbon economy will also contribute to air quality and the reduction of PM and NO₂ as defined in Directive 2008/50/EC, which in contrast to CO₂ are directly harmful to the health of citizens, ecosystems, crops and buildings.

In order to ensure the integration of sustainable development at operational level, the Programme bodies will take the following actions:

- ✓ Meeting the requirements and taking into account the recommendations pointed out by the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Ex-ante evaluation;
- ✓ Potential beneficiaries will be requested to include in their project application concrete and real measures to contribute to sustainable development;
- ✓ Sustainable development will be included as one specific evaluation criteria in the assessment of project applications;
- ✓ Programme bodies will devise specific measures to reduce the impact of project implementation on the environment such as using environmentally-friendly equipment, adopting greening measures for the organisation of events;
- ✓ Beneficiaries will also be invited to implement specific measures to reduce the impact of projects implementation on the environment;

- ✓ The use of Green public procurement criteria will be promoted both at Programme and project level;
- ✓ Although travelling is considered essential for transnational cooperation activities, beneficiaries and programme bodies will be encouraged to use, whenever possible, alternatives modes of interaction that do not require travelling in order to reduce CO2 emissions. In any case, environmentally friendly mobility options will be giving preference;
- ✓ Beneficiaries will be requested to demonstrate in their project reports and final evaluations how the activities undertaken and the results achieved have contributed to the sustainable development principle. Project output indicators measuring the positive effect on the environment, will be encouraged;
- ✓ The contribution of the Atlantic Area programme to sustainable development, will be assessed on the basis of aggregated contributions reported by projects.

8.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

The horizontal principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination is embedded in the European Union legislation, and transposed to the laws of the five MS in the Atlantic region. This principle prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation. The effective removal of discrimination and the guarantee of equal opportunities in the areas of employment, training, education, social protection and other opportunities is vital for social, economic and territorial cohesion of Europe in general and the Atlantic Area in particular.

The Atlantic Area Programme does not intend to develop specific actions uniquely aimed at the promotion of equal opportunities and the prevention of discrimination and therefore no specific Priority Axis has been devoted to this end. Moreover, and considering its main objectives and operations foreseen, the Atlantic Area programme does not target specific groups concerned by discrimination risks. However, the principle of non-discrimination will be approached and addressed in specific field of action where programme activities will have a high social impact. For instance with projects under Specific Objective 2.1 aiming to guarantee renewable energy affordability for local communities; with activities (under Specific Objective 3.1) to empower vulnerable local communities to confront and recover from natural threats in order to increase the safety and security of those communities, or with projects aimed at enhancing and promoting traditional economic activities contributing to create new jobs and economic development opportunities for groups facing employment problems.

The Programme will adopt this principle as a crosscutting theme and will ensure that the equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle is adopted by all Project beneficiaries and Programme bodies. In particular, and in order to ensure the integration of the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, the Programme bodies will put in place the following actions:

- ✓ Meeting the requirements and taking into account the recommendations pointed out by the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Ex-ante evaluation;
- ✓ Potential beneficiaries will be requested to described in their project application whether groups their projects will target specific group concerned by risks of discrimination and the specific actions foreseen to avoid discrimination and promote equal opportunities of such groups;
- ✓ Equal opportunities and non-discrimination will be taken into account in the evaluation of project applications;

- ✓ Programme bodies will ensure that the activities undertaken comply with the principle of non-discrimination and equal opportunities. In particular, communication activities will be designed and implemented in a way that guarantees that the different categories of population can benefit of the result of the projects;
- ✓ Beneficiaries will also be invited to implement specific measures to guarantee non-discrimination and equal opportunities;
- ✓ Beneficiaries will be requested to demonstrate in their project reports and final evaluations how activities undertaken and results achieved have contributed to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination. Project output indicators measuring the positive effect on promoting equal opportunities and non-discrimination, when relevant, will be encouraged;
- ✓ The contribution of the Atlantic Area programme to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination will be assessed on the basis of the aggregated contributions reported by projects.

8.3 Equality between men and women

Equality between women and men is one of the fundamental principles of Community law. The EU objectives on gender equality are to ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women, and to combat any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender and to contribute to economic growth and sustainable development. Thus, the equality between men and women being one of the European Union's founding values, it is also broadly accepted and constitutes a cornerstone of the Atlantic Area Transnational Programme.

The Atlantic Area Programme does not intend to develop specific actions uniquely aimed at the promotion of gender equality and no specific Priority Axis neither specific objective have been devoted to this end. However, this principle will be particularly taken into consideration for Priority Axis such as Priority Axis 1 or Specific Objective 1.1 and 1.2 to promote innovation by implementing actions contributing to raising the number of women in the R&D sector.

Gender equality will be adopted as a transversal and crosscutting priority for the Programme and several actions will put in place to ensure the integration of the principle of equality between men and women:

- ✓ Meeting the requirements and taking into account the recommendations pointed out by the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Ex-ante evaluation;
- ✓ Potential beneficiaries will be requested to describe in their project application which specific measures will be taken into account to ensure equality between men and women. In particular gender equality will need to be guaranteed as regards the target groups and end-users as well as the project management team is concerned;
- ✓ Equality between men and women will be taken into consideration in the evaluation of projects;
- ✓ Programme bodies will ensure that the activities undertaken comply with the principle of gender equality. In particular, the Programme will implement specific measures to promote reconciliation of work and family life and will;
- ✓ Beneficiaries will also be invited to implement specific measures to guarantee equality between men and women;

- ✓ Beneficiaries will be requested to demonstrate in their project reports and final evaluations how activities undertaken and results achieved have contributed to promote equality between men and women;
- ✓ Project output indicators measuring the positive effect on promoting gender equality, when relevant, will be encouraged;
- ✓ The contribution of the Atlantic Area programme to promote gender equality will be assessed on the basis of the aggregated contributions reported by projects.

SECTION 9. SEPARATE ELEMENTS

9.1 Major projects to be implemented during the programming period

Not applicable

9.2 The performance framework of the cooperation programme

Table 24 - Performance framework (summary table)

Priority Axis	Indicator of key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)
1	PI01: Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	3	33
1	PI03: Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	6	66
1	PI06: Total eligible expenditure certified and submitted to EC	Euros	5 564 628	62 822 988
2	PI01: Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	2	21
2	PI03: Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	4	42
2	PI06: Total eligible expenditure certified and submitted to EC	Euros	3 825 436	39 659 206
3	PI01: Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	1	9
3	PI03: Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	2	18
3	PI06: Total eligible expenditure certified and submitted to EC	Euros	2 259 385	20 356 053
4	PI01: Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	2	26
4	PI03: Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	4	52
4	PI06: Total eligible expenditure certified and submitted to EC	Euros	3 983 889	52 644 961

9.3 List of relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme

As already described in Section 5.6.1, the multi-level governance approach and the involvement of partners has been a central component throughout the development of this cooperation programme.

The list of relevant partners involved in the preparation of the programme is presented below:

- ✓ 62 public and private institutions participated in the survey carried out among the 2007-2013 Atlantic Programme's stakeholders and beneficiaries
- ✓ 87 public and private institutions participated in the Public Consultation
- ✓ CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission
- ✓ Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities
- ✓ INTERACT
- ✓ Eixo Atlântico do Noroeste Peninsular
- ✓ Atlantic Transnational Network - of Economic and Social Committees (ATN),
- ✓ Commissariat général à l'égalité des territoires (ex Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale -DATAR), France
- ✓ Irish Marine Institute, Ireland

- ✓ Science and Technology Foundation (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia), Portugal
- ✓ DG Maritime Affairs, Portugal
- ✓ Turespaña, Spain
- ✓ Ministry of Agriculture, Spain
- ✓ Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo (CCDR LVT), Portugal
- ✓ Economic and Social Council, Basque Country, Spain
- ✓ Eixo Atlántico, Galicia, Spain
- ✓ Welsh Government – Departments of Natural Resources, Energy, Innovation and Marine affairs, United Kingdom
- ✓ Scottish Government – Department of Marine affairs, United Kingdom
- ✓ North Ireland Government, United Kingdom
- ✓ Aquitaine, Poitou Charentes, Pays-de-la-Loire, Bretagne, Basse Normandie, Haute Normandie Regions
- ✓ Representatives of national authorities from the five participating MS
- ✓ Atlantic Area Programme MA
- ✓ Atlantic Area Programme JS
- ✓ CCDR-N, Portugal
- ✓ Ecorys Spain - cooperation programme drafting Technical Assistance
- ✓ RegioPlus - Ex-ante evaluator

9.4 Applicable programme implementation conditions governing the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control of the participation of third countries in transnational and interregional programmes through a contribution of ENI and IPA resources

Not applicable

I. Draft report of the ex-ante evaluation, with an executive summary

II. Report on the relevance of the Strategic Environmental Assessment

III. Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme

IV. Map of the area covered by the cooperation programme

V. NUTS regions covered by the cooperation programme

VI. Output and Results Indicators – Conceptual Framework

VII. Citizens’ summary of the cooperation programme

VIII. Analysis of the socio-economic situation of the programme area (including maps and figures)

IX Glossary

X Acronyms

XI Bibliography