



NON-PAPER

THE EU AND THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

Over the past years the Commission presented Communications on the Arctic, the Baltic Sea Region and the Mediterranean.

These documents differed in nature because of:

- their territorial character, i.e. land based, sea-based or both;
- their origins in Territorial Cohesion Policy, Integrated Maritime Policy, or both;
- the level of political guidance given to public funding (EU or other in the area)

In this context the European Commission is currently reflecting on the possible content for a Communication on Integrated Maritime Policy for the Atlantic Ocean region. Such a Communication would be appropriate only if it provides value-added and is useful for Atlantic stakeholders. To this end the Commission has launched a public consultation.

The purpose of this non-paper is to give a preliminary sketch of the potential issues identified as specific to the Atlantic Ocean region. It does not purport to be exhaustive, nor does it prejudge what type of action if any is indeed required or not.

These challenges can be summarised as follows:

- (1) A coherent view and thus a policy on the Atlantic is inhibited by a variety of definitions of the Atlantic between the various regional bodies and initiatives; a definition of the geographical scope of the EU Atlantic Ocean region is therefore required.
- (2) While all Member States and Regions act to achieve smart economic growth and create jobs, such actions often lack coherence across the borders. There is scope for more clustering, synergies and economies of scale.
- (3) The marine environment does not recognise national boundaries. Consequently any policy development on Good Environmental Status can only take place if Member States and Regions cooperate. There is a more stringent and urgent need for cooperation in case of major environmental disasters that may occur be caused by natural hazards or shipping accidents, on which Atlantic communities and the EU will be expected to act in a coordinated and efficient manner.
- (4) "Connectivity" is also major issue in the Atlantic: two sizable Member States and the EU Outermost regions (Macaronesia) have a specific geography which makes connectivity issues important for them, obliging them to rely heavily on

international trade relations. An optimum efficiency in transport, energy and modern (IT) communications, between Member States across the Atlantic waters therefore is essential.

- (5) There is also a human dimension to the Atlantic. People are culturally connected in various ways across the borders. A higher degree of movement of persons can be envisaged (labour market; health systems).
- (6) Maritime governance currently differs between Member States and regions. Various cooperative structures and projects connecting Atlantic Regions and Member States exist. A coherent vision on maritime governance throughout the Atlantic Ocean sea basin will help stakeholder involvement in achieving Integrated Maritime Policy goals.
- (7) The Atlantic Ocean cannot be seen from the European Union alone. There is clearly a strong overseas dimension.