

Interreg
Atlantic Area



Co-funded by
the European Union

**INTERREG ATLANTIC AREA
2021-2027**

Approved Cooperation Programme

Approved by the European
Commission on the 8th of
September 2022

SFC2021 INTERREG Programme

CCI	2021TC16RFTN002
Title	(Interreg VI-B) Atlantic Area
Version	1.1
First year	2021
Last year	2027
Eligible from	01-Jan-2021
Eligible until	31-Dec-2029
EC decision number	
EC decision date	
NUTS regions covered by the programme	<p>PT184 - Baixo Alentejo</p> <p>PT1 - Continente</p> <p>PT11 - Norte</p> <p>PT111 - Alto Minho</p> <p>PT112 - Cávado</p> <p>PT119 - Ave</p> <p>PT11A - Área Metropolitana do Porto</p> <p>PT11B - Alto Tâmega</p> <p>PT11C - Tâmega e Sousa</p> <p>PT11D - Douro</p> <p>PT11E - Terras de Trás-os-Montes</p> <p>PT15 - Algarve</p> <p>PT150 - Algarve</p> <p>PT16 - Centro (PT)</p> <p>PT16B - Oeste</p> <p>PT16D - Região de Aveiro</p> <p>PT16E - Região de Coimbra</p> <p>PT16F - Região de Leiria</p> <p>PT16G - Viseu Dão Lafões</p> <p>PT16H - Beira Baixa</p> <p>PT16I - Médio Tejo</p> <p>PT16J - Beiras e Serra da Estrela</p> <p>PT17 - Área Metropolitana de Lisboa</p> <p>PT170 - Área Metropolitana de Lisboa</p> <p>PT18 - Alentejo</p> <p>PT181 - Alentejo Litoral</p> <p>PT185 - Lezíria do Tejo</p> <p>PT186 - Alto Alentejo</p> <p>PT187 - Alentejo Central</p> <p>PT2 - Região Autónoma dos Açores</p> <p>PT20 - Região Autónoma dos Açores</p> <p>PT200 - Região Autónoma dos Açores</p> <p>PT3 - Região Autónoma da Madeira</p>

PT30 - Região Autónoma da Madeira
PT300 - Região Autónoma da Madeira
IE0 - Ireland
IE04 - Northern and Western
IE041 - Border
IE042 - West
IE05 - Southern
IE051 - Mid-West
IE052 - South-East
IE053 - South-West
IE06 - Eastern and Midland
IE061 - Dublin
IE062 - Mid-East
IE063 - Midland
ES1 - Noroeste
ES11 - Galicia
ES111 - A Coruña
ES112 - Lugo
ES113 - Ourense
ES114 - Pontevedra
ES12 - Principado de Asturias
ES120 - Asturias
ES13 - Cantabria
ES130 - Cantabria
ES21 - País Vasco
ES211 - Araba/Álava
ES212 - Gipuzkoa
ES213 - Bizkaia
ES22 - Comunidad Foral de Navarra
ES220 - Navarra
ES23 - La Rioja
ES230 - La Rioja
ES61 - Andalucía
ES611 - Almería
ES612 - Cádiz
ES613 - Córdoba
ES614 - Granada
ES615 - Huelva
ES616 - Jaén
ES617 - Málaga
ES618 - Sevilla
ES7 - Canarias
ES70 - Canarias
ES703 - El Hierro
ES704 - Fuerteventura
ES705 - Gran Canaria
ES706 - La Gomera
ES707 - La Palma
ES708 - Lanzarote
ES709 - Tenerife
FRD - Normandie

	FRD1 - Basse-Normandie FRD11 - Calvados FRD12 - Manche FRD13 - Orne FRD2 - Haute-Normandie FRD21 - Eure FRD22 - Seine-Maritime FRG - Pays de la Loire FRG0 - Pays de la Loire FRG01 - Loire-Atlantique FRG02 - Maine-et-Loire FRG03 - Mayenne FRG04 - Sarthe FRG05 - Vendée FRH - Bretagne FRH0 - Bretagne FRH01 - Côtes-d'Armor FRH02 - Finistère FRH03 - Ille-et-Vilaine FRH04 - Morbihan FRI - Nouvelle-Aquitaine FRI1 - Aquitaine FRI11 - Dordogne FRI12 - Gironde FRI13 - Landes FRI14 - Lot-et-Garonne FRI15 - Pyrénées-Atlantiques FRI2 - Limousin FRI21 - Corrèze FRI22 - Creuse FRI23 - Haute-Vienne FRI3 - Poitou-Charentes FRI31 - Charente FRI32 - Charente-Maritime FRI33 - Deux-Sèvres FRI34 - Vienne
Strand	Strand B: TN Transnational Cooperation Programme (ETC)

Table of Contents

1. Joint programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses	8
1.1. Programme area (not required for Interreg C programmes)	8
1.2 Joint programme strategy: Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learnt from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies	8
1.3. Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg-specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure	23
Table 1.....	23
2. Priorities.....	33
2.1. Priority: 1 - Blue innovation and competitiveness	33
2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO1.1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies.....	33
2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate	33
2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure.....	35
2.1.1.2. Indicators	36
Table 2 - Output indicators	36
Table 3 - Result indicators.....	37
2.1.1.3. Main target groups	37
2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools	37
2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments	38
2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention	38
Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field	38
Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing.....	38
Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	38
2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO1.2. Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities	39
2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate	39
2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure.....	41
2.1.1.2. Indicators	42
Table 2 - Output indicators	42
Table 3 - Result indicators.....	42
2.1.1.3. Main target groups	43
2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools	43
2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments	43
2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention	44
Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field	44
Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing.....	44
Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	44
2.1. Priority: 2 - Blue /Green environment	45

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.....	45
2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate	45
2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure.....	48
2.1.1.2. Indicators	48
Table 2 - Output indicators	48
Table 3 - Result indicators.....	49
2.1.1.3. Main target groups	49
2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools	49
2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments	50
2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention	50
Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field	50
Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing.....	50
Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	51
2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.4. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches	51
2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate	51
2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure.....	53
2.1.1.2. Indicators	54
Table 2 - Output indicators	54
Table 3 - Result indicators.....	54
2.1.1.3. Main target groups	55
2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools	55
2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments	55
2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention	56
Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field	56
Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing.....	56
Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	56
2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.6. Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy.....	57
2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate	57
2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure.....	60
2.1.1.2. Indicators	60
Table 2 - Output indicators	60
Table 3 - Result indicators.....	60
2.1.1.3. Main target groups	62
2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools	62
2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments	62
2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention	63
Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field	63
Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing.....	63
Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	64

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.7. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	64
2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate	64
2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure.....	66
2.1.1.2. Indicators	67
Table 2 - Output indicators	67
Table 3 - Result indicators.....	67
2.1.1.3. Main target groups	68
2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools	68
2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments	68
2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention	69
Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field	69
Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing.....	69
Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	69
2.1. Priority: 3 - Blue sustainable and social tourism & culture	70
2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO4.6. Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	70
2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate	70
2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure.....	72
2.1.1.2. Indicators	73
Table 2 - Output indicators	73
Table 3 - Result indicators.....	73
2.1.1.3. Main target groups	74
2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools	74
2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments	74
2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention	74
Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field	74
Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing.....	75
Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	75
2.1. Priority: 4 - A better governance for cooperation in the Atlantic area	76
2.1.1. Specific objective: ISO6.1. Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders (all strands)	76
2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate	76
2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure.....	77
2.1.1.2. Indicators	78
Table 2 - Output indicators	78
Table 3 - Result indicators.....	78
2.1.1.3. Main target groups	78
2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools	80
2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments	80
2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention	80
Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field	80
Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing.....	81

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	81
3. Financing plan	81
3.1. Financial appropriations by year.....	81
Table 7.....	81
3.2.Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing	82
Table 8.....	82
4. Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation	83
5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)	86
6. Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds	88
7. Implementing provisions	89
7.1. Programme authorities.....	89
Table 9.....	89
7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat	91
7.3. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third or partner countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission	92
8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs	93
Table 10: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs	93
Appendix 1	94
A. Summary of the main elements	94
B. Details by type of operation	95
C. Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates	96
1. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data, where the data is stored, cut-off dates, validation, etc)..	96
2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 94(2) is relevant to the type of operation	97
3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and, if requested, provided in a format that is usable by the Commission	98
4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	99
5. Assessment of the audit authority or authorities of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data	100
Appendix 2	101
A. Summary of the main elements	101
B. Details by type of operation	102
Appendix 3: List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable - Article 22(3) CPR	103
DOCUMENTS.....	104

1. Joint programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1. Programme area (not required for Interreg C programmes)

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(3), point (a) of Article 17(9)

The Atlantic Area (AA) covers the western part of the Atlantic Ocean and includes all regions of Ireland and Portugal, as well as several French and Spanish regions close to or on the Atlantic Ocean coast. The total list of NUTS2 regions included in the Programme is as follows:

- **France:** Normandie (Haute Normandie and Basse Normandie), Pays-de-la-Loire, Bretagne, Nouvelle-Aquitaine (Aquitaine, Limousin, Poitou-Charentes);
- **Ireland:** Northern and Western, Southern, Eastern and Midland;
- **Portugal:** Norte, Algarve, Centro, Lisboa, Alentejo, Região Autónoma das Açores, Região Autónoma de Madeira;
- **Spain:** País Vasco, Navarra, La Rioja, Cantabria, Principado de Asturias, Galicia, Andalucía, Islas Canarias.

1.2 Joint programme strategy: Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learned from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies.

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(3), point (b) of Article 17(9)

The Atlantic Area (AA), due to its geographical and maritime characteristics, is in constant evolution and subject to challenges that are common to the Member States (MS) and regions that are part of the Programme. Not only the challenges of balanced economic development and climate change but also the unexpected challenge of Covid-19. The crisis generated by the pandemic and the need for resilience is very present in the Programme's strategy.

The AA is an eminently maritime territory. This characteristic, jointly with the coast-hinterland interrelationships, corresponds to a major approach to the Programme's conception. The cooperation area is located within the Atlantic sea-basin strategy, so the discussion of synergies between the Programme and the sea-basin strategy is highly recommended to complement efforts and achieve more powerful results with a more significant impact at the level of public policies.

The European Commission (EC) published the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0 in July 2020,[1] which has been considered, so both strategies assist one other in establishing common synergies for the benefit of Atlantic territory inhabitants. The Programme also considers the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), with the full coverage of its descriptors in the environmental assessment.

The oceans, and the Atlantic in particular, play a highly significant role in human well-being through 3 main areas that build an ecosystem of services in line with the EU's blue economy strategy, which are classified into:

- Provision of services, such as food or water;
- Regulating environmental services: through the regulation of marine, coastal and inland ecosystems, e.g. climate regulation, carbon dioxide absorption, etc.;

· Cultural services: non-economic benefits obtained directly from marine ecosystems, *e.g.* the landscape, health and well-being, recreation, *etc.*

These three approaches to the blue economy are highly present in the AA strategy for the period 2021-2027 and are developed through selected priorities and specific objectives (SO).

TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS

The AA is a territory marked by significant imbalances between regions. At the macro level, the differences in **income per capita** are quite significant, from 24 675 € in Portugal to 47 611 € in Ireland in 2019 (Eurostat, GNI (Gross National Income) *per capita* in Purchasing Power Standard, PPS).

Looking at the regional accounts, with data available for GDP (Gross Domestic Product) at current prices (PPS, EU27 2020) *per* inhabitant for 2019 (Eurostat), it is possible to verify that, while the Irish and French regions exceed the EU27 average (31 200 €), with regions such as Eastern and Midland in Ireland boasting 202% of the 2020 EU average, the southern regions of the cooperation area are at much lower levels, except for País Vasco and Navarra. The Norte region of Portugal, with 21 100 €, represents 68% of the average EU27 value. The AA average is approximately 95.7% of the EU average in 2019 and the differences are so stark within the cooperation area that they could generate difficulties in finding financially suitable partners for certain projects. The island regions of Portugal and Spain do not differ significantly from the mainland regions.

There is also a large disparity in **unemployment rates** between the north and the south of the AA. Ireland's unemployment rate peaked at 15.9% in Q1 of 2012 and has been on a generally downward trajectory since then in all three regions, registering 4.9% in 2019 and 5.6% in 2020, somewhat below the EU27 average (6.7% in 2019 and 7.1% in 2020). Unemployment is also lower than the EU average in Portugal, with a rate of 6.5% in 2019 and 6.8% in 2020. Island regions have rates between 6% and 8% in 2020 (7% and 8% in 2019), with no significant difference from mainland Portugal. The unemployment rate in France is above the EU27 average: 8.4% in 2019 and 8.0% in 2020. Most French regions are close to the EU27 average, except for Basse-Normandie (6.1%) and Bretagne (6.7%), with rates slightly below for 2020. Poitou-Charentes registered the highest unemployment rate in 2020, with 8.6%.

For the Spanish regions, unemployment is much higher than the EU average. Only La Rioja (10.0% in 2019 and 10.8% in 2020) and País Vasco (9.2% in 2019 and 9.5% in 2020) have lower unemployment rates that are closer to the EU27 average.

For all the countries in the AA, the unemployment rate is especially significant for those under 25, being particularly high in Spain (32.5% in 2019 and 38.3% in 2020 *versus* a EU27 average of 15.1% in 2019 and 16.8% in 2020) and in the regions most affected by general unemployment. The most affected regions are Andalucía (41.7% in 2019 and 49.5% in 2020) and the Islas Canarias (42.2% in 2019 and 51.6% in 2020), and the Spanish region with the best performance is La Rioja, although with rates much higher than the EU27: 25.0% in 2019 and 26.6% in 2020. In France, the situation is comparatively better (19.6% in 2019 and 20.2% in 2020), although rates are above the EU average, as in Portugal (18.3% in 2019 and 22.6% in 2020). Only Ireland (12.5% in 2019 and 15.3% in 2020) has figures below the EU27 youth unemployment rate.

Since 2012 it can be concluded that the unemployment figures, for all age groups and by gender, have been in line with the general unemployment evolution for the AA, registering an improvement until the overall worsening due to the Covid-19 crisis, not only in terms of unemployment but for the majority of economic indicators.

The **regional disparities in unemployment rates** in each MS, which measure the differences between regional rates within each country, are higher in Spain and France (30.9% and 28.5%) than in Portugal (12.7%) in 2019. Eurostat's regional disparities in unemployment rates (NUTS level 2, NUTS level 3) do not provide data for Ireland. These values are far below the European average of 76.4% (EU27) so it can be said that interregional differences are lower in the AA than in the EU.

The percentage of **people employed** in the AA (65.2%) is, on average, relatively close to that of the EU27 (67.6%) in 2020 (Eurostat). However, there are notable differences by region. While Ireland and most Portuguese regions register percentages above the average and French regions are close to, but below it, two Spanish regions, Islas Canarias and Andalucía, present much lower values, 53.1% and 52.7%, respectively. The island regions have the lowest percentages within their respective countries. The case of the Asturias is very significant, with a low rate of 58.9%, which can be associated with a very old population (the largest in Spain) and socio-economic characteristics, with a high volume of the population from transformed mining areas and in early retirement (highest pension rate in Spain). In fact, two Spanish regions in the AA lead the aging rate in Spain: Asturias and Galicia. Asturias was in the top 10 regions with the highest old-age dependency ratios in the EU (Eurostat, Regional Yearbook, 2019). Galicia, Asturias and Cantabria had the highest median age of mothers at childbirth in the EU. The median age of the population was also relatively high in a number of Spanish regions characterised by relatively low fertility rates and rural depopulation (in part reflecting a range of push factors that encourage younger people to leave their region). This pattern was most evident for Asturias (Eurostat, Regional Yearbook, 2021).

At the state level, Ireland has the least aged population in 2020 (38.1 years), almost 5 points below the EU27 average (42.9 years). Spain is approximately 1.5 points above (44.3) while France is 1 point below (41.9). Portugal is the most aged country, with a median of 45.5 years, 2.6 years over the EU27 average (Eurostat).

In 2020, the average unemployment rate among young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) in the AA stands at 14.9%, higher than the EU27 average (11.1%) (Eurostat). Canarias and Andalucía show very high values, 19.7% and 17.2%, respectively. Açores, in Portugal, also registers 17.2%, followed by the Irish region Northern and Western with 14.9%. Haute-Normandie and Poitou-Charentes are the French regions with the worst performance, recording 13.6% and 13.0%, respectively. At the country level, only Portugal has a rate lower than the EU27 average, 9.1%. Spain has the worst record with 13.9%, whereas Ireland and France register, respectively, 12.0% and France 11.4%.

Tourism is a complex sector with a multiplicity of stakeholders throughout the value chain. The actors are involved in manufacturing, transport, mobility or facilitation. There are also actors in charge of the public services (water, energy, waste utilities, ICT, health system, etc.), supply, human capital, the labour market, and regulatory and financial activities. Tour operators, food and beverage services, retail and rental services are support activities in the tourist sector model. There have been important behavioural changes in tourism due to Covid-19 (Joint Research Center (JRC), 2020).

Tourism and hotel industries are very important economic activities in coastal areas, but also in nearby inland areas, particularly in the French, Spanish and Portuguese regions. When analysing the indicator of nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments (Eurostat), the French regions with available data (missing for Haute-Normandie and Limousin) reported 21.7 million nights in 2019. For Spain, overnight stays are very high in Canarias and Andalucía. The Islas Canarias is at the top, with almost 84 million. In 2019, the number of overnight stays in the NUTS2 of the eligible area is close to 218 million. The

Portuguese coastal areas, including Açores and Madeira, also have a considerable number of overnight stays, almost 51.6 million in 2019.

Coastal tourism, the biggest sector across the Blue Economy both in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA) and employment, includes beach-based tourism and recreational activities, *e.g.* swimming, sunbathing and other activities for which proximity to the sea is an advantage, such as coastal walks and wildlife watching. Maritime tourism covers water-based activities and nautical sports, such as sailing, scuba-diving and cruising. Spain leads coastal tourism in the EU with 26% of the jobs and 30% of the GVA (Blue Economy Report 2021-BER21).

In 2018, just over half (51.7 %) of the EU's tourist accommodation establishments were located in coastal areas. In 2018, coastal areas accounted for more than 3/4 of the total nights spent in tourist accommodation across, among others, Portugal and Spain. Two of the most popular tourist destinations in the EU, all located in coastal areas, were the Islas Canarias and Catalonia in Spain.

While tourism was expected to continue to grow in 2020, the outbreak of Covid-19 in Europe in February 2020 put the sector under unprecedented pressure. Due to the travel restrictions, there were few new bookings for tourism services while, simultaneously, the sector was flooded with claims for refunds on cancellations and the non-performance of services. Whilst the EC and national governments are implementing measures in an attempt to mitigate the effects, the true extent of the economic impact remains to be seen. Jobs and revenues are already showing signs of major disturbances (BER20). The UNCTAD estimates that global GDP losses due to the crisis in tourism could amount to 2.8% of the world's GDP (USD 1.2 trillion) if international tourist arrivals drop by 66%, with the consequences most marked in countries like Portugal (6%), Ireland (3%) and Spain (3%). (OECD Tourism papers 2020/3, p. 7).

Coastal and maritime tourism depend highly on good environmental conditions and, in particular, good water quality. Any maritime or land-based activity deteriorating the environment can negatively affect tourism. Coastal areas may also be directly or indirectly affected by a number of climate change related impacts, such as flooding, erosion, saltwater intrusion, increase in air and seawater temperatures and droughts.

Sustainability may become more prominent in tourism choices due to greater awareness of climate change and the adverse impacts of tourism. Natural areas, regional and local destinations are expected to drive the recovery, and shorter travel distances may result in tourism having a lower environmental impact. Digitalisation in tourism services is expected to continue to accelerate, including a higher use of automation, contact-less payments and services, virtual experiences, and real-time information provision (OECD, p. 10).

The use of digital tools is a further area of action, including apps with the dual benefit of informing visitors of sanitary conditions and attendance levels in tourism sites and facilities, while also helping to direct visitors to less busy places (OECD, p. 36).

The area is very rich in cultural and natural spaces, as the identification of the UNESCO cultural heritage sites shows. The protected sites are spread over all countries and coastal regions (in addition to the inland regions). These sites are a vital factor in tourism attraction and their enhancement supports the development of tourist activities and related economic sectors.

Tourism is one of the sectors most impacted by Covid-19. It is a common situation throughout Europe but one that is extremely negative in some AA countries, such as in the regions Madeira and Azores,

Portugal, and Spain, with a decrease in nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments of between 80-100% from April 2020 to October 2020 compared to the same month in 2019 (last date available on Eurostat). This is a similar situation for Portugal, whose decrease ranges from 70 to 96% in the same period.

This is linked to the evolution of the GDP (at market prices) for the whole of Europe, with significant falls in Q1 and Q2 2020. Q3 shows a slight recovery compared to the dramatic fall of the previous two quarters.

Covid-19 impacts in various ways, according to the JRC:

- Impact on consumer behaviour - travel and consumption patterns, prudence, increased demand for information on health issues, preferred destinations, avoidance of mass tourism, travel time, *etc.*;
- Impact on the tourism sector itself - fall in income and in employment, inability to adapt businesses to changes, *etc.* Spain is in the group of countries with the highest risk in terms of employment, followed by Portugal and France, with high risk. Only Ireland is classified as a moderate risk country.

“At regional level, probably the most affected territories might be those places with a usually high tourism concentration in summer, or urban tourism destinations, as the results of recent surveys showed new preferences for this summer: low tourist density destinations, outdoor activities and away from big cities. For some rural areas, the Covid-19 crisis could even be an opportunity to boost their local economy, not only because of the above features but also based on a more sustainable and ecoinclusive consumer behaviour.” (JRC 2020)

According to more recent data from Eurostat, seasonally adjusted GDP (current prices) was up by 2.2% and employment up by 0.7% in the Euro area in the Q2 of 2021 compared with the previous quarter. Compared with the same quarter of 2020, seasonally adjusted GDP increased by 14.3% in the Euro area and by 13.8% in the EU in the Q2 of 2021, an evolution that shows signs of the expected recovery.

Social inclusion

Access to education is guaranteed throughout the AA. However, as in the case of health, there are areas with difficulties of access spread throughout the territory. When comparing both sectors (health and education) thanks to the ESPON project “Prophecy”, the areas are quite coincident with each other. These data allow us to make a statement on the need to improve access to these areas pre-identified by ESPON and which are spread all over the AA. Digital tools can improve access to basic services in these areas through a cooperation programme, considering the difficulty to finance large investment projects.

The AA presents inequalities in the **training** of young people. The indicator of young early leavers from education and training is particularly high in regions such as Andalucía (21.8%) and the Islas Canarias (18.2%) in Spain, and Açores (27.0%) and Algarve (19.9%) in Portugal (Eurostat, data for 2020). By country, Ireland (5.0%) presents the best data (lowest Early School Leaving rate) in all regions, with percentages well below the EU27 average (9.9%), followed by the French regions, with 7.0% on average. In France, there is a significant difference between regions, from 4.5% in Bretagne to 9.5% in Haute-Normandie.

Skilling and reskilling

The need for skilling and reskilling has been increasingly recognized in the blue economy sectors and the promotion of Blue careers. *The EU blue economy report 2021[2]* recognizes the lack of well-trained professionals and highly-skilled personnel in these areas. As established by the European Skills Agenda

for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience,[3] the EU budget should be a facilitator to unlock investment in skills and lifelong learning. The report highlights the importance of “*establishing platforms for cooperation between businesses and education, at local/regional or transnational level, via relevant projects. It seeks to develop and implement concrete actions to close the skills gap, tackle the unemployment challenge and raise the attractiveness of 'blue careers' among students and young professionals.*” (p. 112). The Atlantic Maritime Ecosystem Network (MareNET)[4] is highlighted as an example of a blue career project that aims to promote career opportunities in the blue economy through the reinforcement of cooperation between maritime business and academia.

Several training courses, targeting both professionals and students, are identified as tools to enhance training and professional opportunities in the blue economy sector, meeting skill gaps and shortages, such as:

- Maritime transport;
- Cruise tourism;
- Fish tourism;
- Aquaculture;
- Blue entrepreneurship;
- Offshore renewable sector.

Digital tools are one of the key solutions in the development of the educational system. For example, concerning **vocational education and training (VET)**, digital elements must be incorporated into the training system in addition to joint methodologies in the countries of the AA, based on the Digital Scoreboard for the EU. Investments in accessible online education, ensuring people with disabilities have equal access to the training systems as foreseen in the Directive (EU) 2016/2102 Web Accessibility Directive (WAD), are needed. Also important is the implementation of courses on accessibility specialisation to promote the WAD’s implementation and the exchange of best practices.

In the case of the **population at risk of poverty**, Eurostat offers data up to 2019 for the 4 MS at the country level and for 2020 for the Portuguese and the Spanish regions only. For France, the data is not broken down by region. The first conclusion is the high risk of poverty in two Spanish regions: Andalucía (31.3% and 28.5% of its population in 2019 and 2020, respectively) and Islas Canarias (28.5% and 29.9%, in 2019 and 2020 respectively). Portuguese islands, Açores (31.8% in 2019 and 28.5% in 2020) and Madeira (27.8% in 2019 and 26.3% in 2020), also have high rates. These regions differ significantly from the other AA regions. The Spanish regions País Vasco, Navarra and La Rioja are somewhat below the average for the country and the AA. Also worth mentioning is the fact that Irish regions, which have the highest income *per capita*, have a significant disparity in the percentages of the population at risk of poverty: between 10.8% in Eastern and Midland and 18.9% in Northern and Western in 2019 (no data for 2020). The AA maintains significant differences between regions, both intra-national and between the regions of the states.

Competitiveness and innovation capacities

The Regional Innovation Scoreboard shows a significant imbalance between the north and south of the cooperation area, with a positive performance in the Irish regions and most of the French regions, as well as the Norte and Centro regions and Lisboa in Portugal (Porto and Lisboa including the metropolitan area). The Spanish regions are located in moderate or modest areas, with the exception of País Vasco. There is a dichotomy between north and south in Portugal. In the case of the islands, the Islas Canarias, the Açores and Madeira show very modest performances in terms of innovation capacity.

These results are very similar to those of the Regional Competitiveness Index. There is a significant north-south imbalance, with the exceptions of Lisboa and the País Vasco in the south. Eastern & Midland in Ireland (Dublin metropolitan area) shows the best scores for the AA. The Spanish and Portuguese regions have lower average scores, along with Nouvelle-Aquitaine and Pays-de-la-Loire in France and Northern & Western in Ireland. The comparison RCI2016-2019 is similar for nearly all regions. Capital and metropolitan cities lead the competitiveness in the area.

Three fields of activities concentrate a large percentage (69%) of workers in the AA (2017. *Employment (thousand persons) by NUTS 3 regions (Eurostat)*):

- Wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food service activities (22%);
- Public administration, defence, education, human health and social work activities (18%);
- Industry (15%) + Manufacturing (14%).

In addition, a fourth group (Professional, scientific and technical activities, administrative and support service activities) encompasses 9%, meaning that this and the three above-mentioned fields account for approximately 78% of the employment. Within these, tourism and related activities (hotels, restaurants, guides, travel agencies) and the processing of fishery products for human consumption, industrial processing, fertilisers, animal feed, etc. are of considerable importance.

The blue economy sectors constitute the main framework for the Programme's actions and are the priority. Following the description in the BER20, the main sectors and sub-sectors included in this concept are:

- Marine living resources - primary sector, processing of fish products; distribution of fish/algae/seashell products and coproducts, aquaculture;
- Marine non-living resources - oil and gas; other minerals;
- Marine renewable energy (RE) - offshore wind energy;
- Port activities - cargo and warehousing; port and water projects;
- Shipbuilding and repair (including maintenance and recycling) - shipbuilding; equipment and machinery;
- Maritime transport - passenger transport; freight transport; services for transport;
- Coastal tourism - accommodation; transport; other expenditure.

Synergies between sectors may emerge through alternative activities, including eco-tourism and marine protection. Co-existence with other blue economy sectors, such as the extraction of marine living and non-living resources may depend on direct spatial and use conflicts, while synergies may also exist. For example, Marine RE such as offshore wind farms may help to mitigate environmental impacts by reducing carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) but may imply a trade-off with aesthetic benefits. The natural resources and beauty of coastal areas have made them popular destinations for visitors. A healthy natural environment is a huge asset, but tourism generates lots of pressures on local environments and ecosystems, such as higher water use/ consumption, increased waste generation and accumulated emissions from air, road and sea transport in peak seasons (BER20).

Seaports are economically very important in the EU as they are key nodes in the global trade network, handling a large share of all the EU's cargo. Most of the ports in the AA are publicly owned. The port authority owns the basic infrastructure and leases it out to port operators, usually by means of a concession while retaining all regulatory functions. Hence, port operations are run by private companies,

which provide and maintain their own superstructure, including buildings and cargo-handling equipment at the terminals. Ports may act as facilitators of economic and trade development for their hinterland. On the other hand, ports may compete for room, for instance, with respect to aquaculture and coastal tourism. They need to make a transition to become greener while remaining competitive compared to bigger ports outside the AA.

Fishing and aquaculture are traditional activities in the AA and there are many Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) distributed along the coasts which could have a relevant role in the local approach. Algae production for food but also for cosmetics or animal feed is an emerging activity (in some regions, already consolidated), complementing traditional fishing and presenting a new source of income for coastal areas and traditional activities. Transformation through agro-industry, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, composites, etc., is one of the pathways for creating added value and using resources efficiently. Digitisation of the whole value chain remains critical for the competitiveness of the sector.

In fact, **digitisation** is a key challenge for all sectors in AA. The Digital Economy and Society Index 2020 shows an important need for AA countries to improve, especially France and Portugal. Spain remains at an average level compared with the EU27 and Ireland shows results above the EU27 average. Digitisation includes the acquisition of digital skills to cope with the challenges of new technologies, applications and forms of production and services (e-commerce, adaptation to consumer behaviour changes), as well as providing access (through coworking, third places, etc.).

The fundamental goal of digital technologies must be to improve citizens' lives. The digitisation of public services must comply with the WAD, with online content of public sector organisations being better accessed by all people, including persons with disabilities.

In addition, the BER20 explains the main needs in terms of skills now and for the future (in 10 years' time) for aquaculture, maritime transport and the cruise industry. These points are made in the conclusions of the MENTOR project, which drove the creation of the Blue Career Centre.

For **aquaculture**, "Essential technical skills, at this moment, are project (business) management, testing, inspection and verification, machinery damage and repair, seamanship, diving, driving specialised vehicles, navigating specialised vessels, welding/materials and nondestructive evaluation (NDE), hardware, technical writing, big data analytics, diagnostic engineering, languages, occupational health and safety. In the next ten years, the technical skills expected are navigation of specialised crafts, machinery damage and repair, hardware/computer/ IT, technical writing and reporting, project management, machinery damage and repair, occupational health safety, operating systems, risk assessment, electrical and control, hatchery, seamanship, testing inspection and verification, big data analytics".

For **maritime transport**, there is a "need for engineers and technically skilled personnel (emergency response personnel/technicians)". "These technical competencies need to be coupled with communication skills, incorporating that competence within the corporate and regulatory environment (technical writing, management systems). Additional factors influencing maritime transport include digitalisation, cybersecurity, ballast water and emissions regulations."

Skills are also a challenge for other sectors such as the **recreational boating industry**: "a key issue for the sector is lack of workforce and skills as well as the seasonality of jobs, which are concentrated on the summer months. Initiatives moving towards decreasing seasonality can ensure long-term stability in the sector" (BER20, p. 151).

The challenge of an efficient AA

The AA is a territory that has made a commitment to RE, as it has the natural qualities and capacities. Along with the traditional commitment to wind farms in coastal and inland areas, and hydroelectric energy, in the last decade work has been done on the development of energy production using waves, tides and sea currents. Technological advances and the application of innovation have been key elements in the development of these capacities and production at affordable prices for citizens and companies.

There is a reasonably intense use of waves for energy production along the coast of the AA, with particular density in the space between Ireland and France and the Cantabrian area, as well as in the Islas Canarias and the Açores. Tidal development projects are concentrated around the Bretagne area and Ireland, particularly in the Irish Sea, the maritime border with the United Kingdom. Despite the existing projects, the installed capacity in the AA is relatively small compared to other European countries. There is still ample scope for further action. Hydrogen technology, highlighted by the European Green Deal (EGD), represents a challenge that the AA must face in its strategy to position itself as an area of RE production. The Programme is committed to the Hydrogen Strategy (“A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe”), recognizing that hydrogen is a crucial priority to achieve the EGD and clean energy transition.

An area rich in biodiversity and sensitive to pollution and climate change effects

The AA is an area that is extremely rich in protected environments and Natura 2000 Network points, on the coast and inland. It also has protected areas in the open sea and the archipelagos. In the cooperation areas of Ireland and Spain, particularly in the western Cantabrian Sea and the Bay of Biscay, there is a close relationship between the protected areas on the coast and those immediately inland, and there is an ecological continuity that makes joint treatment advisable.

The preservation of the spaces must be coordinated with existing and future projects for the production of RE so that both preservation and conservation and the production of RE can coexist in the AA.

The cooperation area has a large percentage of coastal and near-shore territory with some kind of environmental protection. This presents a challenge between the need to exploit marine and maritime resources and the preservation of protected environments and biodiversity. Improved catching techniques, new, less polluting materials, energy efficiency, the collaboration of the fishing sector in cleaning up the ocean, the use of technologies for selecting fish catches, *etc.* are ways of making both approaches complementary.

In this sense, innovation applied to the fisheries sector to improve its efficiency, working conditions and environmental sustainability, is key to supporting the development of this activity while preserving natural resources and mitigating/adapting to climate change. Likewise, the ports, as poles for the development and concentration of maritime activities, are necessary actors for establishing measures that influence the fishing and shipment sector towards a green transition, being entities that can dialogue with the territory's research and innovation centres.

As mentioned above, one of the challenges existing in the AA is the coordination issue between sustainable energy development with the network of protected areas and the development of fishing and maritime transport activities.

The concept of **circular economy** is highly relevant in the AA. The oceanic nature of the territory implies a deep concern for the accumulation of plastics in marine waters and rivers discharging into the sea, as well as for discharges from coastal populations and industries into the ocean. The capacity to recycle and reuse materials is an essential challenge for the AA. Moreover, the important presence of marine and recreational ports along the coast means that there are additional actors with a high capacity to use packaging materials, transport, logistics, *etc.* that generate waste that can be reused. The idea of a network of green ports is highly significant in the AA and has high exemplary value for the other economic sectors. In line with the French Agency for Ecological Transition (ADEME) approach (final report 2020), the Programme is confronted with seven types of approaches:

- Extraction - optimise the extraction of resources (energy, minerals);
- Eco-conception - take the whole life cycle of a product into account at the moment of its conception;
- Industrial and territorial ecology - create symbioses between companies, encouraging exchanges and mutualisation of needs;
- Functionality economy - offer services related to products instead of the products themselves, favour use over ownership;
- Responsible consumption - encourage consumers to take environmental impacts at all the stages of the product's life cycle into account;
- Increased use time - favour repair and reuse, notably by promoting second-hand buying and selling;
- Recycling - maximise the use of raw materials contained in waste.

Climate change adaptation. The ocean plays a major role in regulating the Earth's climate by redistributing and absorbing heat and by removing CO₂ from the atmosphere. In the open ocean, the 'biological carbon pump' results in the transfer of around 10 gigatons of carbon *per year* from near-surface waters to the ocean interior, driven by the combination of photosynthesis by phytoplankton and downward transfer of particulate carbon through a variety of processes (BER20). The global ocean has taken up more than 90 % of the excess heat in the atmosphere and has absorbed 20-30 % of anthropogenic CO₂ since the 1980s (Intergovernmental panel on Climate Change-IPCC, BER20).

The AA is an eminently maritime area, with the sea and the coast as the main elements common to all the territories. The risks associated with the seas and coasts are paramount in the area of cooperation. The Atlantic coasts and nearby inland areas are affected by natural risks of their own and those resulting from the effects of climate change. Floods, for example, affect inland and coastal territories. Changes in sea levels can affect traditional and mainstream activities such as tourism and the hotel industry, but also capital-intensive segments such as the shipbuilding industry. Air and water pollution, the abandonment of plastics at sea and coastal pollution all affect economic activity, tourism and biodiversity. Working to prevent and reduce the consequences of natural risks is a beneficial factor for nature, inhabitants and economic activities.

Areas affected by phenomena such as **marine submersion** are rare in the cooperation area. They are concentrated between Ireland and France. However, the Atlas points to a strip of sea between the south of the Iberian Peninsula and the Açores Islands as prone to marine submersion.

Anomalies in sea levels have been detected at specific points: the Lisboa area in Portugal and Bretagne in France. A sea level anomaly reveals the regional extent of anomalous (*i.e.* deviating from what is normal or expected) water levels in the coastal seas for a certain period (EMODnet).

In addition to the **coastal and maritime risks**, the Programme has a remarkable network of river systems in inland areas, particularly with the extension to regions close to the coast in France and Spain. The Programme has developed projects on **flood** prevention which should be capitalised on 2021-2027.

EU **coastal zones** will be severely exposed to the effects of climate change. Extreme sea levels in Europe could rise by as much as one meter or above by the end of this century and will very likely continue to rise in the future. If no climate action is taken, global warming will result in an unprecedented rise in coastal flood impacts. Rising sea levels, more intense coastal storms and global warming are the key drivers of the rise in coastal flood risk, while the absolute magnitude of the impacts is further amplified by the projected rise in economic activity in coastal areas (BER20).

Marine pollution concerns different types of pollutant input to the seas, such as chemical and toxic substances (including oil spills and sulfur pollution), plastics and nutrients, but also underwater noise and other inputs from energy. Industrial sectors directly linked to marine and maritime activities and potentially contributing to pollution include shipping, marine resource exploitation such as offshore oil and gas extraction, tourism, coastal industries, fishing and aquaculture.

The relationship between the economy and marine pollution is complex, as economic activities may result in pollution, while pollution also hinders economic activities. The factors to be considered include costs for prevention, clean-up, reduction or cessation of pollution and the cost of socioeconomic harm and harm to wildlife and human wellbeing. To support informed decisions and sustainable economic developments, foster innovation and protect the marine environment, public authorities need comparable data, of sufficient coverage (temporal and spatial) and adequate quality ("fit-for-purpose"). This concerns data on environmental occurrences, sources, pathways and impacts of pollution on the environment, such as production volumes, consumption, losses and the respective costs associated with the different elements of product life cycles (BER20).

Based on the Territorial Analysis carried out, particular AA characteristics and challenges have been identified:

Large territory, mainly maritime -The AA is made up of NUTS2 of 4 MS - Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal, including the island territories of the Açores, Madeira and the Islas Canarias. It is a very large territory, mainly consisting of the Atlantic Ocean, with many similarities in economic sectors, culture and biodiversity.

Land-sea interactions -The Programme's maritime approach also involves interactions with inland territories, which impact the coastal areas and the ocean itself. Waste management to prevent waste from reaching the sea, circular economy actions, promotion of RE, economic activities that complement or contribute to the blue economy, innovation centres, sustainable tourism, *etc.* are examples of the necessary land-sea interaction in the Programme.

High disparities in competitiveness and innovation -There are strong disparities between the regions in terms of innovation capacities and competitiveness. The differences are both between countries (especially North-South) and within each MS, and between regions close to two MS.

Sustainable blue economy- The Atlantic is the common element of the cooperation area, as well as the activities linked to blue sustainable growth and the blue economy sectors.

The territory has strong economic sectors such as fishing, fisheries, aquaculture, agro-industry, RE, ports and water projects, naval sector, tourism linked to landscape, and natural and cultural heritage sites. The AA ports are key stakeholders, being present throughout the coast and the islands and acting as economic drivers. They also have a large capacity for interaction between coast and land and are significant in terms of energy consumption and waste generation.

Covid's impact - The territory is largely impacted by the effects of the Covid-19 crisis. This will be a constant during the first part of the Programme, with an impact in terms of increased unemployment. The reconversion of certain sectors and products, process and social innovation are basic pillars for the survival of the economic sectors of the AA and the protection of its resources in the longer term.

Tourism - An essential activity throughout the area, with innovation and creativity in service provision, digitalisation, adaptation to legal requirements and visitor perception being elements the Programme can contribute globally and harmoniously. Post-Covid tourism prioritises elements such as safety and the prevention of overcrowding.

Smart blue skills - The situation among maritime sector companies, but also the crisis generated by Covid, demands a reconversion of the traditional forms of blue economy activities, for instance in industry and the service sector, giving priority to smart and sustainable new skills, especially in digitalization, adaptation to change, efficient and non-polluting industry 4.0, etc. Workers and companies need support in those economic activities specific to the maritime space (blue economy sectors) to adapt and face the post-Covid period. It is important to outline and develop innovative skill-oriented training programs, promoting sustainable collaboration between maritime and port activities and academia and research centres.

Climate change & risks - The territory faces common and supranational challenges arising from the effects of climate change and natural risks, particularly areas on and close to the coast, and waterway-related risks.

Biodiversity - The territory is very rich in natural and cultural protected areas. Marine biodiversity is an asset for the AA that must be preserved. At the same time, this natural heritage is a factor in the attraction and well-being of the territory and must be put to good use to support economic activities such as tourism.

Resource efficiency and production of blue energies -As an eminently maritime and coastal area, it has important resources for the generation of RE, in particular, those classified as blue energy: tides, waves, wind. Ports, industries, urban areas are large consumers of energy that must be used efficiently and can be provided by renewable means, with proximity between the points of production and consumption.

Circular economy - A critical factor that combines actions involving preservation and economic valorisation, promoting more harmonious development of the points with the greatest concentration of resources (energy, materials, human concentration) such as ports and urban areas. Fighting pollution of the ocean through collection and recycling (plastics), while also preventing inland waste discharge into the ocean, is a priority in terms of creating a good quality environment.

The actions supported by the Atlantic Area programme might benefit from improving coordination and complementarity with other actors in the cooperation area, namely by capitalizing on mutual learnings with other programmes with a certain degree of geographical coverage (cross-border and neighbouring transnational programmes), other EU funding instruments such as national and regional programmes,

and the Atlantic Maritime Strategy. By enhancing the effects of structural adjustments derived from the complementarity of interventions, addressing joint constraints and boosting the common potential, the synergies associated with this type of collaboration will allow the development of solutions to solve transnational challenges.

Complementarities with EU wide programmes such as Horizon Europe may be achieved by creating synergies between AA projects and the mission-driven research that characterises Horizon Europe, namely within the EU mission “Regenerating our ocean and waters by 2030”. AA projects, with a focus on territorial cohesion and characterised by a prevalence of topics on innovation-application, may support the implementation of place-based oriented solutions. Complementarities can be mostly expected within priorities 1 and 2, as detailed in Section 2.

In this context, the Communication on “A new ERA for Research and Innovation” (COM/2020/628 adopted on 30.09.2020) is an important step to the European Research Area. The adoption in November 2021 of a Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe ((EU) 2021/2122) established priority areas for joint action in support of ERA, as part of a common ERA policy agenda between the EU and MS.

The Programme aims to contribute, jointly with the set of cohesion policy instruments, including the recovery and resilience facility (RRF), to maximise the funding coverage, avoid overlaps and gaps, and ensure the absence of double funding.

No reduced time for durability will be applied, following art. 65 CPR.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE 2014-2020 PERIOD:

- Earlier implementation of the Programme - the delay in launching the first call led to dissatisfaction among stakeholders and prevented the mid-term evaluation from providing more relevant information on programme implementation.
- Use of proven and user-friendly management (ICT) tools for programme authorities and beneficiaries. The use of the simplified costing system, already consolidated in 2014-2020, is a high added-value starting point to facilitate management.
- Programme flexibility is an effective measure to deal with unexpected situations. This flexibility covers both the management of activities and the budget and its modifications.
- Ensure better, appropriate and constant information and communication flow between the Management Authority and the MS (in both directions) so all management bodies are properly informed about all issues occurring during the implementation of the Programme.
- Avoid excessively long periods for calls for proposals and ensure a quicker process for selection and contracting, adapting procedures and human resources.
- Provide proposals for having targeted calls for proposals for projects to better adapt the Programme to address specific themes, issues or territories.
- Elaboration of a comprehensive capitalisation supporting plan to facilitate the capitalisation of the results of previous projects.
- The mid-term evaluation highlighted the need to improve coordination between the Programme and the maritime Atlantic Strategy and to encourage cross-participation from representatives of the Programme and the Atlantic Strategy governance and working groups.

HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES (HP)

The Programme will safeguard the HP of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development, including United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the “do no significant harm” principle (DNSHP), considering them not only in application and selection procedures but also in project implementation and monitoring reporting. The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSHP since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

Practical measures (*e.g.*, use of green public procurement, nature-based solutions, lifecycle costing criteria, etc.) will be identified in the Programme manual for all relevant types of actions to ensure their systematic application. Attached to the Programme, the “Atlantic Area Environmental Assessment Report” is used to demonstrate and highlight DNSH compliance, with the evaluation being carried out for types of actions within the Programme. The report emphasizes that a considerable number of the Programme’s SO have a positive correlation with the EGD pillars of environment, energy, climate, zero pollution, and biodiversity. A strong alignment with the EU’s new approach to a sustainable blue economy is also present.

The Programme’s commitment to the UN SDGs is clear, particularly to the goals: 7 Affordable and clean energy, 13 Climate action and 14 Life underwater. The Programme also aims to promote Bauhaus values in activities proposed by projects meant at enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation, which can be sustainable, aesthetic and inclusive. There are some concerns over the durability of the results. Due to the largely soft nature of the Programme, this dimension may be assessed at the level of policy change proposals by projects, which will be lasting.

During the implementation of the Programme, the Managing Authority (MA) will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support policy objectives (PO) (including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps). Beneficiaries should be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (*e.g.* green public procurement criteria) and social considerations, as well as innovation incentives, should be incorporated into public procurement procedures.

Actions to promote the strategic use of procurement will be adopted during the life cycle of programming such as capacity building events and support to beneficiaries, sharing good practices, message in calls for proposal documents, evaluation grids, and grant contract conditions. A dialogue with control institutions on this matter will also be promoted.

On e-cohesion, a fully functional system is set up, which guarantees that all exchanges between beneficiaries and programme authorities are carried out using electronic data exchange by article 69(8) and Annex XIV of the CPR.

The Programme aims to contribute to the goals of the European Strategy for data. For this purpose, the Programme Manual includes recommendations for projects on this matter to increase the awareness of the relevance of the Strategy and the need to actively contribute to its goals such as European Data Spaces in several dimensions such as EGD, culture and tourism.

Datasets that result from the actions supported by the Programme should be made available as open data under the conditions defined in the Open Data Directive (Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of 20/6/2019). This information will also be included in the Manual, highlighting the concept of “high value datasets” according to the Directive: “a) available free of charge; b) machine readable; c) provided via APIs; d) provided as a bulk download, where relevant.

[1] https://atlanticstrategy.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/aap_v2.0_en.pdf, accessed on May 2022.

[2] EC (2021), *The EU blue economy report 2021*, Publications Office of the European Union. Luxembourg.

[3] <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9723>, accessed in August 2021

[4] <https://www.marenet.org/home/>, accessed in August 2021.

1.3. Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg-specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(3)

Table 1

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
1. A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity	RSO1.1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	1. Blue innovation and competitiveness	Innovation is a key element for strengthening the competitiveness of the productive sectors of the Atlantic Area (AA) from the point of view of transnational cooperation. The connection of knowledge + innovation centres is a priority in the sectors that make up the Blue Economy, due to the Atlantic maritime nature of the cooperation area. This strengthening shall occur at several levels, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and adaptation to climate change. Investing in “stimulating innovation” per se should not be the most relevant topic for cooperation on innovation. The focus should be on subjects connected directly with the Ocean or with maritime/main activities that are fundamental in the Atlantic territories. In a territory characterized by significant disparities in R&D and transference of innovation, cooperation aims to reinforce these activities, promoting diversification and adaptation to the new economic and societal challenges, namely in lagging territories. By selecting this SO the Programme aims to offer added value in addressing, among others, the following specific needs (for types and examples of actions please refer to Section 2): • Improve SME

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>competitiveness, through mutual learning and collaboration between academics, businesses, local authorities and third sector organisations; • Strengthen stakeholders' innovation capacities through support to experimentation and pilots, including the collaboration of regional economic ecosystems; • Strengthen the competitiveness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including tourism; • Target, as the ideal end goal, feeding into public policies to hopefully improve them within those sectors. The support assumes the form of grants since this is the most appropriate for accomplishing the Programme's goals, taking into account the financial envelope and the particularities of Interreg programmes, namely the basically non-generating revenue nature of transnational projects. Moreover, the density of transnational programmes makes it unreasonable to set up financial instruments.</p>
<p>1. A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity</p>	<p>RSO1.2. Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities</p>	<p>1. Blue innovation and competitiveness</p>	<p>Digitalisation is a general challenge in the Atlantic Area for economic sectors and public administration. The European Green Deal and the Next Generation initiative highlight and prioritise such actions for economic competitiveness, care, citizens' well-being and adaptation to changes in consumer behaviour and forms of production. Skilling and reskilling of people at work or in training towards digitalisation and new technologies must be encouraged as well as the use of ICTs by SMEs and local authorities (data, tools...) and the provision of access to end users. This will contribute to fostering the competitiveness of businesses and the resilience of Atlantic territories.</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>The coordination of regional smart specialisation strategies (RSS) on this issue is also required. The activities of the blue economy, common throughout the territory, have been impacted by the Covid-19 crisis, which accelerated the need for the digitalisation of sectors. By selecting this SO the Programme aims to answer to, among others, the following specific needs (for types and examples of actions please refer to Section 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the digitisation of blue economy services focusing on the upskilling and reskilling of workers or people in training; • Explore how tourism could benefit from digitisation to adapt, promote, and diversify its offers and gain new markets. The support assumes the form of grants since this is the most appropriate for accomplishing the Programme’s goals, taking into account the financial envelope and the particularities of Interreg programmes, namely the basically non-generating revenue nature of transnational projects. Moreover, the density of transnational programmes makes it unreasonable to set up financial instruments.
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions</p>	<p>2. Blue /Green environment</p>	<p>AA needs to accelerate its commitment to energy efficiency and production systems based on RE, mainly green/blue energy systems (waves, tidal currents but also wind and solar). This contributes to the reduction of air pollution, the improvement of the quality of life of citizens and the fulfilment of the objectives of the SDGs and the European Green Deal. Investments in RE are expensive and the cooperation Programme does not have the resources to carry</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>them out. However, the Programme can encourage analysis of the possibilities for new green/blue energy projects, facilitate the coordination of regional and national actors and improve exploitation conditions. In proportion to its means, the Programme can contribute to the long-term achievement of a carbon-neutral zone in the Atlantic area. Transnational cooperation associated with this SO promotes added value in tackling, among others, the following specific needs (for types and examples of actions please refer to Section 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis of possibilities for new green/blue energy projects, • facilitate the coordination of regional and national actors and support SMEs to develop and test their pilots in real conditions. The support assumes the form of grants since this is the most appropriate for accomplishing the Programme’s goals, taking into account the financial envelope and the particularities of Interreg programmes, namely the basically non-generating revenue nature of transnational projects. Moreover, the density of transnational programmes makes it unreasonable to set up financial instruments.
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>RSO2.4. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches</p>	<p>2. Blue /Green environment</p>	<p>Coastal areas and inland areas close to the coast are highly exposed to the effects of climate change on natural environments, heritage and current forms of economic activity. It is necessary to continue analysing the impacts and proposing solutions for the future to build climate resilience, guarantee the sustainability of economic activities and preserve the existing flora and fauna in the face of immediate,</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>medium and long-term changes. Natural risks are a permanent element in the Atlantic area and have been increased by the effects of climate change. Considering the Atlantic area has common risks for a good part of the cooperation area, it is of great interest to address them jointly in order to capitalize on those results. By selecting this SO the Programme aims to answer to, among others, the following specific needs (for types and examples of actions please refer to Section 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent disasters and preserve environmental status - protection and restoration of natural functions. • Restore environments polluted/overused due to human activities. • Support stakeholders in achieving effective planning and financing for climate change adaptation, a crucial need particularly in the South Atlantic regions. The support assumes the form of grants since this is the most appropriate for accomplishing the Programme's goals, taking into account the financial envelope and the particularities of Interreg programmes, namely the basically non-generating revenue nature of transnational projects. Moreover, the density of transnational programmes makes it unreasonable to set up financial instruments.
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation</p>	<p>RSO2.6. Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy</p>	<p>2. Blue /Green environment</p>	<p>The circular economy is a set of activities, actions and consumer behaviour that lead to the reduction (including elimination) of net waste resulting from human and industrial activities. The AA is a territory that must conciliate economic development with the preservation of its rich natural and cultural heritage.</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility			<p>The circular economy provides a contribution to this objective as well as to other more global European environmental purposes. It is particularly important in resource-intensive industrial sectors (construction, industry, plastics, marine waste) and is supported by the digitisation and efficiency of production chains (support to bioeconomy, functional economy, etc.). The concept of circular economy is highly relevant in the AA, with the main focus on the blue sustainable economy, for example on Atlantic ports. Transnational cooperation associated with this SO enhances added value in tackling, among others, the following specific needs (for types and examples of actions please refer to Section 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the adoption of a more sustainable economic model based on circular bioeconomy and sustainable tourism in the Atlantic territories ; • reinforce circular value added chains that reduce waste production and enhance the reuse, recycling and other resource-efficiency solutions such as the recovery of energy from waste, the promotion of responsible manufacturing and the development of new industries and jobs. <p>The support assumes the form of grants since this is the most appropriate for accomplishing the Programme's goals, taking into account the financial envelope and the particularities of Interreg programmes, namely the basically non-generating revenue nature of transnational projects. Moreover, the density of transnational programmes makes it unreasonable to set up financial instruments.</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>RSO2.7. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</p>	<p>2. Blue /Green environment</p>	<p>The area of cooperation is rich in biodiversity and natural heritage resources that are valuable assets. Air quality, noise and light pollution need to be tackled. Moreover, a balanced development between the protection of natural areas and economic activities that stimulate local economies must be attained in the cooperation area. Being characterized by a large coastal and near-shore territory that needs environmental protection, there is a major challenge between the need to exploit marine and maritime resources and preserve protected environments and biodiversity. By selecting this SO the Programme aims to answer to, among others, the following specific needs (for types and examples of actions please refer to Section 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the management of natural resources and enhance the sustainability and resilience of natural habitats; • Preserve and reinforce eco-systems services for the benefit of the population; • Promote a balanced approach between the protection of preserved areas (green infrastructures, ecological continuities) and activities that stimulate local economies. <p>The support assumes the form of grants since this is the most appropriate for accomplishing the Programme's goals, taking into account the financial envelope and the particularities of Interreg programmes, namely the basically non-generating revenue nature of transnational projects. Moreover, the density of transnational programmes makes it unreasonable to set up financial instruments.</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	RSO4.6. Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	3. Blue sustainable and social tourism & culture	<p>The AA has an abundant cultural and natural heritage. The SO will help harness these assets to stimulate economic development, in urban and rural areas. The development of well-trained professionals with the capacity to adapt tourism services to the dominant trend of sustainable tourism, also considering the post-Covid context and the need to mitigate climate change effects, is required. Tourism can help the development of innovative social/societal solutions and inclusive answers. The AA has a rich intangible cultural heritage that is common to the regions of the territory and encompasses creative and cultural industries. It is advisable that Bauhaus values be included in activities that can be sustainable, aesthetic and inclusive. This message will be promoted in the Communication of the Programme, e.g. in applicants' seminars. By selecting this SO the Programme aims to answer to, among others, the following needs (types and examples of actions in Section 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the transition towards sustainable tourism, considering climate change challenges; • Support strategies and plans offering innovative and inclusive opportunities for tourism professionals in the transition to sustainable tourism. Cultural and tourism sectors are invited to participate in the future data space on cultural heritage and tourism, that includes the update of the national digital strategies for cultural heritage, with clear goals on digitization and preservation (particularly in 3D). This priority contributes to the European Pillar of Social

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			Rights by promoting inclusive growth and balanced territorial development. The support assumes the form of grants since this is the most appropriate for accomplishing the Programme's goals, considering the financial envelope and the particularities of Interreg programmes, namely the basically non-generating revenue nature of transnational projects. Also, the density of transnational programmes makes it unreasonable to set up financial instruments.
6. Interreg: A better Cooperation Governance	ISO6.1. Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders (all strands)	4. A better governance for cooperation in the Atlantic area	Institutional capacity and governance are commonly identified as crucial determinants for achieving effective and sustainable cooperation. By primarily addressing governance issues through strategic projects, ISO 1 may therefore be conceived as a facilitator to enhance cooperation in the eligible areas of the future Atlantic Area Programme and a tool to promote efficiency in the implementation of the Programme's strategies. In this context, national, regional and local authorities along with international networks intervening in the Atlantic area are crucial enablers for European and national policies. Stronger cooperation between relevant stakeholders, through integrated policies and multi-level governance processes, is fundamental for addressing complex territorial challenges such as digitisation, climate change, health or common crisis situations, etc., that impact Atlantic regions. They are best tackled by joint, integrated and cross-cutting approaches. Transnational cooperation associated with this SO enhances added value in tackling, among

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>others, the following specific needs (for types and examples of actions please refer to Section 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more visibility of valuable project results, feeding into existing or potential governance networks or initiatives (e.g. capitalisation through theme-based projects); • Coordination and complementarity with other actors in the cooperation area, including the Atlantic Maritime Strategy, other ETC programmes, and national and regional programmes. The support assumes the form of grants since this is the most appropriate for accomplishing the programme's goals, taking into account the financial envelope and the particularities of Interreg programmes, namely the basically non-generating revenue nature of transnational projects. Moreover, the density of transnational programmes makes it unreasonable to set up financial instruments.

2. Priorities

Reference: points (d) and (e) of Article 17(3)

2.1. Priority: 1 - Blue innovation and competitiveness

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO1.1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Innovation is crucial to reinforce AA's competitiveness through transnational cooperation. Connection to "knowledge&innovation centres" is a priority in blue economy sectors due to the AA maritime nature and must occur at several levels e.g. RE, energy efficiency and adaptation to climate change.

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Objectives

Support, as major orientation, the blue economy activities and other relevant sectors: the green/organic economy, industry 4.0 (industrial processes & tools digitalization), silver economy and social innovation, cultural & creative industries, etc. There is a clear link with the Atlantic maritime strategy's action plan since "research and innovation underpin all four pillars of the revamped strategy", [1] targeting blue economy sectors, with ports fully integrated:

- Improve SME competitiveness through mutual learning & collaboration between academics, businesses, local authorities, third sector organisations;
- Strengthen stakeholders' innovation capacities: support to experimentation & pilots, including the collaboration of regional economic ecosystems;
- Strengthen the competitiveness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including tourism;
- Target, as the ideal end goal, feeding into public policies to improve them within those sectors.

The main priority is the application of innovation in its broad definition (including social innovation, effective provision of services of public interest) to the economic sectors and place-based challenges of the AA to increase competitiveness (market-oriented actions) and resilience. Pure fundamental research (less than TRL6) is not a focus. Actions must show a direct, clear benefit between academics, businesses, local authorities, third sector organisations and end users and their involvement in operations (as partners, testing solutions, etc.).

The Programme aims to generate a significant impact on the territory and support economic & societal vitality, as well as the durability and transferability of solutions among stakeholders.

Actions should contribute to strengthening (or creating) innovation networks (social and economic), with business support organisations, quadruple helix partnerships and value chains. The link with RSS strategies, also on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as with the blue economy, will be positively valued.

Projects should focus mainly on marine/maritime activities or relate to the maritime identity of the Programme. They are encouraged to contribute to the European Research Area (ERA) and the new challenges for R&I EU policy, e.g. promoting the dissemination of R&I results with joint actions.

NB for all SOs: Blue economy sectors - marine living resources (fishery, aquaculture, algae, etc.); marine non-living resources; marine RE; port activities; shipbuilding and repair; maritime transport; marine and coastal tourism (BER20) but also R&D, innovation and biotechnology, supporting the development of these sectors.

Indicative type of actions

Potential cooperation actions include the development and implementation of joint transnational strategies, action plans, training, pilots and networking:

- Assisting stimulation of innovation and entrepreneurship;
- Supporting innovation in blue economy sectors, including social innovation;
- Improving capacities and cooperation, including digitalisation to help technology and innovation transfer to SMEs and other stakeholders (ports, local communities, public authorities...) in the blue economy sectors to increase competitiveness and resilience (upskilling, social inclusion, etc.);
- Developing and using new materials for blue economy activities;
- Key enabling technologies [TRL-6+ (Technology Readiness Levels)];
- Enhancing sectorial smart specialisation strategies: knowledge & innovation communities (KICs), particularly in the blue economy, considering climate change mitigation & adaption;
- Fostering interregional multi-level maritime clusters (quadruple helix);
- Improving collaboration along value chains of products & services through support to innovation, opening new business opportunities and markets, and helping societal resilience;
- Supporting marine observation to provide robust data, from which innovative products & services could be developed in established and emerging maritime sectors;
- Supporting innovation in the blue bioeconomy: healthcare & pharmaceutical applications; and aquaculture; industrial processes and manufacturing; energy production, biological waste prevention and recycling through technology and the use and valorisation of marine and maritime (co)products, etc.
- Supporting the fishing and aquaculture sector through innovation: develop new products & applications in food, feed, fertilisers, cosmetics, nutraceuticals, pharmaceuticals, biomaterials, etc.
- Support actions related to the low carbon economy, resilience & adaptation to climate change, e.g. on marine RE, and exploit synergies with other PO such as 2 and 4;
- Capitalisation actions from previous periods in the AA or in other programmes;
- Support social entrepreneurship and cultural & creative industries in a post-covid context.

It is not expected to contribute to pure fundamental research but to market-oriented applications for economic revival as well as societal well-being for resilience. Actions may benefit from the coordination with other EU funding instruments such as Horizon Europe, the Interregional Innovation Investment (I3), and ERDF mainstreaming programmes. The key strategic orientations and expected impacts acknowledged in the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan and the associated partnerships can be the major reference points for constructing these complementarities.

It is encouraged the use of Artificial Intelligence based language technologies among SMEs, public authorities and academia to assist the wide organisation of services such as automatic translation, voice technologies, chatbots, text tools, and speech synthesis. These technologies are important tools to remove linguistic barriers. The EC has granted all EU SMEs, public authorities (local, regional, national), NGOs and academia access to automatic translation service, eTranslation.

Strategic use of public procurement is promoted. Beneficiaries shall consider social, innovative & environmental features to support policy goals, targeting quality instead a narrow view focused on the 'lowest price'. Professionalization and administrative capacity to promote this approach must be reinforced.

Expected results

- Improve the competitiveness of the blue economy sectors and help AA communities to be more resilient through social innovation;
- Reinforce quadruple helix cooperation carried out by the AA academics, businesses, local authorities and third sector organisations;
- Increase capacity & support knowledge sharing between public authorities & private stakeholders to implement a sustainable and greener economy in the AA;
- Improve stakeholders' transnational cooperation for implementing RSS.

Actions will respect the HP identified in 1.2 during project design, selection, implementation & monitoring.

Double funding risk is mitigated by control measures at several stages: project selection (partnership, budget) and management verifications, as described in the Manual.

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/atlantic-action-plan-20-2020-jul-27_en.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
1	RSO1.1	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	10351
1	RSO1.1	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	78
1	RSO1.1	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	34
1	RSO1.1	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	20
1	RSO1.1	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	8

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	RSO1.1	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	25.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	
1	RSO1.1	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021	15.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of funded actions will be the direct beneficiaries of the projects: academics, public authorities and third sector organisations (civil society as end users) will benefit from the enhancement and improvement of the innovation ecosystem and the introduction of innovative approaches to aid resilience.

In detail, target groups include quadruple helix actors such as public authorities (national, regional and local), business support organisations and agencies (clusters, chambers of commerce, *etc.*), business networks, social enterprises, third sector organisations, business incubation services, public authorities, education and training organisations, universities and higher education bodies and research institutions.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Actions may be carried out throughout the eligible territory.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

No.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO1.1	ERDF	012. Research and innovation activities in public research centres, higher education and centres of competence including networking (industrial research, experimental development, feasibility studies)	14,573,230.24
1	RSO1.1	ERDF	029. Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and universities, focusing on the low carbon economy, resilience and adaptation to climate change	3,643,307.56

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO1.1	ERDF	01. Grant	18,216,537.80

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO1.1	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	18,216,537.80

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO1.2. Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Traditional sectors often encompass a large number of micro-enterprises with quite limited financial and human resources for digital transformation. Digitisation is not an aim as such but a tool to foster the competitiveness of businesses and resilience of territories.

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Technological aspects come into play as also business models and strategies, data and access to ICT that need to be considered in order to provide adequate support. It is important to help the digital transition of the whole ecosystem (academics, businesses, local communities and public authorities). The activities of the blue economy, common throughout the territory, have been impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. Covid-19 has accelerated the digitalisation of sectors and made this ongoing task more urgent and significant. It is also important to enhance the positive impact digitalisation can have on reducing commuting and increasing the resilience of more isolated areas.

Objectives:

This SO merges digitisation and skilling actions, since such a combination allows for a bigger impact on the AA:

- Promote the digitisation of blue economy services focusing on the upskilling and reskilling of workers or people in training;
- Explore how tourism could benefit from digitisation in order to adapt, promote, and diversify its offers (as regards territories and seasonality) and gain new markets.

The upskilling of workers and local communities in digital technologies, as well as third places where computers and e-services are made available, must be encouraged in order to adapt to the introduction of more ICT tools and processes in their environments (e-services, MOOCs, open data, *etc.*). Tourism is key in the blue economy and one of the sectors most affected by the pandemic crisis, with adaptation or reconversion being most urgent.

Projects are encouraged to contribute to the ERA and the new challenges for R&I EU policy, namely by actively promoting the dissemination of R&I results with joint actions.

Indicative types of actions:

- Raising awareness, training and making digital tools/processes/services available: information events, workshops, technology demonstrations, free information sessions, one-to-one consulting, third places with access to digital tools and training, collection and use of data to develop new digital products and services, etc.;
- Training programmes/modules to respond to the needs of the companies and workers in the key maritime sectors promoting digital platforms and data, by developing appropriate employment model training (AAP 2.0);
- Promoting maritime training programmes and methodologies valid for the whole AA and transferable among blue economic sectors;
- Coordinating and taking advantage of existing information platforms for job opportunities and harvesting their potential for blue jobs (AAP2.0);
- Adaptation of Industry 4.0 through collaborative projects with digital upskilling, tools (e.g. online platforms and market places) and processes (e.g. logistics and storage) and digitalisation of blue economy sectors and public services to adapt to climate change and face up to the consequences of Covid-19;
- Strengthening collaboration between education and industry by assessing the needs for digitalisation in the value chain and promoting the adaptation of the technical and vocational education and training (VET) plans;
- Reinforcing entrepreneurship and self-employment models in the digital sectors, and by using digitalisation tools in all sectors;
- Capitalisation actions from previous periods in the AA or in other Territorial Cooperation programmes.

The SO contributes to the sea-basin strategy by supporting the actions included in Pillar II of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, in particular, objective 3 "quality education, training and life-long learning".

The Programme encourages the use of Artificial Intelligence based language technologies among SMEs, public authorities and academia to assist the wide organisation of services such as automatic translation, voice technologies, chatbots, text analysis tools, and speech synthesis. These language technologies are important tools to remove linguistic barriers. The European Commission has granted all European Union SMEs, public authorities (local, regional, national), NGOs and academia access to its automatic translation service, eTranslation.

The Programme promotes the strategic use of public procurement. Beneficiaries are invited to consider social, innovative and environmental features to support policy goals, targeting quality instead of adopting a narrow view focused on the 'lowest price'. Professionalization and administrative capacity to promote this approach must be strengthened.

Expected results:

- Improved skills for economic, public and academic players or local communities in using digital tools;
- Increased use of digital media in the e-services sectors, in the blue economy, with particular attention to micro and medium-sized enterprises and their positioning in the market through digital tools;

·Improved competitiveness of businesses and improved adaptation to changes in consumer behaviour, towards sustainable production and consumption models (business resilience);

·Increased public e-services available to everyone in the AA with the provision of refined data and digital upskilling and ITC access with third places.

The cooperation actions that aim to lead to the expected results will respect the horizontal principles identified in section 1.2 during project design, selection, implementation and monitoring.

The risk of double funding is mitigated by several control measures at distinct stages, namely selection of projects (partnership and budget) and management verifications, which are described in the Programme Manual. [SS1]Already above in 2.1.1.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

--

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
1	RSO1.2	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	47572
1	RSO1.2	RCO85	Participations in joint training schemes	participations	0	11
1	RSO1.2	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	27
1	RSO1.2	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	217
1	RSO1.2	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	129
1	RSO1.2	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	37

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	RSO1.2	RCR81	Completion of joint training schemes	participants	0.00	2021	5.00	Programme monitoring system/survey	
1	RSO1.2	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021	20.00	Programme monitoring system/survey	
1	RSO1.2	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	28.00	Programme monitoring system/survey	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups include the main innovation and technological ecosystem actors in the AA: academics, public authorities and third sector organisations (civil society as end users), which will benefit from the support for digitalisation, in order to aid resilience and competitiveness.

In detail, target groups may include quadruple helix actors such as business support organisations and agencies, business incubation and support services, business network associations, social enterprises, third sector organisations, public authorities (mainly related to the regional Smart Specialisation Strategies), education and training organisations, universities and higher education bodies, and research & innovation institutions.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire territory of the Atlantic area is eligible to participate in the Programme's operations.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

No.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO1.2	ERDF	013. Digitising SMEs (including e-Commerce, e-Business and networked business processes, digital innovation hubs, living labs, web entrepreneurs and ICT start-ups, B2B)	10,952,806.92

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO1.2	ERDF	01. Grant	10,952,806.92

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO1.2	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	10,952,806.92

2.1. Priority: 2 - Blue /Green environment

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The AA needs to accelerate its commitment to energy efficiency and production systems based on RE and blue energy systems. This contributes to reduce air pollution, improve the citizens' quality of life and fulfil the SDG's objectives, namely the goal "7 Affordable and Clean Energy", and the EGD.

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Investments in RE are expensive and the cooperation Programme does not have the resources to carry them out.

Objectives

Encourage the analysis of possibilities for new green/blue energy projects, facilitate the coordination of regional & national actors and support SMEs to develop and test their pilots in real conditions. In proportion to its means, the Programme can contribute to the long-term achievement of a carbon-neutral AA.

Indicative types of actions:

- Support common strategies to reduce GHG emissions in the AA;
- Support the development of business networks at the AA level for the transition towards a climate-neutral economy and society in terms of efficient and sustainable energies;
- Improve energy management by developing comparable models between regions and sectors of the AA, development of energy management systems, collection of data on energy management and their interoperability through digital technologies to help the development of green energies, energy efficiency and the reduction of GHG;
- Develop local, regional and/or sectoral action plans to reduce GHG thanks to RE and the application of efficient techniques and technologies, especially related to sea potential;

- Supporting the development of sustainable ocean energy technologies and their application in the AA;
- Capitalisation of the results of energy projects in the AA and in other areas of cooperation, in particular those with a maritime component;
- Supporting pilot actions and measures increasing energy efficiency in blue economy sectors (e.g. community-led energy grids), and the integration of sustainable energy sources, including green hydrogen, methanisation, etc., with all technologies complying with the DNSHP;
- Develop technological, legal and training solutions for the enhancement of marine RE & energy efficiency in industrial estates, businesses, public facilities, social housing, etc.;
- Pilot actions to test the production of decentralised RE and the empowerment of renewable self-consumers and local communities;
- Encourage ports (and also marinas) to share good practices, exchanging ideas and tackling problems jointly (AAP2.0) to reduce energy consumption and tap into more RE;
- Analyse the best options to reduce environmental impact to produce and even store energy, including the best sites for marine RE farms and adjacent ports across the Atlantic, taking into account potential impacts on the marine environment (AAP2.0).

Considering hydrogen, differently from other technologies used to produce it, water electrolysis does not rely on fossil resources nor causes any process related to GHG since no carbon feedstock is directly consumed by water electrolysis, being carbon-free or “green”. However, a significant impact in the dimension of climate change may emerge due to plant manufacturing, infrastructure development, and water and electricity supply chains. Scientific studies (e.g., Hermesmann, M. and T.E. Müller, 2022)[1] support that green hydrogen production appears to be the least harmful technology regarding climate change in the long run. Even so, there are constraints associated with increasing demand for water and scarce materials. Related actions must comply with the DNHSP and EU Directives, namely the DIRECTIVE 2012/18/EU (SEVESO III).[2]

Actions should search for synergies with other EU policy instruments, namely associated with the EGD. Research results from programmes such as Horizon Europe and LIFE may be capitalized by AA projects. Actions should also contribute to leveraging investments by seeking complementarities with national and regional ERDF programmes.

Concerning methanisation, these actions must comply with the EU Ambient Air Quality Directives and the standards to avoid the accumulation of unnecessary pollution concentrations, and reduce national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants. Providing affordable, secure and reliable clean energy must be in line with mitigating global climate change. Pilots related to methane emissions must rely on measurement, reporting and verification, controlling for particulate matter, e.g. PM2.5 and PM10 and NOx and nitrogen oxides (NOx).

As identified in the final report for the “Screening of the Strategic Environmental Assessment”, in regards to air quality, RSO 2.1 is “mainly related with strategies and actions to promote a carbon-neutral zone and the reduction of the GHG emission and air pollution. Therefore, several actions promote the development of green energies, energy efficiency and the reduction of air pollution. Therefore, this SO is expected to have a positive impact on air quality

and reduction of air pollution in the AA". In addition, the report also highlights that the Programme acknowledges the need to implement "further efforts for all pollutants to meet the EU emission reduction commitments in 2030, which means a reduction of almost 40% for NOx compared to 2017 emissions, about 15% for NH3, and more than 30% for SO2, as well as for PM2.5. Continued progress is expected as the implementation of current policies to mitigate air pollutant emissions continues.

The SO contributes to the sea-basin strategy by supporting the actions included in Pillar III of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, in particular objective 5 "The promotion of carbon neutrality through marine RE".

The Programme encourages the use of Artificial Intelligence based language technologies among SMEs, public authorities and academia to assist the wide organisation of services such as automatic translation, voice technologies, chatbots, text tools, and speech synthesis. These language technologies are important tools to remove linguistic barriers. The EC has granted all EU SMEs, public authorities (local, regional, national), NGOs and academia access to automatic translation service, eTranslation.

The strategic use of public procurement is promoted. Beneficiaries are invited to consider social, innovative & environmental features to support policy goals, targeting quality instead of adopting a narrow view focused on the 'lowest price'. Professionalization and administrative capacity to promote this approach must be reinforced.

Expected results:

- Stimulate solutions for energy efficiency (making the best of the energy available while reducing consumption and GHG emissions) and for the use of RE production technologies, in particular marine and maritime energy, such as wave, tidal and ocean current energy;
- Promote stronger networks of businesses, academics, public authorities and local communities for an improved use of RE;
- Increase capacities of the regions and sectors to implement improved energy efficiency measures and policies.

Actions will respect the horizontal principles identified in 1.2 during project design, selection, implementation and monitoring. RE production shall comply with the DNSHP.

Risk of double funding mitigated by control measures at several stages, e.g. selection of projects (partnership & budget) and management verifications, described in the Manual.

[1] Hermesmann, M. and T.E. Müller (2022), "Green, Turquoise, Blue, or Grey? Environmentally friendly Hydrogen Production in Transforming Energy Systems", Progress in Energy and Combustion Science, 90: 1-28, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pecs.2022.100996>

[2] DIRECTIVE 2012/18/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 4 July 2012 on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directive 96/82/EC <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012L0018&from=EN>, accessed on 27 May, 2022.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

--

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	RSO2.1	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	31
2	RSO2.1	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	19492
2	RSO2.1	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	34
2	RSO2.1	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	106
2	RSO2.1	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	182

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	RSO2.1	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	136.00	Programme monitoring system/survey	
2	RSO2.1	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021	26.00	Programme monitoring system/survey	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of funded actions include: academics, public authorities and third sector organisations (civil society as end users), which will benefit from support for an energy transition to aid resilience and competitiveness.

In detail, target groups may include actors such as business incubation and support services, third sector organisations, public authorities, education and training organisations, universities and higher education bodies, public and private energy suppliers/sectoral agencies or actors, business network associations, local communities, consumer associations and research institutions.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire territory of the Atlantic area is eligible to participate in the Programme's operations. The priority areas for intervention will be linked to sea potential in increased energy efficiency and the production of green energies. However, community-led actions and sectoral actions will also be encouraged in the AA in order to reach those goals.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

No.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.1	ERDF	051. Marine renewable energy	5,310,801.00
2	RSO2.1	ERDF	053. Smart Energy Systems (including smart grids and ICT systems) and related storage	5,310,801.00
2	RSO2.1	ERDF	046. Support to entities that provide services contributing to the low carbon economy and to resilience to climate change, including awareness-raising measures	5,310,801.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.1	ERDF	01. Grant	15,932,403.00

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.1	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	15,932,403.00

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.4. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Natural risks (coastal & close to the coast areas) are a lasting shared issue in the AA, with bigger effects due to climate change. Human activities' risks are also an issue. There is the need to anticipate potential human&natural risks, ensure adaptation measures and restore polluted environments.

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Objectives:

Prevent disasters and preserve environmental status - protection and restoration of natural functions.

Restore environments polluted/overused due to human activities, taking into account economic and social impacts.

Support stakeholders in achieving effective planning and financing for climate change adaptation, including mitigation and the extensive involvement of citizens.

The Programme will actively contribute to the SDG 13 on climate action.

Indicative types of actions:

- Identification of common natural and/or technological hazards in the AA, data collection, analysis of their impacts, resilience and mitigation measures in coastal areas and close to the coast, development of mapping and joint action plans, especially for sectors of the blue economy and the marine environment;

- Promoting sectoral or territorial plans for adapting to or mitigating the effects of climate change, especially sectors of the blue economy;

- Developing integrated strategies and solutions to support social/societal resilience and counteracting the socio-economic impacts of climate change on groups and sectors;
- Coastal protection measures/nature-based solutions/ecosystem services against natural and/or technological and/or man-made hazards compatible with landscape protection and the development of economic activities;
- Increasing the climate resilience of critical infrastructures through improved risk alerts and risk management plans;
- Integrating adaptation to climate change in water management strategies: water quality, flooding, water scarcity, drinking water, groundwater, promotion of a water saving culture, etc.;
- Supporting marine observation to increase our knowledge and ability to forecast the behaviour of the ocean and its ecosystem and make the best of ecosystem services and stimulate behavioural change among stakeholders (businesses, ports, public authorities, academics and local communities);
- Strengthening capacity building and awareness raising to address environmental issues in order to change behaviour in the use of natural resources, including in tourism;
- Improving information sharing, knowledge, exchange and access to big data (or other available data) and tools for adaptation to climate change;
- Supporting coordinated actions to prevent and respond to deliberate and accidental pollution (AAP2.0).

Actions should explore synergies with other EU policy instruments, namely associated with the EU Green Deal. Innovative results from programmes such as Horizon Europe and LIFE may be capitalized by Atlantic Area projects. Complementarities with national and regional ERDF programmes should be implemented to leverage investments, contributing to the European Green Deal and feeding into SDG on climate action.

The SO contributes to the sea-basin strategy by supporting the actions included in Pillar IV of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, in particular objective 6 "Stronger coastal resilience".

The Programme encourages the use of Artificial Intelligence based language technologies among SMEs, public authorities and academia to assist the wide organisation of services such as automatic translation, voice technologies, chatbots, text analysis tools, and speech synthesis. These language technologies are important tools to remove linguistic barriers. The European Commission has granted all European Union SMEs, public authorities (local, regional, national), NGOs and academia access to its automatic translation service, eTranslation.

The Programme promotes the strategic use of public procurement. Beneficiaries are invited to consider social, innovative and environmental features to support policy goals, targeting quality instead of adopting a narrow view focused on the 'lowest price'. Professionalization and administrative capacity to promote this approach must be strengthened.

Expected results:

- Increased capacity to manage risks and prevention or mitigation measures;
- Increased abilities for public authorities to identify and analyse natural and human activities related to risks, including better involvement of citizens;
- More engaged citizens in the development of more sustainable living areas;
- Increased capacity of public authorities in planning for climate change adaptation and resilience;
- Strengthened governance framework (through sustainable investments and decision-making processes) in terms of climate change issues.

The cooperation actions that aim to lead to the expected results will respect the horizontal principles identified in section 1.2 during project design, selection and implementation.

The risk of double funding is mitigated by several control measures at distinct stages, namely selection of projects (partnership and budget) and management verifications, which are described in the Programme Manual.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	RSO2.4	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	20250
2	RSO2.4	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	88
2	RSO2.4	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	65
2	RSO2.4	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	21
2	RSO2.4	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	73

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	RSO2.4	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021	66.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	
2	RSO2.4	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	49.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of funded actions will be the direct beneficiaries of the projects: academics, public authorities and third sector organisations (civil society as end users) will benefit from the enhancement and improvement of the nature-based solutions and ecosystem services.

In detail, target groups include quadruple helix actors such as business support organisations, social enterprises, third sector organisations, public authorities, education and training organisations, environmental protection agencies, local communities, civil society clusters, universities and upper education bodies and research/innovation institutions.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire territory of the Atlantic area is eligible to participate in the Programme's operations. The priority areas for intervention will be marine and maritime areas, as well as coastal areas and areas close to the coast, contributing to the improvement of the situation on the coast and demonstrating direct links with the coast in the form of synergy and the added value of working together to reduce risks and enhance nature-based solutions.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

No.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.4	ERDF	061. Risk prevention and management of non-climate related natural risks (for example earthquakes) and risks linked to human activities (for example technological accidents), including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches	3,984,043.00
2	RSO2.4	ERDF	060. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	3,984,043.00
2	RSO2.4	ERDF	058. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	3,984,043.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.4	ERDF	01. Grant	11,952,129.00

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.4	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	11,952,129.00

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.6. Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The circular economy may contribute to the creation of new opportunities for business, the production of goods and services and innovative solutions, resulting in less negative impacts on the environment and more sustainable production systems.

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The circular economy is a set of activities, actions and behaviours that lead to the reduction (including prevention & elimination) of net waste resulting from human and industrial activities. The promotion and selection of the best proposals are fundamental to enhance the results, namely to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Objectives

The actions will have to be concentrated on the blue economy. The Action Plan 2.0 positions ports as key factors in a pillar of the Plan. These are the dynamic elements of the activities linked to the blue economy. The ports, as major consumers of resources, can also have a huge impact as regards the circular economy by reducing their waste and creating circular loops. Their impact includes quadruple helix stakeholders (businesses, public authorities, citizens, academics).

For a circular economy, it is essential to recycle materials from waste 'to close the loop'. The recovery of energy from waste also plays an important role. A circular economy model, which employs not only waste management, but reuse, recycling and responsible manufacturing could support the development of new industries and jobs, reducing emissions and increasing the efficient use of natural resources (including energy, water and materials). The Programme welcomes actions that contribute to reducing CO2 emissions and increasing resilience.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (2016 cfr. Pham et al., 2014),[1] 95 percent of the marine litter found on coastlines, sea surface, and the ocean floor corresponds to plastics. To inspire action and guide policy, a multi-stakeholder engagement across all economic sectors and groups of society is needed to overcome linear systems of production, consumption and disposal, and to tackle marine litter at source and sea. The Programme supports the development of solution-oriented actions and collaborative initiatives addressed to improving prevention, detection, monitoring, follow up and removal of marine litter, actively encouraging key agents to reduce the waste generation in the Atlantic Area, ensuring that the produced waste is reused or recycled whenever technically feasible, fostering circular economy initiatives. Chemical pollution associated with harmful contaminants has a strong impact on the marine environment. Common human-made pollutants that reach the ocean include pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, detergents, oil,

industrial chemicals, and sewage. Microplastics also present a significant problem for marine litter management. They can be found, for example, in personal care and industrial products (primary microplastics); they can also come from larger pieces of plastic that have degraded (secondary microplastics). Microplastics pose a significant threat as they can pass through wastewater filters with ease, making it impossible to recover them once in the ocean. Microplastics range in size but are commonly defined as plastic particles of less than 5mm. The Programme welcomes actions that target the fight against invisible pollutants in the sea.

Indicative types of actions

- Identify the need for improvements, changes, etc. in sectorial value chains (blue economy sectors) and/or local communities and/or industrial estates to reduce barriers for circular economy applications and test pilots to boost behavioural change;
- Increase awareness of stakeholders about the need to transition towards a circular economy in the blue economy sectors and/or local communities and/or industrial estates in the AA;
- Awareness actions to reduce the use of plastics and other waste, including invisible pollutants, and their discharge into the ocean, and developing sustainable alternatives to the use of plastics and other waste by supporting the development of biodegradable organic substitutes or composites;
- Support actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions employing recycling, reusing, etc., and awareness actions to increase the durability of infrastructure in facing climate change;
- Exchange knowledge and good practices on solutions to support the circular economy, use and repair, recycling and upcycling in industrial sectors in the blue economy; etc. and testing them in pilot actions in the AA;
- Develop & test approaches enhancing market demand for recycled materials and products (e.g., sustainable public procurement, ecodesign, etc.);
- Support eco-innovative business models (possible sectors: agriculture, food, fisheries, health and tourism, etc.) directly or indirectly linked to the ocean;
- Support sustainable practices for waste reduction and prevention (overpacking, focus on plastic) directly or indirectly linked to the ocean;
- Promote the networking of green ports to jointly address common problems, share experiences and advance in their sustainability.

The Programme encourages the use of Artificial Intelligence based language technologies among SMEs, public authorities & academia to assist the wide organisation of services such as automatic translation, voice technologies, chatbots, text tools, and speech synthesis. These language technologies are important tools to remove linguistic barriers. The EC has granted all EU SMEs, public authorities (local, regional, national), NGOs and academia access to automatic translation service, eTranslation.

Projects are invited to seek synergies with other policy instruments, taking advantage of innovative results and technologies from programmes such as Horizon Europe and LIFE) and existing networks (e.g. the Circular Plastic Alliance). Actions should also contribute to the leverage of investments from other instruments such as national and regional ERDF programmes.

Strategic use of public procurement is promoted. Beneficiaries are invited to consider social, innovative & environmental features to support policy goals, targeting quality instead of adopting a narrow view focused on the 'lowest price'. Professionalization and administrative capacity to promote this approach must be reinforced.

The SO contributes to the sea-basin strategy by supporting the actions included in Pillar IV of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, in particular, goal 7 "The fight against marine pollution".

Expected results

- Increased capacities of AA private and public stakeholders to implement circular economy action plans & innovative solutions, in particular in the blue economy;
- More engaged citizens in a more sustainable consumption approach;
- Strengthened governance framework (through sustainable investments and decision-making processes) in terms of the circular economy.

They are expected to contribute to the strengthening of economic sectors and behavioural change among businesses and consumers.

Actions will respect the HP identified in 1.2 during project design, selection, implementation and monitoring.

The risk of double funding is mitigated by control measures at distinct stages, namely selection of projects (partnership & budget) and management verifications, which are described in the Manual.

[1] UN Environment Programme (2016), *Marine Litter Legislation: A Toolkit for Policymakers*, accessed on May 2022.

Pham CK., Ramirez-Llodra E, CHS, A., Amaro T, Bergmann M and M. Canals (2014), "Marine Litter Distribution and Density in European Seas, from the Shelves to Deep Basins", PLoS ONE 9(4): e95839. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0095839>

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

--

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	RSO2.6	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	58
2	RSO2.6	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	12
2	RSO2.6	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	17
2	RSO2.6	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	132282
2	RSO2.6	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	96

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	RSO2.6	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021	9.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	RSO2.6	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	13.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of funded actions will be the direct beneficiaries of the projects: academics, public authorities and third sector organisations (civil society as end users) will benefit from the enhancement and improvement of the circular loops and efficient uses of resources.

Target groups are part of the quadruple helix ecosystem, including enterprises (mainly SMEs), public authorities, education and training organisations, environmental agencies, local communities, social enterprises, third sector organisations, tourism associations, business networks, fisheries, universities and higher education bodies and research centres.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire territory of the Atlantic area is eligible to participate in the Programme's operations. The priority areas for intervention will be marine and maritime areas, as well as coastal areas and areas close to the coast that contribute to the improvement of circular economy approaches.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

No.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.6	ERDF	071. Promoting the use of recycled materials as raw materials	5,585,953.00
2	RSO2.6	ERDF	075. Support to environmentally-friendly production processes and resource efficiency in SMEs	5,585,953.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.6	ERDF	01. Grant	11,171,905.00

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.6	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	11,171,905.00

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.7. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The area of cooperation has remarkable natural heritage resources that are valuable assets and that contribute to the attractiveness of the AA for tourism.

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The protection of these assets, namely biodiversity, must account for the influence of climate change on ecosystems. Actions focused on the role of CO2 capture and utilization in mitigating climate change are also welcome, promoting adaptation and resilience.

Actions that contribute to the protection of this heritage are crucial, for example fighting against marine pollution that covers underwater noise. The Programme will contribute to SDG 14 Life below water.

Objectives

- Improve the management of natural resources and enhance the sustainability and resilience of natural habitats;
- Promote development and uses that are balanced between the protection of preserved areas (green infrastructures, ecological continuities) and economic activities that stimulate local economies.

Indicative types of actions:

- Restoration of degraded ecosystems, creation of multifunctional ecological continuities (blue and green corridors to foster biodiversity, ecosystem services);

- Developing measures for the protection of natural heritage, including World Heritage Sites which allow, where appropriate, for the recovery, enhancement, management, and sustainable development of economic activities;
- Plans and coordinated measures to improve and promote biodiversity and reduce threats to AA flora and fauna, including invasive alien species;
- Linking green and blue infrastructures to create and strengthen ecological corridors and protected sites at a local, regional and transnational level to reduce landscape fragmentation and improve the connectivity of habitats;
- Supporting the analysis and processing of reliable data and making use of available tools to identify major sources, pathways and hotspots of marine litter, as well as accidental or deliberate pollution (AAP2.0);
- Testing, in pilot actions, innovative technical solutions for restoring degraded marine and maritime ecosystems, as well as those close to the coast;
- Testing pilot actions of “litter-free” coastal communities (AAP2.0);
- Design and implementation of joint strategies for sustainable tourism that promotes the AA’s natural heritage: protected areas, wetlands, landscapes, etc. through participatory approaches and avoiding usage conflicts;
- Supporting long-term sustainability of both nature and other man-made activities, towards nature-friendly practices that benefit biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Supporting joint actions to promote public awareness of the problem, *e.g.* beach days, beach cleaning days, *etc.* (AAP2.0);
- Reinforcing transnational links to more effectively protect and restore the areas covered by the Natura 2000 network and marine protected areas;
- Coordinated studies of the impact of climate change on biodiversity and climate proofing, promoting vulnerability assessments in a participative format with local public participation, and enhance community capacity building for climate change mitigation and adaptation, comprising the definition of incentives for climate action.

Actions may benefit from complementarities with other programmes such as LIFE by exploring innovative solutions related to nature and biodiversity. Exploring synergies with other policy instruments is crucial to enhance the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, following the goals proposed by the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the European Green Deal.

The SO contributes to the sea-basin strategy by supporting the actions included in Pillar IV of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, in particular goal 7 "The fight against marine pollution".

The Programme encourages the use of Artificial Intelligence based language technologies among SMEs, public authorities and academia to assist the wide organisation of services such as automatic translation, voice technologies, chatbots, text analysis tools, and speech synthesis. These language technologies are important tools to remove linguistic barriers. The European Commission has granted all European Union SMEs, public authorities (local, regional, national), NGOs and academia access to its automatic translation service, eTranslation.

The Programme promotes the strategic use of public procurement. Beneficiaries are invited to consider social, innovative and environmental features to support policy goals, targeting quality instead of adopting a narrow view focused on the 'lowest price'. Professionalization and administrative capacity to promote this approach must be strengthened.

Expected results:

- Better preserved, managed and interconnected natural and protected maritime coastal areas and areas close to the coast;
- Reinforced ecosystem-based approaches conciliating preservation and economic activities;
- Improved ecological connections and enlarged protected areas on land and sea, ensured by innovative solutions.

The cooperation actions that aim to lead to the expected results will respect the horizontal principles identified in section 1.2 during project design, selection, implementation and monitoring.

The risk of double funding is mitigated by several control measures at distinct stages, namely selection of projects (partnership and budget) and management verifications, which are described in the Programme Manual.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	RSO2.7	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	51
2	RSO2.7	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	117
2	RSO2.7	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	27935
2	RSO2.7	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	99
2	RSO2.7	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	75

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	RSO2.7	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	88.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	
2	RSO2.7	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021	38.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of funded actions will be the direct beneficiaries of the projects: academics, public authorities and third sector organisations (civil society as end users) will benefit from the enhancement and improvement of ecosystem services and the protection of biodiversity.

In detail, target groups include quadruple helix actors such as enterprises (mainly SMEs), business support organisations, public authorities, education and training organisations, environmental agencies, local communities, social enterprises, third sector organisations, tourism associations, business networks, fisheries and research/innovation institutions, universities and higher education bodies.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire territory of the Atlantic area is eligible to participate in the Programme's operations with a focus on marine, maritime, and coastal areas, as well as areas close to the coast.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

No.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.7	ERDF	079. Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	15,367,024.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.7	ERDF	01. Grant	15,367,024.00

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO2.7	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	15,367,024.00

2.1. Priority: 3 - Blue sustainable and social tourism & culture

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO4.6. Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Tourism is one of the sectors for which adaptation and reconversion are urgent considering the necessary evolution towards the crucial and dominant trend of sustainable tourism, also taking into consideration the post Covid-19 context.

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Objectives:

- Promote a transition towards a more sustainable tourism sector, taking into account climate change challenges as a cross-cutting issue, which is a crucial determinant of the associated supply and demand and needs to be tackled as an exogenous shock;
- Support strategies and plans offering innovative and inclusive opportunities for tourism professionals to adapt to sustainable tourism.
- Endorse actions focused on the flexibility of the tourism sector in dealing with the challenges of climate change and the role of tourism in CO2 emissions (e.g., estimating the possible effects of GHG effects and working with tourism operators to reduce carbon footprint) and the potential for energy saving of cultural heritage and infrastructure.

The AA has plenty of cultural heritage that needs to be enhanced in order to make it a real asset for economic development, both in urban and rural areas. Likewise, the development of well-trained tourism professionals with the capacity to adapt tourism services to the post-Covid period is required. Indeed, this priority includes actions that aim to improve the capacities, skills and well-being of the Atlantic Area communities, namely regarding the development of better quality jobs related to tourism and culture.

Tourism can help the development of innovative social solutions and inclusive responses in areas on and close to the coast, both rural and urban, where resilience is needed. Tourism and culture activities within this SO are linked to actions related to the social economy and social innovation in particular. Priority will be given to sustainable actions that show novel, innovative approaches to generating balanced development and employment.

The Programme encourages interdisciplinary initiatives as emphasised in the New European Bauhaus initiative (COM/2021/573 final) to combine art, culture, social inclusion, science and technology. The core Bauhaus values shall be included in activities that should be sustainable, aesthetic and inclusive. For example, restoring biodiversity by re-naturing landscapes enhances sustainability, rediscovering historical and architectural heritage may promote aesthetic conceptualisations, and thinking about new forms to appeal to wider participation of citizens is a way to contribute to inclusiveness, with culture being an important driver of an inclusive society.

Indicative types of actions:

- Plans for the design and promotion of sustainable tourism in the AA, including approaches for common protocols for the provision of tourism services after Covid-19;
- Developing innovative sustainable solutions and new sustainable business models in culture/creative and cultural industries and tourism, supporting cultural clusters through cooperation, networking, and exchanges;
- Tackling the diversification of tourism activities, including culture, the extension of seasonal peaks and adaptation to consumer changes after Covid-19 towards less-crowded destinations, natural, coastal and close-to-coast tourism;
- Driving diverse forms of sustainable coastal and close-to-coast tourism, such as cultural, rural, sport, nautical, etc. and combined products, cultural events, cultural routes (e.g. old galleons, remarkable sites), bicycle rides, fisheries, boat trips to see seals or offshore wind-farms and other activities;
- Supporting online training systems that favour the transmission of knowledge and the acquisition of professional skills in AA priorities, supporting the introduction of digital tools in tourism;
- Enhancing the adaptation of traditional tourism mobility to sustainable mobility in line with natural and sustainable destinations;
- Facilitating exchange systems between training centres, in vocational education and training (VET) in tourism and culture;
- Support actions to develop climate-relevant design standards, promote the adaptation of facilities, and integrate green urban areas, green walls, green roofs, etc. These dedicated design approaches may reduce the negative effects of high-temperature extremes and facilitate the efficient use of water for cooling.

Actions should seek synergies with other EU policy instruments, namely with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARDF) through LEADER, promoting the enhancement of bonds in local communities, social innovation across sectors, and dissemination of knowledge amongst Local Action Groups (LAGs) at national and EU-wide levels- The Programme encourages the use of Artificial Intelligence based language technologies among SMEs, public authorities and academia to assist the wide organisation of services such as automatic translation, voice technologies, chatbots, text analysis tools, and speech synthesis. These language technologies are important tools to remove linguistic barriers. The European Commission has granted all European Union SMEs, public authorities (local, regional, national), NGOs and academia access to its automatic translation service, eTranslation.

The Programme promotes the strategic use of public procurement. Beneficiaries are invited to consider social, innovative and environmental features to support policy goals, targeting quality instead of adopting a narrow view focused on the 'lowest price'. Professionalization and administrative capacity to promote this approach must be strengthened.

Expected results

As a result of the actions included in the SO, it is expected that the AA will be further strengthened, through tourism and culture (and connected activities) in the fields of social economy and social innovation, developing more resilience in the event of pressure on the culture and tourism sectors, so that the economic development of the area will include the most fragile areas and sectors before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, the cooperation actions that aim to lead to the expected results will respect the horizontal principles identified in section 1.2 during project design, selection, implementation and monitoring.

The risk of double funding is mitigated by several control measures at distinct stages, namely selection of projects (partnership and budget) and management verifications, which are described in the Programme Manual.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

--

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
3	RSO4.6	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	100
3	RSO4.6	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	20
3	RSO4.6	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	978379
3	RSO4.6	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	133
3	RSO4.6	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	35

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	RSO4.6	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	joint strategy/action plan	0.00	2021	75.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	
3	RSO4.6	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	15.00	Programme monitoring system/surveys	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of funded actions are the direct beneficiaries of the projects: academics, public authorities and third sector organisations (civil society as end users). These groups benefit from actions to promote the development of tourism in a sustainable and inclusive way.

In detail, target groups include quadruple helix actors such as enterprises (mainly SMEs), business support organisations, public authorities, education and training organisations, environmental agencies, local communities, social enterprises, third sector organisations, tourism associations, business networks, fisheries and research/innovation institutions, universities and higher education bodies.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire territory of the Atlantic area is eligible to participate in the Programme's operations with a focus on marine, maritime and coastal areas, as well as areas close to the coast.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

No.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	RSO4.6	ERDF	165. Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services	8,678,580.24
3	RSO4.6	ERDF	166. Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	3,471,432.09
3	RSO4.6	ERDF	167. Protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites	3,471,432.09
3	RSO4.6	ERDF	146. Support for adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change	1,735,716.05

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	RSO4.6	ERDF	01. Grant	17,357,160.47

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	RSO4.6	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	17,357,160.47

2.1. Priority: 4 - A better governance for cooperation in the Atlantic area

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: ISO6.1. Enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders (all strands)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

The main objective is to ensure that the Programme's investments in the Atlantic Area have a greater impact.

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Objectives

- Providing more visibility, a better appreciation of valuable project results, feeding into existing or potential governance networks or initiatives (e.g. capitalisation through theme-based portfolio/horizontal projects);
- Improving coordination and complementarity with other actors in the cooperation area, including the Atlantic Maritime Strategy, other ETC programmes, national and regional programmes. For example, a complex and cross-cutting subject such as climate change, when introduced and analysed as a horizontal topic, may strongly benefit from multi-level governance and transnational approaches.

Indicative types of actions:

- Capitalising on results for specific strategic themes in the Atlantic area along with key stakeholders, networks and initiatives, taking into account the other cooperation programmes sharing themes/areas with the AA Programme;
- Better coordination with the Maritime Atlantic Strategy and other relevant stakeholders in the Atlantic Area;
- Encouraging studies and data collection about strategic subjects for the AA, namely related to the climate challenges as a horizontal topic, taking into consideration conclusions and recommendations from the thematic pillar developed under the Maritime Atlantic Strategy.

The Programme encourages the use of Artificial Intelligence based language technologies among SMEs, public authorities and academia to assist the wide organisation of services such as automatic translation, voice technologies, chatbots, text analysis tools, and speech synthesis. These language technologies

are important tools to remove linguistic barriers. The European Commission has granted all European Union SMEs, public authorities (local, regional, national), NGOs and academia access to its automatic translation service, eTranslation.

The Programme promotes the strategic use of public procurement. Beneficiaries are invited to consider social, innovative and environmental features to support policy goals, targeting quality instead of adopting a narrow view focused on the 'lowest price'. Professionalization and administrative capacity to promote this approach must be strengthened.

Expected results:

Better and clearer identification and recognition of the programme project's results by the strategic stakeholders within the Atlantic Area. As a result of the actions included in the Interreg SO, it is expected that the AA will be further strengthened in terms of governance. Through this improvement in Atlantic Area governance, there will be better coordination among stakeholders and synergies will be found. Thus, the plan is to maximise individual investments through complementary and/or common interventions as well as capitalisation activities.

The cooperation actions that aim to lead to the expected results will respect the horizontal principles identified in section 1.2 during project design, selection, implementation and monitoring.

The risk of double funding is mitigated by several control measures at distinct stages, namely selection of projects (partnership and budget) and management verifications, which are described in the Programme Manual.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
4	ISO6.1	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	5
4	ISO6.1	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	5981
4	ISO6.1	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	50

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
4	ISO6.1	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	4.00	Programme monitoring system	
4	ISO6.1	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2021	25.00	Programme monitoring system	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Target groups of funded actions will be the direct beneficiaries of the projects: academics, public authorities and third sector organisations (civil society as end users) will benefit from projects under ISO 1 for fostering engagement and capitalisation.

In detail, target groups include public authorities, education and training organisations, environmental agencies, local communities, third sector organisations, tourism associations, business networks, research/innovation institutions, universities and higher education bodies.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire territory of the Atlantic area is eligible to participate in the Programme's operations with a focus on marine, maritime and coastal areas, as well as areas close to the coast.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

No.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ISO6.1	ERDF	173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context	1,875,000.00
4	ISO6.1	ERDF	170. Improve the capacity of programme authorities and bodies linked to the implementation of the Funds	1,875,000.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ISO6.1	ERDF	01. Grant	3,750,000.00

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	ISO6.1	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	3,750,000.00

3. Financing plan

Reference: point (f) of Article 17(3)

3.1. Financial appropriations by year

Table 7

Reference: point (g)(i) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF		19,316,788.00	19,627,073.00	19,943,563.00	20,266,386.00	16,793,145.00	17,129,009.00	113,075,964.00
Total		19,316,788.00	19,627,073.00	19,943,563.00	20,266,386.00	16,793,145.00	17,129,009.00	113,075,964.00

3.2.Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Reference: point (f)(ii) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 8

Policy objective	Priority	Fund	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
1	1	ERDF	Total	31,502,893.00	29,169,346.00	2,333,547.00	10,500,964.00	9,450,868.00	1,050,096.00	42,003,857.00	75.0000005952%	0.00
2	2	ERDF	Total	58,777,338.00	54,423,462.00	4,353,876.00	19,592,447.00	17,633,202.00	1,959,245.00	78,369,785.00	74.9999990430%	0.00
4	3	ERDF	Total	18,745,733.00	17,357,161.00	1,388,572.00	6,248,578.00	5,623,720.00	624,858.00	24,994,311.00	74.9999989998%	0.00
6	4	ERDF	Total	4,050,000.00	3,750,000.00	300,000.00	1,350,000.00	1,215,000.00	135,000.00	5,400,000.00	75.0000000000%	0.00
	Total	ERDF		113,075,964.00	104,699,969.00	8,375,995.00	37,691,989.00	33,922,790.00	3,769,199.00	150,767,953.00	74.9999995025%	0.00
	Grand total			113,075,964.00	104,699,969.00	8,375,995.00	37,691,989.00	33,922,790.00	3,769,199.00	150,767,953.00	74.9999995025%	0.00

4. Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Reference: point (g) of Article 17(3)

This section is based on the guidelines of the CPR (article 8) and the European Code of Conduct on Partnership. Article 8 of the CPR states that:

1. Each MS shall organise a partnership with the competent regional and local authorities. That partnership shall include at least the following partners:

(a) regional, local, urban and other public authorities;

(b) economic and social partners;

(c) relevant bodies representing civil society *e.g.*, environmental partners, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination.

2. In accordance with the multi-level governance principle, the MS shall involve those partners in the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and throughout the preparation, implementation and evaluation of programmes, including through participation in monitoring committees in accordance with Article 39.

Article 4 of the European Code of Conduct states that:

1. For each programme, MS shall identify the relevant partners among at least the following:

a) competent regional, local, urban and other public authorities,

b) economic and social partners,

c) research organisations and universities, where appropriate,

d) bodies representing civil society, such as environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination.

2. For ETC programmes, MS may also involve in the partnership European groupings of territorial cooperation operating in the transnational Programme area and authorities or bodies involved in the development or implementation of a macroregional or sea-basin strategy in the Programme area.

Stakeholder participation was envisaged from the Programme's inception, as well as in its design and implementation.

Preparation Phase

Preparation of the Programme has been led by a Task Force (AATF) composed of representatives of the MS and regional authorities, with the support of the EC and the MA. Multi-level participation has been designed to improve governance.

A first participatory process was carried out among national & regional stakeholders, through the completion of an online paper questionnaire. This questionnaire was sent to the national authorities, who in turn circulated it among the regions, who were able to make their contributions. The topics analysed in the questionnaire were: (i) the assessment of performance during 2014-2020, (ii) the regional & national priorities for the AA, (iii) the main aspects to be analysed in the territorial analysis, (iv) the initial alignment with the AA of potential topics emanating from the Regulation proposal and (v)

governance within the Programme. This consultation process took place in October and November 2020. One questionnaire was obtained from each of the 4 MS, one from the MA, and 10 questionnaires from the Spanish regions. For the other MS, the national questionnaire included the regional positions. This analysis by the MS and the regions made it possible to ascertain national and regional priorities, pool them, and build an initial overview of priorities in the cooperation area.

This first consultation process enabled an initial overview of Programme concerns and challenges for the 2021-2027, which, in turn, were in line with the conclusions made in the Territorial Analysis undertaken at the same time.

The AATF held a series of preparatory meetings from January 2020 onwards. It met 5 times in 2020 and 16 times in 2021, until the final draft version was completed. There is a special section concerning the 2021-2027 period on the Programme website.

The Programme used the annual event on 18 November 2020 to report on developments in the 2021-2027 period and to inform the Programme partnership that the new cooperation Programme was being drafted. The representative of the European Commission for the Atlantic Area and the Presidency of the Atlantic Strategy Group 2020 participated in this event. This participation made it possible to show the existing relationship between the Atlantic Area and the Atlantic Strategy. A presentation was made of the new Atlantic Strategy action plan (Atlantic Action Plan 2.0), which has elements in common with the Programme Strategy. During the annual event that took place on 20 October 2021, a summary of preparations for the future AA Programme was presented.

A **second consultation process** was held, in the form of a public consultation open to all actors in the cooperation area. This process, which took place between 15 and 29 March 2021, made it possible to submit the Programme Strategy, *i.e.* the proposal of political objectives, priorities and SO, for consultation. The consultation was carried out through the creation of a specific section on the Atlantic Area website (www.atlanticarea.eu). A total of 187 contributions were received from citizens and entities in the cooperation area.

A **third consultation** regarding the draft Programme was carried out during the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process. The draft was available on the AA website (www.atlanticarea.eu) for a period of four and a half weeks. Contributions were received from citizens & entities in the AA. The screening of the SEA was completed in 3 stages: 1. Assessment of the environmental impact; 2. National and regional authorities' consultation and public consultation, and 3. Elaboration of general recommendations. The consultation with environmental authorities gathered several contributions such as from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Minister for Environment Climate and Communications, and the Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine in Ireland. The Portuguese environment authority, Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente (APA), responsible for issuing the opinion on this exercise, sent positive feedback and provided some general revisions of the environmental report and contributions from other Portuguese entities (ICNF, CCDR, DGRM). The conclusion was that there was no need for the Programme to be submitted to a full SEA procedure. The Environmental Assessment Report was closed following the contributions from APA and other authorities, including the assessment of Horizontal Principles and the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) Principle (document attached to the Programme).

In this context, it is important to mention that the screening, namely the recommendation focused on the assessment of the environmental status of the Atlantic Area's marine region, considered all the qualitative descriptors listed in Annex I of the Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 (MSFD), which establishes a framework for community action in the field of

marine environmental policy and aims to protect the marine ecosystem and biodiversity upon which our health and marine-related economic and social activities depend. The Programme will consider the MSFD qualitative descriptors to contribute to the aim of the good environmental status of the marine region. In addition to the output and result indicators included in the Programme, a set of indicators aiming to monitor the Programme's environmental performance has been identified.

Several monitoring indicators proposed at the environmental level, namely the one entitled "Joint marine observation projects to increase knowledge and ability to forecast the behaviour of the ocean developed", are linked to the MSFD.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

During the implementation phase, the main means of representing the partnership is through the Monitoring Committee (MC). The MC is the Programme's highest management body. The organisations that are part of this body represent, in turn, a very important group of actors within society. The participation of organisations representing the socio-economic sectors allows the Programme to be more comprehensive and enhances transparency and accountability, while also enhancing exchanges and the dissemination of results. The Programme will strive also for their involvement in the implementation and monitoring and evaluation phases.

The MS representatives have a fundamental role in the tasks concerning the implementation, monitoring & evaluation of the Programme, and in the participation in the MC meetings. They also are key players in the communication and dissemination efforts of the Programme at regional & local level.

The systematic participation will enhance ownership of the Programme among partners and improve the coordination with other policy instruments. This participation will be organised guaranteeing compliance with appropriate national requirements regarding their composition, functioning and managing of obligations on data protection, confidentiality and conflict of interest.

The Programme will seek ways to involve relevant stakeholders in the Maritime Atlantic Strategy, to find synergies and maximise the impact for the benefit of the territory and its citizens. Regular meetings between those responsible for the Programme and the Atlantic Strategy will be considered so that both parties can keep abreast of progress and seek new forms of cooperation. Meanwhile, representatives of the Atlantic Strategy will be invited to the Programme's main events. In this way, links between the Programme and the Strategy will be more visible and communicated externally.

Upon invitation, relevant EU umbrella institutions and organisations might also be involved with an observer role in the MC.

The Programme will seek collaboration with other ETC programmes present in the eligible area, both cross-border & neighbouring transnational programmes. The aim of this collaboration is to learn about the governance models in each area and strategic projects and their application to the AA, while also promoting processes for capitalising on results through joint learning and knowledge sharing with other programmes.

5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)

Reference: point (h) of Article 17(3)

A good communication strategy will serve the Programme's vision and objectives by defining an intervention logic that links the communication objectives and target audience to the messages, campaigns and activities. Annual actions plans will further define detailed activities and budgets. These will address the different communication approaches according to the audience and the Programme life cycle.

Our mission is to support and strengthen cooperation, addressing common regional challenges and seeking innovative approaches for the benefit of the Atlantic Area community.

Objectives:

1. To raise awareness about the Programme - make the Programme visible and attractive and promote the benefits of Interreg in the Programme area and beyond, while ensuring EU support;
2. To attract relevant partnerships - attract and support relevant entities to apply for the Programme and deliver support for efficient project implementation;
3. To support the implementation of good quality projects - create a cooperation community with the beneficiaries to deliver support for efficient project implementation, including communication and capitalising on results;
4. To promote efficient governance - ensure strong links with the Programme bodies and strategic partners.

Target groups:

- Project developers: any entity eligible to be part of an Atlantic Area project (academics, public authorities and third sector organisations);
- Strategic counterparts: entities with an interest in the Programme's achievements (the MS, European institutions, policymakers, other programmes and networks, and so on);
- Civil society as end-user.

Communication channels:

- Website: with all information related to the Programme strategy and the funded projects;
- Social media: Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook (new trends will be considered); weekly update; digital campaigns will be carried out to feature specific topics, events or dates; we foresee a 15% increase in followers per year on Twitter and LinkedIn, 10% on Facebook and 5% on YouTube;
- Public events, events tailored to specific audiences, contribution to external events and meetings;
- Publications, videos, digital and printed material;
- Press coverage;
- Community platform.

The operations of strategic importance communicate the Programme objectives and the EU support and require close cooperation between beneficiaries and the MS. Each of these operations will have

dedicated communication activities such as mini-campaigns, media coverage, information *via* the website and social media, promotional material and visual productions.

People with disabilities will be considered when organising events and they will have dedicated resources to access the website.

Monitoring and evaluation of communication performance will be covered in the evaluation of the Programme. A communication strategy will be prepared with further detail on the indicator baselines and target values, output results and information sources.

Indicators (targets in %):

- Level of awareness about the Programme's added value and impact on the territory (75%);
- Level of satisfaction with the Programme among the partners' community (85%);
- Level of awareness about the positive impact of project results (75%);
- Percentage of applicants satisfied with the information and support provided during the application process (75%);
- Percentage of partners satisfied with the information and support provided during the implementation of the project (80%);
- Level of satisfaction among Programme bodies with respect to the quality of information they receive on Programme implementation (50%);
- Level of satisfaction among strategic partners with respect to the level of coordination and complementarity with the Programme (60%).

Monitoring mechanisms: surveys, website statistics, social media account outreach, project call statistics, and midterm evaluations.

The communication budget will be at least 0.3% of the Programme's total budget (425.304 M€), in line with the EC recommendation. Annual communication budgets will follow the Programme's implementation phase (launch, promotion and capitalisation).

The Programme will appoint a communication officer to be in charge of the implementation of communication strategy and act as Interreg representative in the INFORM EU network.

6. Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds

Reference: point (i) of Article 17(3), Article 24

The Programme considers that its intervention in the territory is on a macro scale, aiming to spread the experiences and competences in the cooperation area and therefore does not envisage supporting small projects under Small Project Funds as defined in article 2(10) of the CPR and article 25 of the Interreg Regulation.

This project typology is not adequate to the goals and intervention logic of the Interreg Atlantic Area since it is focused on small territorial and partnership dimensions, with limited action that frequently overlaps, and also has a very limited budget (maximum of €100,000). These features significantly decrease the potential overall capacity in terms of impact and reduce efficiency in the use of resources. Therefore, the action of small-scale projects does not seem to have real added value for the Programme, even being inconsistent with its main goals defined within its transnational dimension.

Considering the scale of intervention and the density of the Programme area, projects shall have a considerable number of partners and an important level budget. In 2014-2020 (similar figures for the period 2007-2013), the average ERDF per project was approximately 1.87 million euros, involving on average 9 partners. The characteristics of the Atlantic Area projects, namely level of funding, type of activities and coverage of partnerships, show that operations with a significant dimension are needed to address common challenges and deliver results with substantial impact.

Nonetheless, it is relevant to add that, throughout the implementation, if necessary, the Programme has the flexibility to offer scope for projects smaller than the average project dimension. Moreover, as the past programming periods show, due to a robust bottom-up approach, the Programme has been able to bring in smaller organisations, with rather localised activity areas. In the period 2014-2020, non-for-profit organisations (some relatively small) correspond to 23% of the total number of beneficiaries, with small and medium enterprises accounting for 13%. Hence, despite the Programme considering small projects are inadequate for its intervention logic, public, private and third-sector organisations can participate in the supported projects bringing limited financial contributions.

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(6)

Table 9

Programme authorities	Name of the institution	Contact name	Position	E-mail
Managing authority	Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte (CCDR-NORTE), Rua Rainha D. Estefânia, 251, 4150-134 Porto, Portugal	President of CCDR-Norte	President	ma@atlanticarea.eu
Audit authority	Inspeção Geral de Finanças, IGF, Rua Angelina Vidal, 41,1199-005 Lisboa, Portugal	Ricardo Reis	Team Leader, Project Management	ricardoreis@igf.gov.pt
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries)	Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão	Graça Raquel Rocha	Coordinator of the Territorial Cooperation Unit	raquel.rocha@adcoesao.pt
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries)	Ministerio de Hacienda y Función Pública	M ^a del Carmen Hernández Martín	General Subdirector for European Territorial Cooperation	MCHernandez@sepg.hacienda.gob.es
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries)	Northern & Western Regional Assembly	Denis Kelly	Director	dkelly@nwra.ie
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries)	Nouvelle-Aquitaine Regional Council	Ludovic Lareynie and Laura Chiron	Head of the European Cooperation Department and Interreg Programmes Officer	ludovic.lareynie@nouvelle-aquitaine.fr
Group of auditors representatives	ERDF Audit Authority - Department of Public Expenditure & Reform	Paul Herron and Dermot Byrne	Internal & EU Audit Unit	Paul.Herron@per.gov.ie
Group of auditors representatives	Inspection Générale des Services, Service Audit des Fonds Européens, Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine,	Antoine Valin	Head of the European Funds Audit Service	antoine.valin@nouvelle-aquitaine.fr
Group of auditors representatives	Inspeção Geral de Finanças, IGF	Ricardo Reis and Teresa Curto Silva	Team Leader for Project Management	ricardoreis@igf.gov.pt

Programme authorities	Name of the institution	Contact name	Position	E-mail
Group of auditors representatives	Intervención General de la Administración del Estado (IGAE)	Beatriz González Betancort and Rafael Cortés Sánchez	National Auditor Area Director and Head of Division of Control of European Funds I - National Audit Office	bgonzalezb@igae.hacienda.gob.es
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão (AD&C), Avenida 5 de Outubro nº153 1050-053 Lisboa, Portugal	President of the Board of Directors of AD&C	President	presidente@adcoesao.pt
Body other than the managing authority entrusted with the accounting function	Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão (AD&C)	Gisela Rodrigues	Head of Unit	gisela.rodrigues@adcoesao.pt

7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(6)

In accordance with Article 46 “Functions of the managing authority” of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, the MA, after consultation with the Member States (MS), shall set up a Joint Secretariat (JS), which must be adapted to the challenges and ambition of the new Programme, having a size and profile appropriate to the envisaged tasks and responsibilities, while ensuring a smooth transition between the programme phases. The JS is funded by the technical assistance budget. The location of the JS is in Porto, Portugal. The JS will be hosted on the premises of the MA.

The JS shall assist the MA and the monitoring committee in carrying out their respective functions and, when appropriate, the Audit Authority. Support to the Audit Authority is restricted to administrative assistance, e.g. provision of relevant data to enable the EC to prepare the audit sample, organisation and follow-up with respect to auditor group meetings and written procedures, ensuring communication flows between the different bodies involved (EC, audit authority, group of auditors, external audit firm if applicable) and retaining an up-to-date list of auditor group members. The JS will also collaborate with the body in charge of the accounting function.

Moreover, the JS shall offer information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities, as well as support beneficiaries and partners in the implementation of operations. The JS will also offer the support required for preparing the following cooperation programme 2028-2034, if prevailing, until the new MA is designated.

The JS shall have relevant technical expertise and knowledge on programme/project management and monitoring and adequate knowledge on the relevant thematic areas. The MA shall ensure that the necessary training is provided to the JS staff to enhance knowledge and build on existing capacities.

The JS composition and recruitment procedure shall be approved and attended by the MS participating in the Programme following a proposal by the MA. The recruitment procedures will follow the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal opportunities. The possibility of reappointing members of the JS staff from the 2014-2020 Programme is envisaged by MS, following an evaluation of the existing profiles and the programme’s future needs. For the Director and remaining posts, an open public competitive recruitment procedure shall be organized.

7.3. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third or partner countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(6)

The managing authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the project. The managing authority shall also recover funds from the project following a termination of the subsidy contract in full or in part based on the conditions defined in the subsidy contract.

If the managing authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the project, the EU Member State on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located or, in the case of an EGTC, is registered, shall reimburse the managing authority based on Article 52 of Regulation (EU) No 3 [ETC], Recoveries. In accordance with Article 52(4) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059 [ETC], “[O]nce the Member State, third country (...) has reimbursed the managing authority any amounts unduly paid to a partner, it may continue or start a recovery procedure against that partner pursuant to its national law”.

Details on the recovery procedure will be included in the description of the management and control system to be established in accordance with Article 69 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 [CPR].

The managing authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States, as laid down in the cooperation programme and in Article 50 of Regulation (EU) No 3 [ETC].

With regard to financial corrections imposed by the Member States or the Commission on the basis of Articles 103 or 104 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 [CPR], financial consequences for the EU Member States are laid down in the section “liabilities and irregularities” below. Any related exchange of correspondence between the Commission and an EU Member State will be copied to the managing authority/joint secretariat. The managing authority/joint secretariat will inform the accounting body and the audit authority/group of auditors where relevant.

The MS 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 Partner State;
- In the event of a systemic irregularity or financial correction (decided by the programme authorities or the Commission), the EU Member State will bear the financial consequences in proportion to the relevant irregularity detected on the respective Member State territory. Where the systemic irregularity or financial correction cannot be linked to a specific EU Member State territory, the Member State shall be responsible in proportion to the ERDF contribution paid to the respective national project partners involved in the programme;
- For the technical assistance expenditure (calculated as a flat rate in accordance with Article 27 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059 [ETC]), the above liability principles applicable for project-related expenditure and systemic irregularities/financial corrections may also be applied to TA corrections as they are the direct consequence of project expenditure related corrections.

If the managing authority/joint secretariat, the accounting body, any EU Member State becomes aware of irregularities, it shall without any delay inform the liable EU Member State and the managing authority/joint secretariat. The latter will ensure the transmission of information to the liable EU-Member State (if it has not been informed yet directly), the accounting body and audit authority or group of auditors, where relevant.

In compliance with Annexe XII referred to in Article 69(2) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 [CPR], each EU Member State is responsible for reporting irregularities committed by beneficiaries located on its territory to the Commission and at the same time to the managing authority. Each EU Member State

shall keep the Commission as well as the managing authority informed of any progress in related administrative and legal proceedings. The managing authority will ensure the transmission of information to the accounting body and audit authority.

If a Member State does not comply with its duties arising from these provisions, the managing authority may suspend services to the project applicants/partners located on the territory of this Member State.

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

Table 10: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Intended use of Articles 94 and 95 CPR	Yes	No
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under the priority according to Article 94 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 1

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the simplified cost option will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of simplified cost option (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the simplified cost option
				Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex 1 CPR

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable

Appendix 1

B. Details by type of operation

C. Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates

1. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data, where the data is stored, cut-off dates, validation, etc):

--

2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 94(2) is relevant to the type of operation:

3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and, if requested, provided in a format that is usable by the Commission:

--

4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate:

5. Assessment of the audit authority or authorities of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data:

--

Appendix 2

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	The amount covered by the financing not linked to costs	Type(s) of operation covered		Conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbusesment by the Commission	Indicator		Unit of measurement for the conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Envisaged type of reimbursement method used to reimburse the beneficiary or beneficiaries
				Code(1)	Description		Code(2)	Description		

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex 1 to the CPR and Annex IV to the EMFAF Regulation.

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable.

B. Details by type of operation

In the period 2021-27, the programme will provide funding to support “Better governance for cooperation in the Atlantic Area” under priority 4, ISO 1, by primarily addressing governance issues through strategic projects. The main goal is to conceive facilitators to enhance cooperation in the eligible areas of the future Atlantic Area programme and tools to promote efficiency in the implementation of the programme's strategies and objectives.

Indicative timeline: open the first Call for proposals to this priority from May or June 2023, with projects being implemented from September or October 2023 until June 2029.

DOCUMENTS

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent by
Map of the Interreg Atlantic Area	Map of Programme Area	15-Jul-2022		Ares(2022)5248880	Interreg Atlantic Area map	19-Jul-2022	Rocha, Raquel
Programme snapshot 2021TC16RFTN002 1.1	Snapshot of data before send	18-Jul-2022		Ares(2022)5248880	Programme_snapshot_2021TC16RFTN002_1.1_en.pdf	19-Jul-2022	Rocha, Raquel