

**ATLANTIC AREA
TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME
2014-2020**

**SUMMARY OF THE
DRAFT OPERATIONNAL PROGRAMME
FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

June 2014



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund



INTRODUCTION	3
SECTION 1. STRATEGY FOR THE PROGRAMME	4
1.1 Analysis of the Programme in terms of needs	4
a) Analysis of the socio-economic situation of the Programme Area.....	4
b) SWOT Analysis	7
c) Programme needs and challenges	10
1.2 Programme Strategy	15
SECTION 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIORITY AXES	18
2.1 Priority Axis 1 – Stimulating innovation and competitiveness	18
Specific Objective 1.1: Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness	18
Specific Objective 1.2: Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes	20
2.2 Priority Axis 2 – Fostering resource efficiency	22
Specific Objective 2.1 Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency.....	22
Specific Objective 2.2: Fostering green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency.....	25
2.3 Priority Axis 3 – Strengthening Risk management systems	27
Specific Objective 3.1: Strengthening risks management systems.....	28
2.4 Priority Axis 4 – Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and culture assets	30
Specific Objective 4.1: Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems’ services.....	30
Specific Objective 4.2: Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development	32

INTRODUCTION

The Atlantic Area operational programme is the result of the work carried out by the Working Group for the preparation of the 2014-2020 Atlantic Area Programme comprising representatives of the five stakeholder Member States- France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom; and the Managing Authority and JTS.

Over the past months, Member State representatives, the European Commission, and Programme stakeholders have been interviewed during the strategic approach of the programme preparation, while a survey to stakeholders has also been carried out and experts consulted on a number of questions. The Working Group has held nine meetings so far and will hold further meetings during and after the public consultation in order to finalise the Programme including to take into account the results of the public consultation. Subsequently, the Programme will be submitted to the European Commission for approval.

The Programme is submitted for consultation open to all stakeholders and potential beneficiaries, the objective being for the Working Group to verify the relevance of the choices made in relation to the defined strategy for the Programme, the Priority axes and Specific Objectives selected to respond to the identified challenges and needs of the Atlantic Area. The new Programme, through its transnational cooperation activities will contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion. It seeks to respond to this strategy and objectives by choosing Priorities for cooperation (Priority Axes) and Specific Objectives attainable and able to generate measurable results or change on the Atlantic Area territory. As some of the objectives may be particularly challenging, the answers and comments you will give will be crucial for the Working Group to confirm their relevance.

Your contribution to this consultation process is essential, as you are either potential end users of the Programme, experts in one of the areas of cooperation covered or a stakeholder having direct or indirect interest in cooperation in the Atlantic Area.

The Working Group thanks you for your contribution to the public consultation and therefore to the preparation of the programme.

SECTION 1. STRATEGY FOR THE PROGRAMME

1.1 Analysis of the Programme in terms of needs

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

The Atlantic Area covers the western part of Europe bordering the Atlantic Ocean. It comprises the western part UK, Ireland and Portugal as well as the northern and south westernmost part of Spain and western France. The programme comprises a total of 37 regions presented in the following table:

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

It is important to highlight that the 2014-2020 Programme will cover an expanded area compared to the previous OP due to the inclusion of new regions: Canary Islands (Spain), the Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira (Portugal).

The process of integrating new regions responds to a Member States request for the benefit of the programme area. The participation of the three insular regions will contribute to a more cohesive Atlantic Region, increases its natural and cultural heritage and will enhance its comparative advantage related to its maritime perspective.

The Atlantic Area is home to almost 58.96 million inhabitants in 2012 (28.7 million male and 30.2 million female) and generates a total GDP of 1.486.301 million Euros distributed per country and year as shown in the table below:

Atlantic regional GDP (million Euros, at current market prices)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
France	383.605	383.065	375.100	382.003	395.149
Ireland	189.653	180.250	162.284	158.096	162.599
Portugal	169.250	171.921	168.334	172.662	170.942
Spain	296.309	306.268	293.319	295.708	297.265
UK	554.988	480.937	424.684	456.358	460.346

Source: Eurostat

The primary features drawing the area together are its environmental heritage and maritime dimension as well as a territorial and urban development common pattern based on a majority of intermediate rural areas and a limited number of large metropolitan areas. The average

estimated population density is 84 inhabitants per km² (2011), under the EU27 average (116.61).

Among other points of convergence of the Atlantic Area acting as key factors for its joint development must be quoted the tradition of cooperation, the existing strong networks between relevant actors and the strong cultural heritage and cultural identity. In this framework, the territorial cooperation programme is an important means for a further development of the Atlantic Region transnational territories.

However, the Programme area is in many respects diverse, while a south-north and coastal-inland gradient can often be observed, with important differences in terms of economic and demographic development.

The figure below introduces the main features identified in the Atlantic Area with respect to its Geographic specificities and accessibility, employment and social issues, economic development-competitiveness, and, finally, the environmental situation, natural resources and energy efficiency.

A heterogeneous part of Europe with regional disparities and an important north south gap that can be clearly evidenced on aspects such as demography, accessibility, higher education, early school leaving, Economic development, Competitiveness (RCI index) and Innovation regional performance (Innovation Union Scoreboard), NATURE 2000 sites' share and capacity to adapt to climate change

1. Geography and accessibility

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

2. Employment and social

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

3. Economic Development and competitiveness

- a) General worsening of the economic situation can be observed in the area (if compared to previous programming period) which implies a risk to a potential increase of the north south divide
- b) Economic dynamism concentrated mostly in urban areas (with some minor exceptions)
- c) In general and aggregate terms, lower values on the Regional Competitiveness Index with respect to the rest of western Europe can be observed
- d) Level of R&D expenditure are on the average or below the European values, with most of the Atlantic regions holding a share of 1% to 2%, far from the EU 2020 target of 3%

4. Environment, natural resources and energy efficiency

- a) Well preserved natural resources, but not a very significant share of NATURA 2000 areas can be observed
- b) High exposure to climate change due to the Atlantic region's large coastal area
- c) Pollution deriving from industrial activities, transport as well as production and consumption patterns ,are factors which contribute to increase the exposure of the Atlantic territories to climate change effects
- d) The Atlantic Area is the second main transnational area for wind power in Europe, and almost all the territory provides opportunities to promote wave power, although the take up of it is currently quite challenging

b) SWOT Analysis

This section includes the SWOT analysis of the Atlantic Area.

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

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

The main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are shown in the following table:

SWOT analysis of the Atlantic Area

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One of the oldest cooperation tradition in Europe ✓ Strong networks between relevant actors of the Atlantic Area working together for over two decades ✓ Maritime dimension of the Atlantic economy creating a “unique selling point” of the area, with a strong tradition of maritime industries (shipbuilding, aquaculture, fisheries, ports etc.) ✓ Strong dynamism of a number of urban metropolitan areas and growth poles (Lisbon, Porto, Bilbao, Oviedo-Gijon-Aviles, Bilbao, Bordeaux, Nantes, Cardiff, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Belfast and Dublin) acting as champions and drivers for growth and jobs ✓ Well preserved environment in rural areas, quality of natural landscape, rich biodiversity and water and air quality are assets of the area ✓ Strong cultural identity and heritage in the Atlantic area (including the Celtic dimension- Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Bretagne, Asturias, Galicia) ✓ Attractive urban areas, well preserved natural landscapes and strong cultural identity render the area attractive to visitors and tourists ✓ Wind and wave power potential are potential cornerstones in building a competitive low-carbon economy in the Atlantic Area ✓ Well-established working structures between Atlantic port cities ✓ Existence of a wide array of research poles and centres of excellence (including in marine and maritime research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Partial peripheral situation of the Atlantic area in the enlarged EU ✓ The area shows a strong north-south gradient making it a heterogeneous part of Europe with regional disparities with an important north south gap, clearly evidenced on aspects such as demography, accessibility, higher education, early school leaving, economic development, competitiveness (RCI index) and Innovation regional performance (Innovation Union Scoreboard), share of NATURE 2000 sites and capacity to adapt to climate change ✓ The Atlantic territory also presents strong differences in terms of economic and demographic trends between coastal-inland areas. ✓ Lower competitiveness levels of the Atlantic Area with respect to the rest of Western Europe ✓ Limited interlinks between coastal and inland areas ✓ Relatively low levels of innovation in a number of traditional economic sectors with a high potential to bring growth and jobs to the Atlantic Area ✓ Stagnant or decreasing levels investment in R&D&I, partially explained by the severe economic crisis and the credit crunch ✓ Low level of patent application showing a limited level of innovation and technological activity. ✓ The current exposure of the Atlantic territories to climate change effects may suffer an increase due to pollution deriving from industrial activities, transport and new production and consumption patterns. ✓ Limited exploitation of the potential related to renewable offshore energies ✓ Limited connection of off-shore installations to the European grid ✓ Limited capacity to adapt to climate change due to economic, socio-cultural, institutional and technological barriers ✓ Unbalanced urbanisation in the area, with a higher concentration along the coastline ✓ Shortage of a suitably-skilled workforce, especially for certain sectors of the maritime industry

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Potential role for the Atlantic Area as a "Gateway to Western Europe"✓ Maritime transport potential still to be developed at full extent✓ Strong European political agenda on Blue Growth and Sea Basin-related initiatives✓ Different territorial patterns of innovation in different parts of the Atlantic area provide an opportunity for synergies between regions with different innovation profiles that can be strengthened to better exploit complementarities✓ Growth potential of the blue economy and maritime specialisation: coastal tourism, aquaculture, yachting, naval and nautical industries, renewable offshore energy, blue biotechnologies✓ High potential for renewable offshore energy: wind, wave and tidal power, ocean thermal energy, etc., the Atlantic Area being the second main transnational area for wind power in Europe, and almost all the territory provides opportunities to promote wave power, although the take up is currently quite challenging✓ Possibility of further exploiting the green economy model by profiting from the existing natural resources in the Atlantic Area✓ Potential for increasing the revenues coming from the tourism sector✓ Potential key role of the Atlantic metropolitan areas and growth poles (including port cities) in the internationalisation and attractiveness of the Atlantic economy✓ Opportunity to develop a dynamic area by strengthening urban networks and linkages between land and sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Economic crisis, budgetary restrictions and credit crunch✓ Risk of an increased North-South divide due to the economic and financial crisis✓ Strong competition from major ports outside the Atlantic area✓ Technological, environmental, social and legal potential risks related to the development of blue growth technologies✓ High exposure to climate change effects, such as coastal erosion, eutrophication of the ocean and hydric stress✓ Risk of accidents related to maritime economic activities (shipwrecks, oil spills...)✓ Increasing levels of depopulation in certain areas of the Atlantic territories

c) Programme needs and challenges

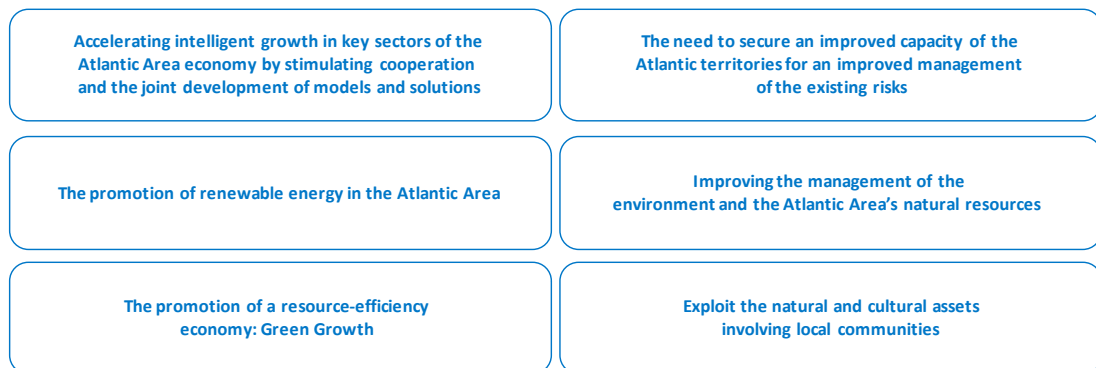
The Atlantic Area Operational Programme 2014-2020 should contribute to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

As laid down in the Regulation on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal, **transnational cooperation should aim to strengthen cooperation by means of actions conducive to integrated territorial development linked to the Union's cohesion policy priorities.**

In addition, the ERDF under the European Territorial Cooperation goal should contribute, in order to deliver on the targets and objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, to the thematic objectives of developing an economy based on knowledge, research and innovation, promoting a greener, more resource-efficient and competitive economy, fostering high employment to deliver social and territorial cohesion, and developing administrative capacity.

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

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



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

At the start of the 2014-2020 programming period the Atlantic Area faces several challenges related to the capacity of the European and Atlantic area economy to grow, innovate and generate jobs. Expenditure on research and development is considered a driver of this economic growth. Investing 3% of GDP for R&D is therefore one of the headline targets of Europe 2020. Private business expenditures are essential to meet the target. Despite the existence of a wide array of centres of excellence, especially in maritime and marine research, the programme area mainly shows average values for both overall R&D expenditure as well as R&D expenditure in the private sector. In particular, the levels of R&D expenditure in the

Atlantic Area are equal or below the average European values, most regions hold a share of 1% to 2%, whilst regions in southern Portugal, including Azores and Madeira, north-western Spain and the Canary Islands, France and the western UK verge on falling under 1%. The share of R&D expenditure is above 3% of regional GDP only in certain areas of southern UK.

In this respect, the Atlantic Area Programme should support the reduction of any existing innovation barriers and it should contribute to create an innovation-friendly business environment to attract new investments and activity in the R&D&I fields.

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

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

Finally, this facilitation and stimulus to cooperation in the innovation field will be structured around those sectors where the Atlantic regions have a greater potential to become strong, where real critical mass can be created and where significant opportunities can be identified, in line with the RIS3 strategies that have been developed by all the Atlantic regions.

Fostering of renewable energy in the Atlantic Area

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

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

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

This triple dimension will mean in practice that the Programme will focus on three different strands: a policy-driven strand, working with institutions, regional and local authorities, a social-driven strand, raising awareness about renewable energies and the important opportunities that their deployment could imply for the local economies (in addition to the obvious benefit to

the environment) and a technological-driven strand, working with the industry in structuring the sector.

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

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

Fostering a resource-efficient economy: Green Growth

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

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

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

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

As regional and local authorities are well positioned to facilitate transformative changes by supporting various eco-innovations and involving different actors in development and implementation eco-innovative strategies, especially under the framework of regional policy and RIS3, there are major opportunities for transnational cooperation in many fields, including R&D, studies, strategies, smart specialisation, target setting and institutional solutions. Cooperation can therefore become a major contributory factor in progressing and progressing faster in those areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, the similarity of situations, the importance of potential impacts, particularly on densely populated coastal areas, justify the development of common transnational initiatives

within this context in matters of risk knowledge and identification, as well as the definition, dissemination and adoption of joint methodologies for management and prevention directed at the Atlantic territories (namely as concerns submersion and the evolution of the coastline and the hinterland, or even the quality of coastal waters and their impact on economic activities).

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

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

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

Biodiversity and the relatively good ecological status of the Atlantic environmental systems are assets providing specific opportunities, particularly the marine and coastal ecosystems, in terms of territory attractiveness and quality of life and economic enhancement. The development of emergent sectors based on the coastal ecosystems such as biotechnologies, biomaterials, seaweed farming, etc. shows the importance the natural heritage can play.

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

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

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

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

Exploit and enhance the natural and cultural assets involving local communities

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

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

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

1.2 Programme Strategy

The European Territorial Cooperation Regulation states that transnational cooperation should aim to strengthen cooperation by means of actions conducive to integrated territorial development linked to the Union's cohesion policy priorities, and should also include maritime cross-border cooperation not covered by cross-border cooperation programmes. It also states that the Programme is required to focus on a limited number of thematic objectives, corresponding to the needs of the programme area where the programme can make the most relevant contribution.

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

From all the above, and on the basis of the main identified needs, challenges and funding priorities, the strategy of the Programme is structured around four different Priority Axes addressing four different thematic objectives established in the thematic menu settled in article 9 of the CPR:

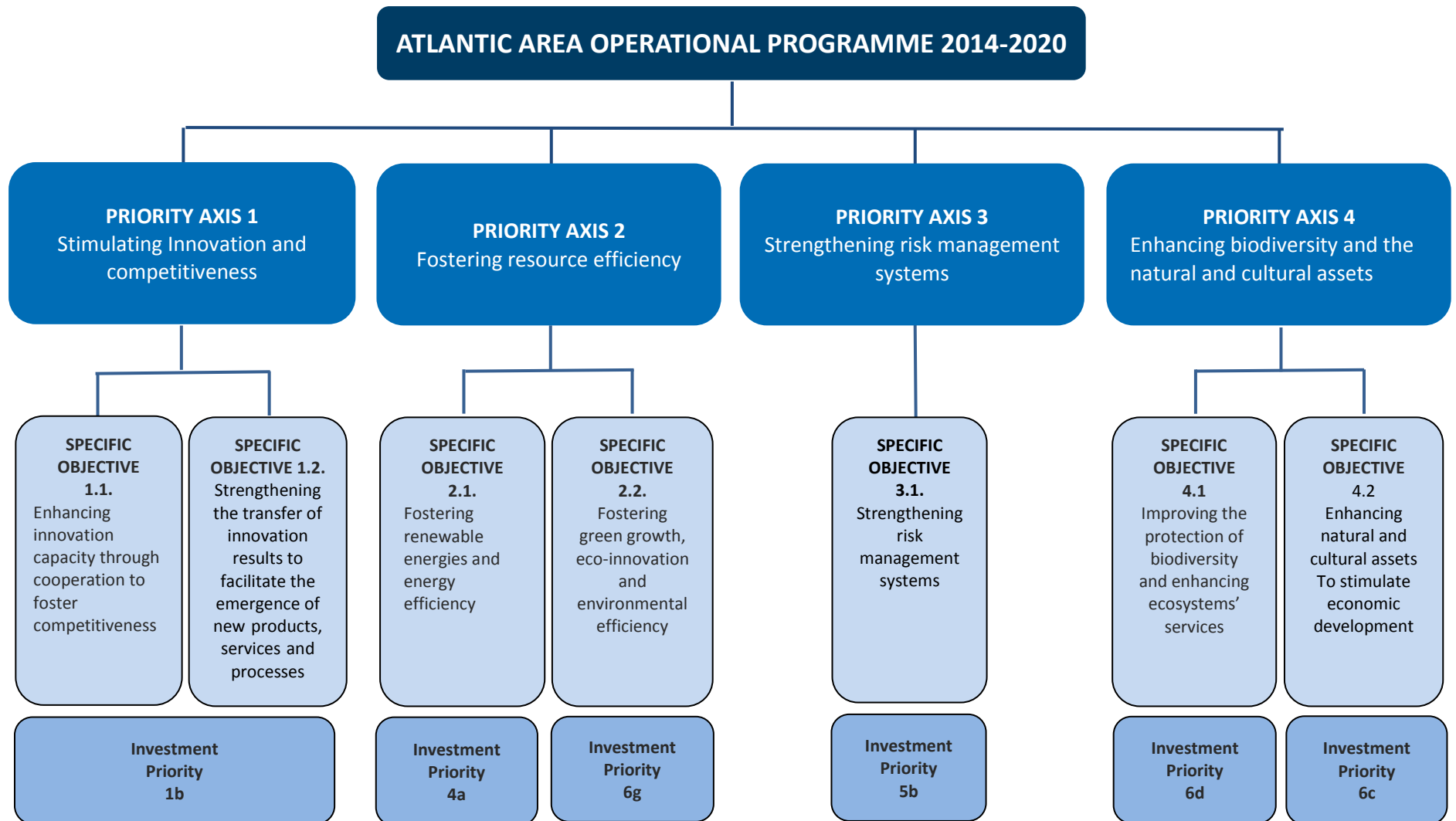
- ✓ Priority Axis 1: Stimulating innovation and competitiveness (Thematic Objective 1b)
- ✓ Priority Axis 2: Fostering resource efficiency (Thematic Objective 4 and Thematic Objective 6)
- ✓ Priority Axis 3: Strengthening Risk management systems (Thematic Objective 5)

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

To focus the programme implementation within the selected four Thematic Objectives, 6 investment priorities are selected out of the available options as set out under article 5 of the ERDF Regulation.

From these investment priorities' selection, 7 specific objectives for the Programme have been defined, "translating" the broad EU objectives into the Atlantic Area context, taking into account the specific circumstances and development needs of the programme's area.

The figure below illustrates the Programme's strategy for the Atlantic Area in the 2014-2020 programming period:



SECTION 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIORITY AXES

2.1 Priority Axis 1 – Stimulating innovation and competitiveness

Priority Axis 1 will address the challenge of accelerating intelligent growth in the Atlantic region by promoting interventions aimed at stimulating innovation in those common sectors identified in the regional RIS3 strategies in which the Area shows comparative competitive advantages. The Priority will be implemented through the following specific objectives. One of which to enhance innovation capacity by promoting cooperation between the innovation-related actors, and a second one aimed at take things one step forward by supporting the exploitation of innovation results to accelerate the market access of new products, services and processes, as well as innovation processes in the public and social sectors.

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

a) Results sought

ID	Specific Objective 1.1
Specific Objective	Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness
Results sought	<p>The main change sought will be the achievement of an improved cooperation framework to support linkages such as clusters and networks between public, private and research actors, to foster innovation in key regional areas of smart specialisation and to support capacity building to upgrade innovation skills and knowledge in public, social and business sectors.</p> <p>To achieve an improvement in a reference situation with relatively low innovation standards of relevant sectors of the Atlantic Area, networking and co-operative activities between research centres, higher education, business and the social and public sectors in the five Member States are meant to create those favourable circumstances which can allow the upgrade in their innovation capacity.</p> <p>The Programme can help to achieve this objective of improving the general conditions to encourage innovation in the Atlantic business community, the public sector, and among social actors, by contributing to transnational collaboration between businesses/social sector/public sector and research/higher education institutions, by facilitating the clustering of businesses across borders, by facilitating cooperation with public and social actors and by facilitating transnational business networks. These transnational cooperation links will also contribute to improve the access to technological core facilities in various sectors for researchers and firms working in the respective fields, and to offer technological and knowledge based services accessible to the private, social and public sectors.</p> <p>As a result of transnational cooperation, the Atlantic Area 2014-2020 seeks to contribute to the creation of better cooperation frameworks between firms/social organizations/public institutions and R&D related bodies across the Atlantic in a number of sectors that show clear potential and where significant opportunities can be identified. Cooperation will therefore foster private, public and social innovation.</p>

b) Description of the type and examples of actions and their expected contribution to the corresponding specific objectives

The Programme aims to support actions that bring the most relevant partners together to improve innovation capacity and cooperation in Atlantic Area regions. Examples of actions to be supported include:

- ✓ Establishment and further strengthening of transnational innovation networks, SME networks and clusters, also supporting their internationalisation
- ✓ Development of cooperation schemes contributing to organising the development of scientific resource centres, business incubators, clusters, business networks, research and innovation infrastructures and regional poles of excellence
- ✓ Stimulation of regional triple helix and quadruple helix cooperation
- ✓ Enhancement of intersectoral cooperation and interlinks within and between supply chains for the launch of innovative initiatives
- ✓ Development of regional innovation chains
- ✓ Development of pilot actions on knowledge exchange and collaboration tools: e.g. social innovation platforms, social innovation clusters, observatories, web-based platforms
- ✓ Development of social enterprises and social incubators in transnational collaborative networks
- ✓ Development of public-private partnerships to work in smart specialisation areas, setting up of transnational frameworks and platforms for the coordination of innovation policy, including the coordination of regional RIS3 strategies, innovation governance initiatives, competence networks, resources pooling structures or integrated supply chains
- ✓ Increasing skills of employees in the business, social and public sector regarding novel technologies, innovative products, services or processes
- ✓ Support of programmes for training for trainers and develop curricula, and adapt education and training systems for the uptake and diffusion of innovation and the provision of capacity development mechanisms
- ✓ Development of technology transfer initiatives
- ✓ Development of innovative based strategies and tools to improve creativity and entrepreneurial mind-sets.

c) Target groups and beneficiaries

The main types of beneficiaries will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public authorities
- ✓ Regional and local development agencies
- ✓ Universities

- ✓ Research institutes and innovation centres
- ✓ Science and technology parks
- ✓ Business incubation services
- ✓ Business support centres and agencies
- ✓ Chambers of commerce
- ✓ Clusters
- ✓ Business networks and associations, SMEs and social enterprises
- ✓ Third sector organisations

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

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

a) Results sought

ID	Specific Objective 1.2
Specific Objective	Strengthening the Transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes
Results sought	<p>The main change sought is an improved cooperation framework linking research organisations, industry and social and public sector entities in order to improve the existing mechanisms for knowledge transfer. This will contribute to enhance the uptake of all types of innovation (social innovation, product innovation, service innovation, public sector innovation...) facilitating the joint development of activities leading to new products, processes and services.</p> <p>The Programme will be making a contribution to a reference situation whereby companies and firms and social and public organizations are experiencing the common difficulty of transforming European research into high value added and high profit products and services and more competitive processes.</p> <p>The Programme will facilitate the market access of innovation results by contributing to the creation of spin-offs and to the consolidation of existing niches of excellence linked to those sectors and fields of activity having a high potential, but also to implement social and public innovation results aimed at developing new solutions to address social and public needs. The Programme will contribute to enable companies, public services institutions and third sector organisations to work together and cooperate with research institutions to facilitate the transfer of knowledge with a view of accessing and using innovation results. This activity will mean in practice that through transnational cooperation, a better knowledge of the existing market, business opportunities and social needs in a number of key area and market niches will be achieved and the exploitation of research outcomes for the development of new technologies, products and services will be enhanced. In other words, the Programme will be supporting firms and the public and third sector to work closer with end-users, to know their needs and limitations, connect with sources of knowledge and promote the uptake of all types of innovation and strategic processes.</p> <p>As a result of transnational cooperation the Atlantic Area 2014-2020 seeks to</p>

ID	Specific Objective 1.2
	contribute to reduce, in certain public and social areas or high potential market segments, the gap between the existing innovation potential and the actual innovation undertaken in the Atlantic area, by supporting the development of business/social/public support strategies and solutions to overcome these challenges.

b) Description of the type and examples of actions and their expected contribution to the corresponding specific objectives

The Programme aims to support actions that enhance the links between research and industry actors in order to accelerate the market access of new products, services and processes. In particular, examples of actions to be supported include the following:

- ✓ Development of common mechanisms to ensure cost-efficient exploitation of resources and best use of the research results
- ✓ Designing and demonstrating new products and services addressing social needs (social innovation)
- ✓ Designing and demonstrating new processes and tools addressing the efficiency of public services
- ✓ Development of transnational knowledge transfer models, enhancing the transfer of RTD results from research institutions to the business sector (in particular SMEs) leading to new services and products
- ✓ Development of knowledge and information tools addressed to business internationalization
- ✓ Development of networking mechanisms and platforms for the generation of business consortia
- ✓ Development of data sharing and market information systems
- ✓ Realisation of focused market watch and gap analysis
- ✓ Development of intelligence and strategic scoping tools for transnational innovation partnerships
- ✓ Development of knowledge intensive services and products
- ✓ Development of innovative products through cooperation approaches (end-user-involvement, co-design, open innovation ...)
- ✓ Transfer and development of models or solutions enabling R&D support for SME demand-driven innovation
- ✓ Development of demonstration projects to test the market readiness
- ✓ Supporting the development of, different ways of financing innovation such as venture capital mechanisms and other relevant financial instruments

c) Target groups and beneficiaries

The main types of beneficiaries will be:

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

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

2.2 Priority Axis 2 – Fostering resource efficiency

Priority Axis 2 will contribute to promote resource efficiency in the Atlantic Area through two different specific objectives aiming at a) promoting renewable energies and energy efficiency models and b) supporting transnational cooperation initiatives devoted to the introduction of eco-innovations and the green growth economy.

Specific Objective 2.1 Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency

a) Results sought

ID	Specific Objective 2.1
Specific Objective	Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency
Results sought	The main change sought is a generally improved cooperation framework contributing to an adapted institutional and technical environment to enable the development of favourable conditions for the sector of local renewable energy, leading to a better position of the Atlantic Area in the sector of renewable energies and the adoption of energy efficiency patterns and policies.

The common **reference situation** is the important challenge that the territories are facing due to the pressure that the industry, the economy and the society is putting on the environment and to the abundance of natural resources (sea, rivers/estuaries, wind, biomass...), with already installed and/or planned wind, wave and current energy production capacities and existing energy efficiency strategies and policies, and with a solid number of potential investors and enterprises already operating in the area. Energy efficiency and renewable energy are the main pillars of sustainability in the energy sector. In the present scenario, most of the Atlantic regions have still a long way to go before they can claim to have significant renewable energy capacities installed in the foreseeable future and before adequate energy efficiency patterns are adopted

From all the above, the main efforts of the Programme will be concentrated to support three different aspects: a policy-driven strand, a social-driven strand, and technological-driven strand. As far as the institutional environment is concerned, the **Programme will contribute** to enable the development of favourable conditions for the rise of the local renewable energy sector through promoting exchanges on local policies for the development of renewable energies with regard to research, resource mapping (joint mapping projects of renewable energy resources, structuring of centres of excellence), sharing of reference as concerns clusters, and the legal framework provided for the sector, as well as for the promotion of ultra-low energy buildings, high energy savings and super-efficient appliances. The Programme will contribute to joint work on the development of common local policies supporting all renewable energy market actors in overcoming their many barriers, in establishing governance frameworks for energy efficiency and defining training standards, identifying of specific competences, and promoting the ex-change of know-how. Transnational cooperation will also contribute to develop common methodologies concerning social acceptability (ways of engaging in dialogue with the different categories of users and consumers) and the involvement of coastal communities for offshore renewable energy. Cooperation could also contribute to the development of social driven and technological-driven instruments like those related to the provision of information addressed to the industry and end-users about energy saving opportunities and about technical assistance to help making choices on energy efficiency options.

As a **result of transnational cooperation**, the Programme seeks to contribute to improve the institutional, technical and social framework to promote favourable conditions for the sector of local renewable energy and for the adoption of energy efficiency strategies, including R&D, technology transfer, cluster building, demonstrators, testing's and dissemination of results.

b) Description of the type and examples of actions and their expected contribution to the corresponding specific objectives

The actions under this priority will aim to foster the development of favourable conditions through cooperation for the sector of local renewable energy. Examples of actions to be supported include the following:

- ✓ Development of technological, legal, educational, financial and organisational solutions in the field of renewable energy
- ✓ Identification of existing and potential local value chain and key differentiators in the renewable energy sector

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- ✓ Development of joint mapping of competencies versus expected needs from renewable energy project developers and technology suppliers
- ✓ Enhancement of cooperation between private, public and research actors throughout the whole value chain related to energy (R&D demonstration, feasibility & project planning, manufacturing, installation, operation & maintenance, distribution, environmental impact assessment...)
- ✓ Development of networks of clusters on (marine) renewable energies in the Atlantic Area
- ✓ Improvement of spatial management to enhance the use of offshore and onshore renewable energies
- ✓ Development of peer reviews and networking of regions, economic agencies and organisations specialised in the development of renewable energies to support the delivery of existing low carbon strategies
- ✓ Enhancement of coordination and integration of the production and distribution systems of different kinds of renewable energy
- ✓ Joint actions to support the grid integration of offshore renewable energies
- ✓ Awareness raising on the relevance and business opportunities of renewable energy
- ✓ Development of information, communication and awareness raising campaigns to increase social acceptance of renewable energy
- ✓ Supporting consumer and local communities empowerment (micro-generation, smart metering)
- ✓ Development of local policies and tools for the promotion of ultra-low energy buildings, high energy savings and super-efficient appliances

c) Target groups and beneficiaries

The main types of beneficiaries will be:

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

- ✓ Consumers organisations
- ✓ Civil society associations promoting renewable and energy efficiency

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

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

a) Results sought

ID Specific Objective 2.2

Specific Objective Fostering green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency

Results sought The **main change sought** is a strengthened cooperation framework to facilitate awareness raising on eco-innovation and eco-efficiency, the promotion of efficient organisation of businesses and organisations to include the two concepts, and to facilitate an enhanced response to market/public demand of green products and services, through the support to the introduction of an efficient policy mix of supply and demand measures to stimulate research and innovation favourable to green growth.

The **reference situation** features a fragile environmental balance with a number of threats as a result of anthropic activities, including economic activities. Any approach able to contribute to minimizing these impacts, is likely to provide some relief to the Area while contributing to reduce the use of resources, to limit pollution, to optimise the use of eco-system services and raise the general public, local communities and businesses awareness to the need to make and efficient use of the region's and planet's resources. Promoting green growth and eco-innovation is an efficient manner to go into this direction whilst contributing to smart and sustainable growth. There is also a growing demand for environmental products and services, a strong natural resource base (especially those coming from the sea), the existence of consolidated research groups in environmental themes, proximity of knowledge structure and the fact that mainstream policy support for sustainable development already exists in the Atlantic regions. However uncertainty surrounding the market demand, the profitability of investments, the fact that market prices do not exactly reflect the environmental costs and benefits and the rigidity of the economic structures are major barriers.

In this context, where a wide range of aspects constrain the development of environmentally friendly technologies and the adoption of sustainable production and consumer patterns, there is no single policy measure that can support eco-innovation and eco-efficiency. The **Programme will contribute** with the promotion of a comprehensive policy mix addressing the development of innovative products and processes that reduce environmental impacts (producers view), but also putting the focus in the social and cultural acceptance of environmental efficiency as a main principle of usage (consumers view). The Programme will promote joint work supporting the definition of local strategies and policies for the sustainable production and consumption (SPC), the creation and dissemination of consumer information tools on eco-efficiency, the development of instruments and guidelines to facilitate the implementation of cradle to cradle initiatives, building eco-innovation

triple helix, pilot and demonstration projects, the dissemination of eco-efficiency analysis tools allowing companies to assess and improve the environmental performance of products and services and promoting the adoption of management tools like environmental management systems, life cycle management, design for environment and environmental supply chain management.

As a **result of transnational cooperation**, the Programme seeks to contribute to better directing investments in eco-innovation and promote favourable conditions for the reduction of material intensity of goods and services and waste, promoting recyclability and improving the durability and the service intensity of goods and services, boosting business cooperation in the area and finally, contributing to the creation of better and more efficient transnational support networks and structure that informs, promotes and fosters eco-innovation, eco-efficiency and green growth within the Atlantic Area.

b) Description of the type and examples of actions and their expected contribution to the corresponding specific objectives

Examples of actions to be supported are:

- ✓ Development of mechanisms to convey the information on the need of eco-innovation products and services to the relevant actors of the sector
- ✓ Development of measures and tools to stimulate the adaptation of policies and behaviors supporting green growth and eco-innovation
- ✓ Development of awareness-raising policies, strategies and plans fostering a positive eco-innovation behavior
- ✓ Development of business management support instruments, such as analysis tools for the assessment of the environmental performance of products and services, and environmental management, life cycle management, design for environment and environmental supply chain management tools
- ✓ Promoting the adoption of the agenda 21 in the private sector
- ✓ Development of circular economy / cradle-to-cradle principles that deliver new products or ways-of-working to achieve sustainable economic growth
- ✓ Development of mechanisms to reduce the amount of resources (e.g. land, water, minerals) used in industrial processes
- ✓ Development of solutions to reduce or recycle the waste outputs of industrial or domestic processes
- ✓ Development of actions to reduce the use of resources in businesses, administrations and organisation of major events such as festival and large conferences

- ✓ Developing policies and strategies to support eco-innovation and generate demand for eco-innovative products and services
- ✓ Development information systems addressed to consumers on the eco-efficiency performance of products and services

c) Target groups and beneficiaries

The main target groups and types of beneficiaries will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public dealing with eco-innovation and environmental efficiency
- ✓ Regional and local development agencies
- ✓ Regional and local energy agencies
- ✓ Regional and local environmental agencies
- ✓ Research institutes and innovation centres
- ✓ Science and technology parks
- ✓ Universities
- ✓ Business networks, organisation, associations and chambers of commerce operating in the sector
- ✓ Private and public investors
- ✓ Local communities
- ✓ Civil society associations and NGOs
- ✓ Living labs and User Groups

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

2.3 Priority Axis 3 – Strengthening Risk management systems

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

Specific Objective 3.1: Strengthening risks management systems

a) Results sought

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

b) Description of the type and examples of actions and their expected contribution to the corresponding specific objectives

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

Examples of actions to be supported include the following:

- ✓ Development of actions to prevent risks (environmental monitoring and prevention systems; tools to improve governance and coordination, crisis and emergency management and responses; tools for early detection; early warning systems; mapping; risk assessment...)

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- ✓ Coordination of the use of GMES and surveillance systems to support threat and emergency response, coordinated use of IT infrastructure necessary to allow information sharing and interoperability between national surveillance networks and the Common Information sharing Environment at EU level
- ✓ Development of awareness-raising tools related to prevention and management of risks
- ✓ Development of local community empowerment to risk prevention, and recovery and regeneration actions
- ✓ Networking of technical and scientific resources available in the European Atlantic Area: joint production of data on the evolution of the coastline to facilitate its measurement along the Atlantic coast on the basis of comparable data.
- ✓ Development of capacity-building initiatives directed at actors involved in managing and preventing risks Dissemination of data and risk management tools
- ✓ Promote the interlinking of regional, coastal and ocean observation and maritime safety and coastal structures and their forecasting models
- ✓ Development of methodologies for the study, procedures, evaluation and compensation of damages linked to risks under this objective

c) Target groups and beneficiaries

The main types of beneficiaries will be:

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

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

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

Priority Axis 4 will serve the identified need of protecting the environment and promoting cultural identity in order to make the Atlantic region a more attractive place for local communities and visitors. The Priority will be implemented through two specific objectives. The first one objective will promote the protection of the environment and biodiversity as an attempt to secure and preserve the natural ecosystems understood as assets required for the future development of the region. The second specific objective will be more focussed on the direct capitalization of the cultural and natural heritage as a basis for improving the attractiveness of the area and therefore create new sources of wealth and economic activity

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

a) Results sought

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

As a **result of transnational cooperation**, the Atlantic Area Programme 2014-2020 seeks to contribute to a long term sustainable development by improving the preservation and human use of natural ecosystems, in particular regarding marine, coastal and river basin areas through strengthening and/or enlargement of protected areas. The development of initiatives within this transnational framework will help to achieve a more integrated environmental approach, considering economic and social issues in the management of resources and natural spaces.

b) Description of the type and examples of actions and their expected contribution to the corresponding specific objectives

The actions implemented under this specific objective could help develop ecosystem protection and biodiversity preservation actions aimed at providing a better knowledge of habitats and species and defining of a better adapted management rules and procedures. Examples of actions to be supported include the following:

- ✓ Actions to identify, assess and develop ecosystem services and green infrastructures
- ✓ Development of initiatives to preserve and protect the Atlantic natural species, landscapes and sites of major natural interest of AA regions
- ✓ Development of concerted management procedures concerning emblematic species or species with strong economic interest (fisheries resources, migratory species) and combating invasive species
- ✓ Development of pilot actions to test new solutions and methods concerning the preservation and restoration of biodiversity
- ✓ Development of initiatives aiming at mapping natural species habitats and the seabed
- ✓ Development of management, enhancement and assessment methods concerning natural areas and the ecosystem services provided
- ✓ Development of methods for quality monitoring and enhancement of the coastal, inland waters
- ✓ Development of collecting and disseminating natural environmental data (environmental observatory network), modeling aimed at improving forecasts and environmental management
- ✓ Development of joint or comparative methodologies for defining and managing environmental protected areas (considering economic activities)
- ✓ Assessment of marine/coastal areas management modalities and of the impact of new maritime economic activities
- ✓ Development of concerted strategies to combat macro waste

c) Target groups and beneficiaries

The main types of beneficiaries will be:

- ✓ National, regional and local public authorities responsible for environmental biodiversity protection
- ✓ Regional and local development agencies

- ✓ Regional and local energy agencies
- ✓ Regional and local environmental agencies
- ✓ Research institutes and innovation centres
- ✓ Science and technology parks
- ✓ Universities
- ✓ Local communities
- ✓ Civil society associations promoting environmental protection
- ✓ Economic sector actors related to the sustainable exploitation of natural resources and ecosystem services.

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

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

a) Results sought

ID	Specific Objective 4.2
Specific Objective	Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development
Results sought	<p>The main change sought is an improved cooperation framework in view of a better exploitation and preservation of the Atlantic natural and cultural assets leading to an enhanced attractiveness of the Area allowing the region to attract new visitors and to generate new products and services contributing to develop economic activities, create new local jobs, fix and attract people and create synergies contributing to the well-being social progress of populations.</p> <p>The main challenge, due to a reference situation where key assets of the area (a well preserved and quality natural landscapes, rich biodiversity and important cultural heritage, with around 30 UNESCO world heritage sites, are confronted to natural, climate change, demographic, economic and urban pressures, will be to enhance the Atlantic Area identity and improve its attractiveness.</p> <p>The Programme will provide the framework for the exchange and interaction of local communities and authorities and organisations involved in the protection and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage in order to develop adapted and joint strategies, tools and models. Joint actions should be designed in view of promoting and developing the Atlantic territories and natural landscapes (marine and coastal environments, geoparks, forestry resources, green areas, inland waterways etc....) as well as the cultural heritage (tradition, history, gastronomy, cultural industries...) and identity with a sought economic and social impact on local communities. Common strategies will be promoted in order to direct the exploitation of the cultural and natural heritage towards higher added value products and services, including tourism. The Programme will also facilitate the valorisation of local traditional economic and productive activities, services and sectors, and increase the economic return of cultural and environmental based economic activities.</p> <p>As a result of transnational cooperation, the Atlantic Area 2014-2020 seeks to achieve an enhancement and capitalization of its vast natural and cultural assets to create new sources of wealth. Improving the attractiveness of the territories will contribute to generate more visits and tourists coming to the Atlantic Area, develop</p>

b) Description of the type and examples of actions and their expected contribution to the corresponding specific objectives

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

Examples of actions to be supported are:

- ✓ Development of common strategies, policies and initiatives capitalising on the Atlantic cultural and natural heritage by public institutions, enterprises, NGOs and local population to convert natural resources and the cultural heritage in the unmistakable mark of the Atlantic Area, with a view to generate specific new products, services and tools having an economic impact a local and regional level
- ✓ Development of joint actions to preserve the cultural heritage
- ✓ Development of cultural activities and events
- ✓ Development of cultural tourism and industries
- ✓ Enhance the competitiveness of small and medium sized cultural enterprises
- ✓ Development of marketing and promotion strategies for cultural activities
- ✓ Add value to existing cultural and heritage tourist attractions
- ✓ Encourage spillover effects between culture-based creativity and other sectors
- ✓ Development of joint initiatives to promote a transnational identity of the Atlantic cultural heritage as an asset to attract new visitors and develop new local jobs and economic activity
- ✓ Development of the creative and craft industries sector in the Atlantic Area
- ✓ Enhancement of the attractiveness of traditional economic and productive activities, jobs and services as a way to increase their economic valorization, attract new visitors and develop new local jobs and economic activity

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- ✓ Development of niche tourist attractions and products, including coastal, nautical, cruise, sports, rural and farm, gastronomy, wellness, cultural, Pilgrimage and religious events and business tourism
- ✓ Development of nautical activities, marine leisure (integrated development of a nautical sector, promoting the growth of economic activities in coastal areas, job creation, social integration and coastal zone preservation)
- ✓ Development of management tools and exchange of know-how on the economic enhancement of protected site/areas

d) Target groups and beneficiaries

The main target groups and types of beneficiaries will be:

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

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