

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The updated Atlantic action plan provides a pioneering framework for collaboration on maritime affairs among the EU Atlantic countries and with their citizens based on a *common vision for innovation-driven blue growth and a sustainable blue economy in the EU Atlantic area*. The plan considers the challenges facing the Atlantic sea-basin outlined in the Atlantic strategy, the ambitious agenda of the Galway declaration, and the overarching UN Sustainable Development Goals. The action plan sets out a general roadmap for a joint and smart response — across all countries, coastal regions, sectors, and stakeholders.

The updated action plan is based on the following four mutually-reinforcing thematic priority areas aimed to mobilise trans-national and cross-regional collaboration involving businesses, government bodies, regional actors, civil society, and research partners: **i) Atlantic ports as blue economy hubs; ii) Marine renewable energy; iii) Blue jobs and ocean literacy; iv) Clean ocean and resilient coasts**. An improved governance mechanism will help the design and implementation of the joint actions. The plan also aims to ensure alignment between existing funding schemes and involvement of future funding instruments, thus encouraging greater cohesion in the whole EU Atlantic area by 2027.

The work on the implementation of the Atlantic action plan will start under the incoming Portuguese chairmanship of the Atlantic Strategy Group as one of Portugal's priorities.

1. COMMON VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT AND COMPETITIVE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE EU ATLANTIC AREA

The EU Atlantic area and its coastal regions are *leaders in marine and maritime innovation in Europe* that nurture a sustainable and competitive blue economy and work in partnership to master the adverse effects of climate change in line with the global commitments for sustainable development.

This common vision rests on the idea that by 2027:

1. The Atlantic ports become true blue economy hubs	2. The EU Atlantic area supports blue jobs of the future and ocean awareness
3. The EU Atlantic area exploits marine renewable energy	4. The EU Atlantic area is clean and its coasts resilient

2. THEMATIC PRIORITY AREAS

The new action plan includes four thematic priority areas, which represents a practical way to make the common vision a reality. The thematic areas listed below are integrally interconnected, supra-national and trans-regional by nature, addressing key challenges with a view to fostering sustainable blue growth in the EU Atlantic area. They focus on issues that one coastal region and one single Member State cannot solve alone or where it is more efficient to act together and efficiently deliver on challenges that matter in the daily lives of citizens living in the coastal areas.

The feedback received from national workshops held in the Portugal, Spain, France, UK and Ireland, as well as discussions with these Member States have guided the thematic selection and suggested actions. The priorities are not intended to be exhaustive.

This action plan is an invitation to the coastal regions, private sector, researchers, national public bodies and other actors to start designing projects that respond to the priorities. Existing and new partnerships in the EU Atlantic area should use the umbrella of the action plan to exchange knowledge and innovate.

ATLANTIC PORTS AS BLUE ECONOMY HUBS

Coastal tourism, aquaculture, ship-building, as well as growing industries like marine renewables are centred on or closely interlinked with the activity of ports, thus ports can play a major role in their development. This entails an evolution of the governance mechanisms of ports, including the *role of port operators – from landlords for logistical enterprises towards playing the more active role of a community manager and catalyst for blue business*. On the other hand, ports must *cooperate* with each other to mobilise financing for specialised smart infrastructures that will *increase sea-basin trade*.



RIS3



National Strategies



Motorways of the Seas

CSA Smart Ports



SDG 9



National Strategies



EMFF Blue Careers



Working Group on Ocean Literacy



SDG 4 & SDG 14

BLUE JOBS AND OCEAN AWARENESS

Having the right set of skills is essential to take advantage of innovation and rapidly deploy blue technologies. *Smart specialisation of educational opportunities based on an industry-driven strategy can attract young talent in the blue economy, stimulate productivity, and increase the competitiveness of the EU Atlantic area*. While specialised clusters already operate at local and regional levels, *efficient sea-basin cooperation can facilitate the cross-border flow of qualified workers*. Another focus area is ocean literacy because *ocean literate citizen can “adapt their everyday behaviour to make informed and responsible decisions that promote ocean stewardship in a co-creation approach.”*

MARINE RENEWABLE ENERGY

The EU Atlantic area is the leader in and the testbed for the development of novel marine renewables, especially ocean energy. *Reaching the next step of development, namely the commercial maturity of successful prototypes, is essential to maintain technological leadership, retain talent and provide affordable clean energy*. This thematic area responds to a number of interconnected challenges, namely *increasing access to finances, obtaining the necessary strategic and political support as well as facilitating knowledge sharing and making use of best practices across the region*.



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National Strategies



SET Plan

Clean Energy for EU Islands Initiative



SDG 7 & SDG 13



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National Strategies



Plastics Strategy



Working Group on Ocean Health



SDG 14

CLEAN OCEAN AND RESILIENT COASTS

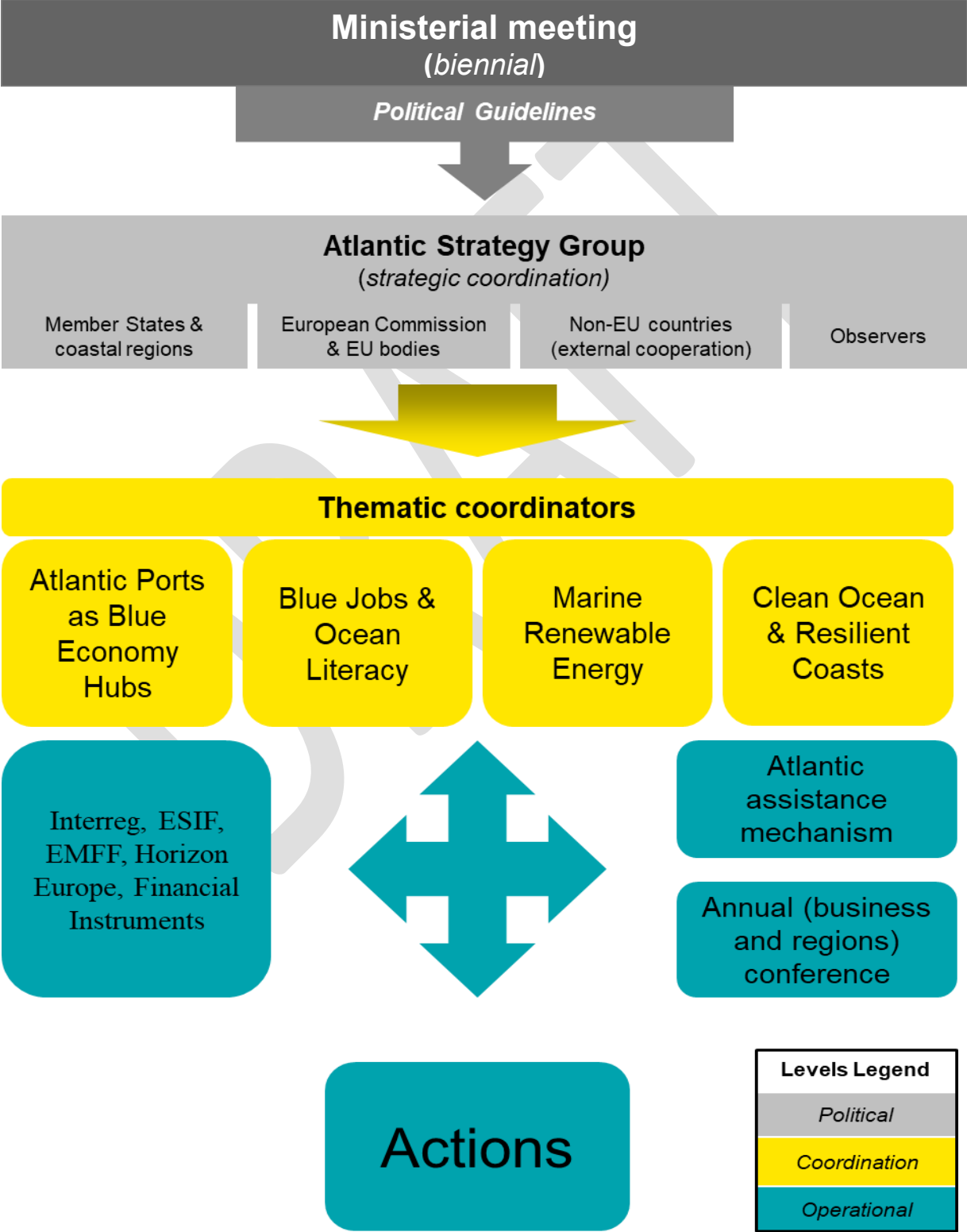
The EU Atlantic coast is vulnerable to large Atlantic storms. Erosion has a detrimental effect on large parts of the coast and will likely be exacerbated by climate change. To *reduce the environmental and humanitarian impacts and protect risk areas*, there is need for collaborative action. Marine litter is another major problem that can be solved through transnational cooperation. Potentially recyclable materials are polluting Atlantic beaches and damaging the environment instead of being put back into the economy. Coastal regions and citizen can develop *an Atlantic response to decrease marine litter* through a system of actions, adding to the ongoing initiatives in the framework of OSPAR and the EU Marine Directive.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

3.1. GOVERNANCE MECHANISM

A new governance framework will support the design and implementation of the envisaged actions, and catalyse engagement of relevant stakeholders across sectors, coastal regions and countries. The thematic priority areas will be advanced through dedicated thematic action groups led by a coordinator.

While the exact modalities and roles in the governance bodies will be subject to discussion within the current Atlantic Strategy Group, an illustration of the relationship between the new governance bodies, the key actors and the four thematic focus areas are outlined below.



3.2. MOBILISING INVESTMENT

As with the original Atlantic action plan, the AAP 2.0 will not have a dedicated funding instrument. To ensure a successful implementation of the identified actions, it will be necessary to mobilise investment and seek other sources of funding, notably through strategic alignment of EU and national funding relevant to the thematic priority areas and actions.

The EU Atlantic countries and coastal regions should commit to drawing on available funding to implement the action plan. In particular, **pertinent country-specific, cross-border and transnational programmes from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for 2021- 2027** can provide significant resources and a wide range of tools and technical options to support the action plan. The role of a new **Interreg Atlantic Area programme** would be crucial to support the implementation and potentially finance the governance arrangements of the Atlantic strategy.

Impact-oriented investments in blue growth actions could be accelerated through the future **EMFF Investment platform** that aims to facilitate access to investment readiness support for SMEs and start-ups based/or operating in the EU Atlantic area.

Synergy and complementarities with **ESIF funding and other funding schemes** will need to be sought, notably with: *Horizon Europe, the COSME programme, the Connecting Europe Facility, the Erasmus and the LIFE programmes*. Furthermore, funding may be available under the **European Fund from Strategic Investments, the European Investment Bank and other international financial institutions**. In addition, national and regional budgetary resources will also be mobilised, in particular in the non-EU countries that can be covered by the Atlantic Strategy and its action plan.

These funds and instruments should bring significant leverage and attract funding from private investors.

4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (INDICATORS)

A robust monitoring and evaluation framework is necessary to measure the success of the new action plan and help to:

- identify whether the plan is being applied on the ground as expected;
- address any implementation problems of an intervention; and/or
- identify whether further action is required to ensure that it can achieve its intended objectives.

Evaluation will be based on the work of the objective coordinators and the action group leaders, who will report on progress towards the agreed targets. While the prime measure of success is the implementation of the action plan, a set of **core indicators, in line with the proposed overall intervention logic** (presented in an annex), describe in detail what evidence needs to be collected. These indicators aim to serve the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the progress made towards the desired objectives under each thematic priority area. These indicators have been categorised according to three levels: impact, outcome and output.

- The proposed indicators should be able to capture the changes that the action plan is expected to bring about. The countries and regions part of the Atlantic strategy will organise an annual forum to take stock of achievements and progress made, consult on revised actions and, where appropriate, develop new approaches.