

ATLANTIC STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM CONFERENCE

18-19 October, 2023

Oporto, Portugal

Conference Report



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Introduction

Concept and objectives of the Conference



The 2023 edition of the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference (ASPC2023) took place in Oporto, Portugal on 18 and 19 October 2023.

The theme of this year's conference was "Atlantic Future: New synergies and innovations for a sustainable ocean economy". The Conference focused on providing insights of the key Atlantic Action Plan (AAP) 2.0 activities and challenges of achieving sustainable blue growth and contributing to greater territorial cooperation and cohesion in the Atlantic area, both in the EU as well as internationally. Special focus was also given to synergies identification and promotion.

The conference was held as a hybrid event with physical and online participation and brought together over 170 stakeholders both traditional as well as new ones from different geographies to discuss future cooperation on blue economy, investments, innovation and sustainability.

Introduction

Conference Structure



Opening Ceremony

Welcoming the audience with a recorded message by the European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius; followed by welcoming remarks from DG MARE and the National Representatives.



3 Plenary Sessions

Discussing the three levels – National, European and International with regards to the European & International dimension of the AAP 2.0, investment and innovative finance, and R&I in the Atlantic area.



Networking and Matchmaking

Bringing together all participating stakeholders to connect, discuss and network in the exhibition area.



Atlantic Project Awards

Six awards granted in five award categories as a recognition of the projects' outstanding performance, promoting the key priorities of the Atlantic Strategy.



Closing Ceremony and the Handover of the ASC Presidency

Key conclusions of the conference and handover of the Presidency.

ASPC 2023 in numbers



More than 170 Participants



27 Speakers



Participants from >10 countries (EU and non-EU)



3 pre- and post- related events

81,4% Satisfaction with the overall event

83,7% Satisfaction with the speakers and the presentations made during the event

81,4% Satisfaction with the balance of stakeholders represented during the event

Participants' Organisations



22,3% Public Authorities and EU institutions



18,5% Academia, Research institutions/centres



14,8% Associations, NGOs, Foundations



14,2% Private Sector



30,2% Other

Presentation of key topics covered by Plenary Sessions

1st Plenary session	European and International dimension of the AAP 2.0 – to boost sustainable blue economy <i>This session was structured in 4 pillar-focused parts, during which the different visions were presented from the European, international and project-level perspective and future cooperation prospects were discussed between the panel speakers.</i>
2nd Plenary session	Cross-cutting enabler - Investment and Innovative Finance: from a National, EU and International perspective <i>This session presented the three different perspectives on what is innovative finance and how it can support the implementation of the revised Atlantic Action Plan (AAP 2.0) while fostering sustainable blue economy on both sides of the Atlantic. Speakers presented the EU, international and national perspectives, with special focus put on identifying synergies between EU and international funds.</i>
3rd Plenary session	Cross-cutting enabler - Research and Innovation: the international dimension of the Atlantic Strategy and the Mission 'Restore our ocean and waters by 2030' <i>The third and final plenary session explored opportunities and challenges for cooperation on Research & Innovation (R&I) in the Atlantic area, with a roundtable discussion being held representing the three levels of R&I cooperation: international, national and regional.</i>

Atlantic Project Awards

The winners of the Atlantic Project Awards 2023 were announced during the ASPC on the 19th of October. This year, six awards were granted as a recognition of the projects' outstanding performance, in the following five award categories, which are in line with the thematic pillars of the AAP 2.0.

Atlantic Ports and Blue Economy



LIVING PORTS

Blue Skills and Ocean Literacy



seaThings – Learning Objects for Promoting Ocean Literacy

Marine Renewable Energy



OPS Punta Salinas

Healthy Oceans and Resilient Coasts



BlueMissionAA – Building a coordination hub to support the mission implementation in the Atlantic and Arctic Basin



MAELSTROM – Smart technology for MARinE Litter SusTainable RemOval and Management

International Cooperation



ASTRAL – All Atlantic Ocean Sustainable, ProfiTable and Resilient AquacuLture

Key takeaways of the ASPC 2023 per thematic pillar

Pillar 1

Ports as gateways and hubs for the blue economy

- There are many **synergies and opportunities for linking RIS3 strategies** to actual blue economy opportunities, especially for sectors that will be potentially boosted in the forthcoming years.
- **Financing mechanisms through the various EU Funds** (Invest EU, EMFAF, etc.) already provide funding opportunities for further development of blue economy sectors and the EU is working to gather and streamline the various efforts being made.



Pillar 2

Blue skills and ocean literacy

- Developing **specialized education and training for the blue economy** is a priority.
- It is important to create **new digital resources to support blue education** and fostering entrepreneurial skills for the Blue Economy.
- Identifying ways to **engage citizens and communities in learning the impacts of climate change in ocean and coastlines** is the backbone in Pillar 2 activities along with promoting engagement in risk mitigation and adaptation, namely through Citizen Science.



Pillar 3

Marine Renewable Energy

- We need to focus on developing **social acceptance and local engagement** in the Atlantic MS, since they are paramount in overcoming the challenges in the area. The early and often community and stakeholder engagement is thus considered a priority.
- Regarding the marine renewable energy sector, **collaboration of more partners** is key to success and progress.



Pillar 4

Healthy Oceans and Resilient Coasts

- Project development support for Pillar IV is for now focused on **implementing nature-based solutions**, developing information campaigns related to Atlantic marine environment and tackling litter with litter free project for coastal communities.
- Alignment **with EU Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030'** is pivotal in order to identify, develop and strengthen synergies related to the protection of our ocean and coasts.



Ministerial Meeting

The Portuguese Presidency organised the Ministerial Meeting of all four Atlantic Member States and the European Commission in the morning of the 18th of October 2023, back-to-back with the ASPC 2023.

France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, supported by the European Commission, signed the first Atlantic Ministerial Declaration and committed themselves to further build on Atlantic's success by cooperating on a wide variety of Sustainable Blue Economy topics.

The approved Ministerial Declaration focusses on reaffirming and further strengthening cooperation in the following thematic areas:

- The contributions of the Committee and national representatives to the Action Plan's objectives, underscoring the regional importance of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy by addressing geopolitical instability, post-COVID recovery and energy crisis mitigation;
- The promotion of specific sectors like offshore renewable energy and blue biotechnologies, reaffirming their commitment to work together on the deployment of offshore renewable energy potential and to work towards decarbonization, where ports have a major role in the sustainable development of sectors like coastal tourism, aquaculture and shipbuilding;
- The value of attracting new talents for the Blue Economy, by upskilling and reskilling workers and ensuring their interoperability in the Atlantic region in order to engage citizens and raise social awareness about the impacts of climate change in coastlines and risk mitigation and adaptation, namely through Citizen Science;
- The role of national maritime spatial plans and EU-funded cross-border projects in mitigating conflicts and promoting stakeholder participation and the continued commitment to cooperative efforts for the prosperity of coastal areas and Action Plan's relevance;
- The cooperation and knowledge exchange with other Sea Basin Strategies to address common challenges and priorities through cross-sea basin policy dialogue.




The full version of the Ministerial Declaration is available in [ENG](#)





Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference 2023

For more information:

- Visit our [Website](#) | Send us an [E-mail](#)
- Follow us on our **Social Media:**   
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The Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference 2023 was organized by the Atlantic Assistance Mechanism together with the Portuguese Presidency of the ASC - Direção-Geral de Política do Mar, CINEA and DG MARE.

2023 PORTUGUESE
PRESIDENCY

ATLANTIC STRATEGY
Supporting the Atlantic Action Plan

