

## Report on Ex Ante Evaluation



European Union

European Regional  
Development Fund

### **Ex Ante Evaluation of the Operational Programme of Transnational Cooperation for the Atlantic Area 2014-2020**

## Index

<b>1. EVALUATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIAGNOSIS QUALITY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Evaluation of the diagnosis extent .....	1
1.2. Analysis of the reliability of the statistical sources used .....	3
1.3. Evaluation of the context indicators system used.....	4
1.4. Evaluation of the SWOT analysis quality .....	6
1.5. Evaluation of the challenges identified for the 2014-2020 period.....	7
1.6. Tracking of the Ex-ante Evaluation recommendations.....	8
<b>2. ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMME’S STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1. Consistency of the Atlantic Area Operational Programme’s objectives     for the period 2014-2020 .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1.1. <i>In relation to the Common Strategic Framework and to the         National Partnership Agreements.....</i>	<i>10</i>
2.1.2. <i>In relation to the Challenges of the Commission’s Position Papers         and specific recommendations per Member State.....</i>	<i>40</i>
2.1.3. <i>In relation to the Atlantic Strategy.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<b>2.2. Coherence analysis.....</b>	<b>53</b>
2.2.1. <i>Analysis of the internal coherence of the programme .....</i>	<i>53</i>
2.2.2. <i>Analysis of external coherence .....</i>	<i>59</i>
<b>2.3. Relation between supported actions and expected results .....</b>	<b>71</b>
2.3.1. <i>Representation of the AATC-OP’s Intervention Logic .....</i>	<i>71</i>
2.3.2. <i>Assessment of the form of finance .....</i>	<i>85</i>
<b>2.4. Assessment of the integration of horizontal principles.....</b>	<b>86</b>
2.4.1. <i>Promotion of equality between men and women .....</i>	<i>86</i>
2.4.2. <i>Non-discrimination .....</i>	<i>89</i>
2.4.3. <i>Sustainable development .....</i>	<i>92</i>
<b>2.5. Tracking of the Ex-ante Evaluation Recommendations .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>3. ASSESMENT OF THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>3.1. Relevance and clarity of the indicators proposed for the programme .....</b>	<b>99</b>
3.1.1. <i>Analysis of the indicators’ relevance .....</i>	<i>99</i>
3.1.2. <i>Assessment of the indicators’ clarity.....</i>	<i>107</i>
<b>3.2. Assessment of baseline and target values .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>3.3. Assessment of milestones .....</b>	<b>110</b>

3.4. Analysis of the administrative capacity, data collection procedures and evaluation .....	112
3.4.1. Administrative capacity.....	112
3.4.2. Data collection procedures.....	113
3.4.3. Evaluation Plan.....	115
3.5. Tracking of the Ex-ante Evaluation Recommendations .....	116
<b>4. CONSISTENCE OF FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS .....</b>	<b>117</b>
4.1. Compliance with Requirement of Thematic Concentration .....	118
4.2. Analysis of the Programme’s Financial Coherence.....	118
4.3. Tracking of the Ex-ante Evaluation Recommendations .....	121
<b>5. CONTRIBUTION TO THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY.....</b>	<b>122</b>
5.1. Identification of the main elements of the AATC-OP driving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth .....	123
5.2. Expected results form a Europe 2020 Strategy perspective .....	124
<b>6. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>7. ANNEX: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>127</b>

## 1. EVALUATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIAGNOSIS QUALITY

The strategic planning of the new Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation Operational Programme (AATC-OP) 2014-2020 should first start by exploring the economic, social and territorial context of the cooperation territory to identify its main needs and challenges in order to overcome them.

This has led to the development of a first work of context analysis under the programming tasks, which has focused on the study of the Atlantic Area (AA) position regarding the objectives for the intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The Ex Ante Evaluation should verify the quality of that study, in order to ensure that the problems, their explanatory causes and the consequences arising thereof have been identified. Only after a proper identification of these variables, it will be possible to propose, in a second phase, objectives and measures to help achieving them.

### 1.1. EVALUATION OF THE DIAGNOSIS EXTENT

The diagnosis conducted shows **adequate coverage levels** that provide a first approximation to the cooperation area main features. However, there are two areas where a greater depth of analysis could have been useful as well as the inclusion of additional elements allowing a greater focus on territorial cooperation: the territorial and thematic perspective.

- ✦ From a **thematic perspective**, the analysis on the context situation includes a study of the key socio-economic development factors, from the mapping of certain variables and indicators. This provides a rapid display of the results and the identification of similarities and differences along the transnational territory, which determine the possibilities for cooperation.

The statistical information used contains relevant data of the main variables affecting the economic, social and territorial cohesion such as the level of education, territorial disparities in terms of GDP, employment and innovation potential or the environment situation.

However, there is scope for improvement as regards a higher utilization and processing of the statistical information available, in order to improve knowledge on the situation of the AA different regions and to obtain additional evidence about the potential for cooperation that exists in each of them.

Some indicators that would provide useful information in order to improve the diagnosis are: population density, labour productivity, the sectoral composition of regional production, business density and level of expertise, among other possible ones.

In fact, the diagnosis has focused on a subset of various fields covered by the ERDF, in line with the Implementing Regulations (Table 1).

Specifically, the objectives that are better supported in the situation diagnosis conducted are those related to strengthening research, technological development and innovation, protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency, promoting employment, and investment in education.

It is also provided some information that can help the decision making process as regards promoting sustainable transport, removing constraints in key network infrastructures, promoting social inclusion and combating poverty.

On the other hand, there are no conclusions regarding other possible areas of interest related to the thematic objectives of improving ICT access, quality and use and improving SMEs competitiveness and the prevention and management of natural risks such as erosion, seismicity or flooding threats.

**TABLE 1. CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE DIAGNOSIS CONDUCTED AND THE REGULATORY INTERVENTION AREAS OF THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS**

DIAGNOSIS AREAS	FACTORS CONSIDERED	ERDF OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES (*)
Geography and accessibility	Maritime activities	Cross-cutting nature
	Urban rural typology	Cross-cutting nature
	Multimodal accessibility	Art. 5.7)
Employment and social	Demographic distribution	Cross-cutting nature
	Employment	Art. 5.8)
	Risk of poverty	Art. 5.9)
	Human capital and School dropout	Art. 5.10)
Economic development and competitiveness	Income and growth (GDP)	Cross-cutting nature
	Regional Competitiveness	Cross-cutting nature
	Expenditure on R&D	Art. 5.1)
	Innovation territorial capacities	Art. 5.1)
Environment, natural resources and energy efficiency	Biodiversity	Art. 5.6)
	Climate change	Art. 5.5)
	Renewable energy	Art. 5.4)

(\*) Note: According to the Regulation set for the ERDF

Therefore, there is some scope for improvement in the sense of extending the analysis to other areas of special interest for the new period 2014-2020, including:

- ✦ The study of the AA entrepreneurial base, as a determinant factor of economic competitiveness of territories, through an economic analysis on the most relevant sectors.

Thus, it would be interesting to note the persistence of the economies direction towards the primary and food sectors, the importance of the tertiary sector in the main urban centres (Dublin or Lisbon) and the relative decline of manufacturing, though with the exception for industrial zones linked to the major seaports that dot the entire facade.

- ✦ The study of selected issues of particular interest to both the AA and from the perspective of the Europe 2020 Strategy: risk prevention, or entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurship capacity observed in the AA.
- ✦ Thus, it is suggested to include a specific section on Equal Opportunities, which collect the main findings of the different areas covered by the diagnosis in relation to this horizontal principle.

If these elements are considered, it will provide a more accurate picture of the economic, social and territorial AA current context. Subsequently, this will facilitate the construction of a more comprehensive SWOT scheme and contribute ultimately to an optimal reasoning of the selected thematic objectives and investment priorities.

## 1.2. ANALYSIS OF THE RELIABILITY OF THE STATISTICAL SOURCES USED

The diagnosis elaborated denotes an adequate knowledge of the main existing statistical sources focusing on this cooperation area. In order to ensure consistency and reliability of the information provided, **Regio Plus** had checked the data used through consultation, review and verification thereof.

All information was obtained from the European Statistical Office (EUROSTAT), ensuring the **homogeneity of the data** for all the regions that make up this cooperation area. In turn, the map presentation of the information has been obtained from the ESPON database.

The use of these sources is crucial in order to ensure comparability of information, especially in an eligible area comprising five Member States. In addition, it offers clear advantages to facilitate the monitoring of the socio-economic environment evolution as well as future Programme evaluation exercises and their impact on the context.

However, it appears necessary to supplement it with other possible qualitative sources, in order to maximize the diagnosis usefulness as a tool to support decision-

making processes regarding strategic formulation. It stands out, for example, the conclusions of the regional smart specialization strategies (RIS-3), which could be useful to identify technology areas of interest at a transnational level.

This would raise awareness on some of the areas addressed in the context, to differentiate the various characteristics that coexist in the AA (profiles of specialization, comparative advantages, endogenous resource availability, among others), as well as to expand the scope of the diagnosis itself, as already mentioned above.

### 1.3. EVALUATION OF THE CONTEXT INDICATORS SYSTEM USED

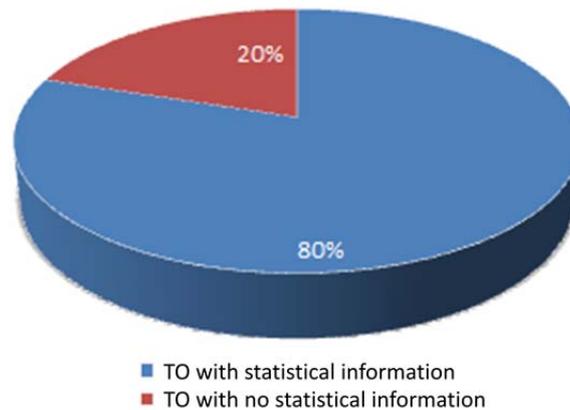
The quality of the diagnosis depends on the attributes of the context indicators collected. The selection covers all fields analysed, providing a **realistic description** of the socio-economic situation of the cooperation area, at an optimal level of territorial disaggregation (NUTII).

In general, **the indicators ensure the goodness of the outcomes obtained**, due to their attributes as follows:

- + Close relationship with the phenomena to be measured.
- + Easily interpretable and accessible to public understanding.
- + Measurable and sufficiently comparable with other regional and/or national areas.
- + Relevant, as they relate to key territorial development factors.
- + Reviewable or upgradable (for short intervals or with little time lag).

However, it should be noted that the set of indicators used is not that wide and does not cover, therefore, all the different dimensions and areas that the programming may consider. As already shown, it only brings context information related to six out of the ten thematic objectives, excluding the objective on improving institutional capacity (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. COVERAGE OF THE CONTEXT INDICATORS SERIES



In any case, there are certain issues that would improve the information quality provided by the indicators. In fact, for certain indicators it is possible to obtain more recent information. Although it would not change the conclusions of the study, updating it with the latest available values (even though there may be partial shortcomings in some specific cases) would allow to perfectly identify the baseline values for follow-up in the upcoming years. This applies, for example, to population data, employment, school dropout or some of those included in the field of R&D.

At the same time, it is convenient to perform the gender breakdown of some of the indicators used (e.g., in the analysis of labour market and educational levels of the population), in order to ensure an optimal integration of the horizontal principle of equal opportunities in the context analysis.

Finally, a positive assessment of the diagnosis is its alignment with main challenges arising from Europe 2020 Strategy (EU2020) for intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth by providing an overview of the situation regarding certain EU2020 parameters.

The final conclusion obtained is that the current design of the statistical substrate accompanying the AA programming meets the necessary characteristics of **reliability, relevance, update and the compatibility** that the Programme's monitoring and evaluation require.

#### 1.4. EVALUATION OF THE SWOT ANALYSIS QUALITY

The diagnosis provides evidence to identify weaknesses and strengths of the cooperation area and the threats and opportunities that may affect it. In fact, the results achieved have resulted into a SWOT diagram regarding the studied socio-economic context, which is characterized by the identification of 9 strengths, 14 weaknesses, 10 opportunities and 7 threats.

Although the diagnosis conducted provides evidence to identify many of the strengths and weaknesses of the cooperation area, as well as contextual elements that might affect it in a positive or negative sense, not all the SWOT components are sufficiently motivated in the socio-economic analysis (environmental hazards, the presence of traditional sectors, among others).

Finally, its legitimacy as a tool to characterize the actual conditions for intervention is guaranteed by the effective implementation of the **principle of partnership and multilevel governance** set out in *Article 5 of the Regulation*, which is in line with the "*Elements for an European Code of Conduct for Partnership*", which the Commission postulates.

This is reflected in:

- + The participation of stakeholders in the assessment of the cooperation area needs and the adequacy of the methods used to engage them, through online surveys addressed to all institutions involved in the Programme's management, the beneficiary entities of the 2007-2013 period and the socio-economic and environmental representative agencies operating in the transnational area.
- + The consideration of the opinions expressed in these surveys, the contributions made by the Partnership members and the debate on the results of the diagnosis and the SWOT analysis within the Working Group.

In conclusion, although the elaboration of the SWOT scheme is considered generally positive, there are issues that would increase its usefulness, according to the assessments in the following table.

TABLE 2. ASSESSMENT OF THE SWOT ANALYSIS

ATTRIBUTES	COMPLIANCE	COMMENTS
EXPLICIT	+++ OPTIMAL	The strengths and weaknesses are clearly identified.
CLEAR	+++ OPTIMAL	There are no ambiguous definitions of the strengths/weaknesses.
RIGOROUS	+ SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT	It provides a rough picture of the socio-economic context and does not address certain ERDF intervention areas.
COMPLETE	++ ADEQUATE	The SWOT analysis covers most of the OP possible lines of intervention.
MEASURABLE	+ SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT	It does not include indicators that support quantitatively the SWOT analysis. In most cases, the information is presented in ranges which prevents us from knowing the exact situation of each territory.
SOUND	++ ADEQUATE	It has established a wide stakeholders participation system. It also identifies the sources of information in the diagnosis.

### 1.5. EVALUATION OF THE CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED FOR THE 2014-2020 PERIOD

The Ex Ante Evaluation shall assess the relationship of the challenges and needs identified in the cooperation area with the EU 2020 objectives. From the diagnosis conducted, the programming tasks pose **three major challenges** common to the whole cooperation area:

#### COOPERATION AREA CHALLENGES

- ① Boosting innovation and technological development
- ② Increasing competitiveness of the productive fabric
- ③ Improving natural resources efficient use

Such challenges are implicit in the SWOT analysis conducted and latent in the transnational territory, **favourably estimated to guide the intervention strategy of the AATC-OP 2014-2020.**

In addition, **its focus is consistent with those reported by the EU 2020.** Scheme 1 summarizes the correspondence between the identified challenges for the cooperation area and those identified by the EU2020 for Europe. As it can be seen, they are all significantly aligned with some challenges set out by EU2020. In turn, the territorial cooperation appears as the scope from which to move forward in order to overcome these challenges. This allows concluding on the **adequacy of the EU2020 challenges to the socio-economic profile of the cooperation area.**

## 1.6. TRACKING OF THE EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The ex-ante evaluation is understood as an interactive process whose main objective is to improve the programme's quality and its capacity to gradually and progressively achieve its objectives. Therefore, the ex-ante evaluation sets out as an unavoidable exercise the tracking of its main recommendations in the programming framework.

Therefore, the evaluation team has carried out this tracking exercise in each of the programming stages of the AATC-OP 2014-2020. This section includes the tracking of those recommendation related to the analysis of the context diagnoses. Moreover, the same exercise is carried out at the end of each chapter of this Ex-ante evaluation. Afterwards, in the Annex, the main conclusions regarding this tracking exercise are summarised.

TABLE 3. TRACKING OF THE EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS		RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
SCOPE	Enrich the initial diagnosis with higher use and processing of statistical information available to improve knowledge and obtain additional evidence in areas such as population density, labour productivity, sectorial production, business density or level of expertise.	The Diagnosis (Section 1) has been extended with regard to its initial versions. New statistical information on variables initially not included has been introduced. However, this recommendation for improvement has not always been taken into account, as it is the case of the productive structure or the business density.	+
	Address the lack of conclusions in ERDF areas of interest: ICT, SME competitiveness and management of natural risks.	The data and information as well as conclusions reached on the Thematic ERDF areas tackled in the OP showed evidence of clear potential for cooperation, making it unnecessary to research all potential areas, when the OP needs to concentrate on a few Priority Axes and Specific Objectives.	+
	Analysis of the present situation of regional RISA (conclusions comparison)	The Draft Strategies for Smart Specialisation of the involved regions have been examined and no divergences are appreciated.	+
	Include a specific section on Equal Opportunities	Question dealt with under a dedicated paragraph 8.2	+
INDICATORS SYSTEM	Obtain more recent information for some indicators	The data used was the most recently available; when the data was not recent this was for lack of them.	+
	Need for a gender breakdown of some indicators (labour market, educational levels...)	The programme does not go into greater detail in terms of educational level or the labour market as both areas remain as macro indicators for the programme that offer general information about the overall situation of the Atlantic Area	-
	Identify the departing situation of the cooperation area with regard to the indicators-objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy.	References to the initial situation are only included for the employment and R&I related objectives of the EU2020 Strategy.	+
SWOT	Increase the quantitative dimension supporting the SWOT analysis, which would allow a real approximation to the weaknesses' and strengths' dimension.	The SWOT analysis is the result of a quantification work included in the Diagnosis and presents valuable and supportive information for the design of the AATC-OP's strategy.	+
	Assess if new elements should be included following an eventual extension of the diagnosis' scope.	The SWOT analysis has been improved with the inclusion of new elements as a consequence of the Diagnosis revisions.	++
	Further motivate all SWOT components in the socio-economic analysis	The weaknesses-challenges and strengths-opportunities classification has been reconsidered. However some SWOT elements are still not clearly supported by the Diagnosis.	+

++ INCLUSION OF RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENT

+ PARTIAL INCLUSION OF THE RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENT

- RECOMMENDATION NOT CONSIDERED

## 2. ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMME'S STRATEGY

The article 55 of the Common Provision Regulation requires for the 2014-2020 programming period an ex-ante evaluation for each programme to be prepared and submitted at the same time as the programme proposal. Following this requirement and according to the *Guidance document on ex-ante evaluation "Monitoring and evaluation of European Cohesion Policy"*, the ex-ante evaluation of the Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation Programme should carry out an analysis of the Operational Programme proposal based on the following fields:

- + The consistency of the selected objectives for the period 2014-2020.
- + The internal coherence of the Programme and its links between the Programme and other relevant instruments.

This analysis aims to verify the elements that justify the needs of the Atlantic Area and should ensure that the operational programme articulates a logic intervention and demonstrate its contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy.

### 2.1. CONSISTENCY OF THE ATLANTIC AREA OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME'S OBJECTIVES FOR THE PERIOD 2014-2020

#### 2.1.1. In relation to the Common Strategic Framework and to the National Partnership Agreements

In the following sections, the coherence between the AATC-OP and the Partnership Agreements developed by each of the countries within the transnational cooperation area will be analysed. These agreements between the EU Commission and the Member States set out the countries' strategy to use the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) between 2014 and 2020 under the guidance of the Common Strategic Framework. The AATC-OP should therefore be coherent with each of them so synergies can be created ensuring the Atlantic area's contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

#### ***a) Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the Spanish Partnership Agreement for the period 2014-2020***

The Spanish Partnership Agreement for the period 2014-2020 stresses the importance of increasing the efforts in areas as the following: R&D&I, competitiveness of SMEs,

labour market, social cohesion, climate change and the transition towards a more resource efficient economy.

The Spanish primary problem at this moment is the worsening of the financial and economic crisis that has produced a slowdown in the economic activity, an increase of the unemployment rate, a reduction in the tax revenues and the instability of public finances.

The selection of the TO 1 is a clear signal of the Programme's willingness to contribute to the recovery from the current economic situation. Improving the R&D&I framework is a key factor for a country to achieve economic growth and to improve competitiveness. Due to the financial crisis, investment in this area has suffered from stagnation with negative consequences to the Spanish business landscape and economic activity. Spain and its Atlantic regions are behind the EU average in this field. Therefore, one of the Atlantic area's investment priorities is to promote business investment in innovation and research and developing synergies and cooperation among the relevant actors, enhancing innovation capacity and supporting the exploitation of innovation results to accelerate market access. This will lead the Atlantic area towards a higher added value and more knowledge oriented production model and will promote competitiveness in its regions.

However, when talking about competitiveness, the Partnership Agreement has a strong focus on SMEs. The AATC-OP does not include the TO 3 and it may give the false impression that the programme does not specifically address this sector. Although the inclusion of TO 3 could have positive effects in the Atlantic area, a detailed analysis of the AATC-OP shows that SMEs are specifically addressed through other TO, especially TO 1. SMEs may play a central role in the two Specific Objectives under TO1. Both include SMEs as a target for their actions and the presence of SMEs in the transfer of innovation results is particularly expected. Furthermore, SMEs should also benefit from actions in the rest of TO, taking advantage of the improved situation regarding the progress towards a more resource-efficient and low-carbon economy and of new business opportunities that may arise.

Thematic objectives 4 and 6 of the AATC-OP could also have a significant effect for the region's economic recovery as they aim to promote sectors with a high growth potential and added value activities such as offshore renewable energies, coastal tourism and other maritime activities. This will diversify the region's economic landscape, which is crucial to overcome high unemployment rates. This is a major concern addressed in the Spanish Partnership Agreement where it has been specifically selected the objective of promoting the sustainability and quality of employment and favouring labour mobility in order to ameliorate the labour market within the country.

The Spanish Partnership Agreement acknowledges the fact that economic growth should be achieved in a sustainable manner, protecting the environment and fighting climate change. These three strongly interrelated elements, sustainability, environment and climate change are well addressed in the AATC-OP through the selection of TOs 4, 5 and 6.

An alignment between the Partnership Agreement and the AATC-OP clearly exists regarding the need for a shift to a low-carbon economy which is the aim of TO 4 within the Programme, that is to be applied to all sectors and therefore would be also related to the Partnership Agreement's objective of promoting the sustainability of transport.

Climate change and its consequences do not understand about country or regional borders and, therefore, transnational cooperation is a key element in this field. This is particularly relevant, as climate change remains a big challenge not only for Spain but also for the whole EU. Therefore, the selection of TO 4, 5 and 6 will empower the AATC-OP to make a positive contribution in areas as important as: resource efficiency, transfer to a low-carbon economy through the promotion of renewable energy sources, climate change adaptation or risk prevention.

Another key aspect in the Agreement would be the protection of the natural and cultural heritage as well as the biodiversity of the cooperation area. Priority axis 4 in the AATC-OP identifies exactly the same priority. This will enable the Atlantic area not only to preserve its environment and biodiversity but also to improve the attractiveness of the area in order to create new sources of wealth and economic activity.

The area of education is not directly covered by the AATC-OP as this domain is mainly addressed through the ESF. Spain is undergoing critical problems regarding this issue due, primarily, to its high rate of early school leaving and important unbalances between training offer and labour demand. However, this concern is not completely out of the Cooperation Programme and a series of activities are foreseen in the field of education and capacity building (e.g. increasing skills of employees in the business sector or developing educational solutions in the field of renewable energy).

The same happens with social issues that are more under the scope of the ESF. As a consequence, the Operational Programme is not as focused as less supports the Partnership Agreement in supporting social inclusion and poverty reduction objectives. However, the Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation may have an influence in these areas, especially through actions within TO 4 and 6 that, as previously explained, could ameliorate and diversify the labour market in Spain, creating more local jobs in the area.

Partnership Agreement (Spain) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Promote investments in R&amp;D</b></p> <p><b>Strengthening research and innovation institutions</b> through a series of actions aimed to improve the capacity of R&amp;I centres, organizations, groups and other structures, including networks, as well as those designed to promote collaboration among agents and promote the transfer of knowledge.</p> <p><b>Improve the existing infrastructures and capacities in the field of R&amp;D&amp;I</b>, both at a national and a regional level in order to rationalize and optimize associated investments.</p> <p><b>Promote business leadership in R&amp;D</b> favouring and encouraging the incorporation of companies, especially SMEs, to R&amp;I activities in order to improve their productivity and competitiveness through the introduction of new products and processes, improving their marketing and internationalization capabilities and paying particular attention to the creation of quality jobs.</p> <p><b>Increase private funding of innovation in all its dimensions.</b></p> <p><b>Promote public-private partnerships in R&amp;D&amp;I</b>, to facilitate the relations among the Spanish System of Science, Technology and Innovation agents and to effectively transfer the research results to the business network.</p> <p><b>Enhance the transfer of knowledge</b> in the proper format so that it can adapt and generate value once incorporated into processes, products and services. Clusters, technology platforms, networks and structures integrating companies, universities, technology parks, innovation centres and other agents should become exchange and collaboration promotion spaces in the field of R&amp;I.</p>	<p><b>TO 1:</b> Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p>	<p><b>IP 1.b):</b> promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&amp;D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies</p>	<p>Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness</p> <p>Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes</p>	<p>+++</p>

Partnership Agreement (Spain) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Improve efficiency in the use of natural resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in public and private buildings</li> <li>- in the different energy consuming sectors</li> <li>- by renovating energy production installations at the end of its operational life time</li> <li>- in urban mobility</li> <li>- reducing energy consumption</li> <li>- by promoting R&amp;D&amp;I activities in these fields</li> <li>- developing smart grids</li> </ul> <p><b>Increase the production and distribution of renewable energy sources and the energy grids</b></p>	<p><b>TO 4:</b></p> <p>Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p>	<p><b>IP 4.a)</b> promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources</p>	<p>Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency</p>	+++
	<p><b>TO 6:</b></p> <p>Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p><b>IP 6.g)</b> supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors</p>	<p>Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency</p>	++
<p><b>Implement the National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change,</b> in particular the development of sectorial assessments and adaptation plans in vulnerable areas.</p> <p><b>Improve land management and its regeneration when damaged by the effects of climate change.</b></p> <p><b>Planning for disaster prevention and restoration of damaged areas.</b></p> <p><b>Develop civil protection infrastructures and early detection tools.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 5:</b></p> <p>promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management</p>	<p><b>IP 5.b)</b> promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems</p>	<p>Strengthening risks management systems</p>	+++

Partnership Agreement (Spain) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Support the protection, promotion and development of cultural heritage.</b></p> <p><b>Protection, development and promotion of natural areas</b>, particularly those of touristic interest.</p> <p><b>Promote the management, conservation and maintenance of natural areas and biodiversity</b>, particularly protected areas, including measures to alleviate the problems of erosion, salinization, desertification, deforestation and low organic matter in the soil.</p>	<p><b>TO 6:</b></p> <p>Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p><b>IP 6.c)</b> conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p>Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services</p>	+++
		<p><b>IP 6.d)</b> protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures</p>	<p>Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.</p>	+++

**b) Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the French Partnership Agreement for the period 2014-2020**

The French Partnership Agreement translates the objectives defined in the Europe 2020 Strategy based in the national objectives as it is shown in the following table:

**TABLE 6: OBJECTIVES OF THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY FOR FRANCE**

Area	EU Objective		French Objective	Situation in France	
				Year	Data
Employment	Employment rate (20-64 years old)	75%	75% (70% women)	2011	69,1% (64,6%)
R&D&I	Expenditure percentage of GDP in R&D	3%	3%	2010	2,6%
	Greenhouse gases emissions	-20% in relation to 1990	- 14% in relation to 2005	2010	- 4%
Environment	Renewable energy percentage	20%	23%	2010	12,8%
	Energy efficiency	Increase of 20%	130 Mtoe in final energy consumption	2010	155 Mtoe
Education	Early school leaving rate	10%	9,5%	2011	12%
	Percentage of the population of 30-34 years old with a higher education diploma	40%	50%	2011	43,4%
Fight against poverty and social exclusion	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	20 mill people reduction	1,9 million in 2020	2011	11,2 millions

Source: French Partnership Agreement.

Following these national objectives and taking into account the country's weaknesses and potentials, France will focus its Regional Policy intervention for the period 2014-2020 in three mayor challenges, applying to the third one a transversal role:

- + Competitiveness of the economy and employment.
- + Energy and environmental transition and sustainable management of natural resources.
- + Reducing disparities among regions and promoting its potentialities.

Due to the economic, social, environmental and climate diversity existing along the French territory, the country has included the 11 thematic objectives in its Partnership

Agreement together with the 6 priorities for rural development and the 5 priorities for fishery and maritime affairs that are related. The following arrangements for the intervention are foreseen:

- + The intervention of the ESI Funds in France will be divided in a balanced way between the three axis of the Europe 2020 Strategy for an intelligent (TO 1, 2 and 3), sustainable (TO 4, 5 and 6) and inclusive growth (TO 8, 9 and 10).
- + The ESI Funds will be allocated as a priority to TO 3 and 6, within the first two axes, and in a balanced way between TO 8, 9 and 10. The ERDF will focus in the TO 1. This distribution addresses the above mention key challenges identified by the Agreement.

The AATC-OP will contribute to this aim, particularly in the field of energy and environment transition and sustainable management of the natural resources (TO 4, 5, and 6 selected in the Programme). Moreover when energy transition is seen as a way of creating employment and to change the economic model of certain regions. Keeping a low level of CO2 emissions, energy efficiency and the development of renewable energies are identified by the Partnership Agreement as important challenges for the country and very well supported by the actions foreseen in the AATC-OP. France's vulnerability to the effects of climate change is acknowledged by French authorities. The AATC-OP will contribute to overcome this issue by carrying out a series of actions aimed at strengthening risk management systems (TO 5).

It should be highlighted that the strategy of promoting the competitiveness of SMEs, which is a major objective within the French Partnership Agreement, is indirectly addressed through the AATC-OP approach. Although TO 3 has not been included in the Operational Programme, TOs 1, 4 and 6 may have a strong and positive impact in the overall competitiveness of the region and of SMEs specifically. This can be done through favouring SMEs' participation in R&I activities and allowing the transfer to the market of the R&I results and by favouring sectors with a high potential for growth and in which SMEs should play a crucial role as tourism or off-shore renewable energy production. In this sense, renewable energy is one of the sectors that have been identified as strategic for the country in the Partnership Agreement.

The selection of TO 1 by the AATC-OP reflects a strong consistency with the Partnership Agreement's concern on the efficacy of the French innovation system to transform innovation efforts in economic results. Therefore, all those actions aimed at improving the transfer of innovation results will be crucial for a country in which there is a significant level of public investment in innovation but with a relatively low impact. Promotion of the business investment in R&D&I is also crucial as the French companies investment in this area is below the level of other countries such as Sweden or Germany.

Education is also tackled by the French Partnership Agreement, particularly with regard to early school leaving, lifelong learning and adaptation of the capacity building to the needs of the local or regional economic activities. Although these domains are not directly covered by the AATC-OP because they fall under the scope of the ESF, concerns on them are not completely out of the Cooperation Programme and a series of activities are foreseen in the field of education and capacity building (e.g. increasing skills of employees in the business sector or developing educational solutions in the field of renewable energy).

The Partnership Agreement includes a description of the different territorial specificities existing in France. Although coastal areas can benefit from specific economic activities linked to its proximity to the ocean, they are also more vulnerable in certain aspects because of potential natural risks, their peripheral position, conflicts due to the use of resources or exposure to climate change effects. As in the Atlantic Strategy, the Agreement acknowledges the potential of the coastal areas to develop the blue economy especially regarding the following fields: low-carbon economy, new usages for maritime infrastructures, research and development, ship technology and tourism. This is equally taken into account within the AATC-OP, which ensures an overall coherency in the interventions and the possibility of developing synergies for the implementation of the different Programmes.

Partnership Agreement (France)	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME FOR 2014-2020			Complem. level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment Prioritie (IP)	Specific Objective	
<p><b>Increase the number and the competitiveness</b> (added value, jobs, and exports) <b>of innovative companies.</b></p> <p><b>Increase the expenditure rate of French GDP in R&amp;D</b> and reduce simultaneously the divergences between the French regions regarding R&amp;D.</p> <p><b>Rebalance the R&amp;D efforts towards experimental development and reinforce the economic impact of research by favouring innovation transfer and the diffusion of the results.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 1:</b></p> <p>Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p>	<p><b>IP 1.b):</b> promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&amp;D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies</p>	<p>Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness</p> <p>Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes</p>	<p>+++</p>
<p><b>Reducing energy consumption in buildings.</b></p> <p><b>Participate in the implementation of the national and regional objectives of increasing the Renewable Energy rate in the final consumption.</b></p> <p><b>Increase the quota of investment</b> in R&amp;D favouring energy transition.</p> <p><b>Increase the amount of population using public transports and other alternative or “soft” modes of transport</b> as well as the modal shift, particularly in the framework of the multimodal exchanges</p> <p><b>Support the transition towards the usage of LNG</b> as the alternative fuel for ships</p> <p><b>Reinforce awareness raising actions regarding sustainable development</b></p>	<p><b>TO 4:</b></p> <p>Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p>	<p><b>IP 4.a)</b> promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources</p>	<p>Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency</p>	<p>++</p>

Partnership Agreement (France)	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME FOR 2014-2020			Complem. level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment Prioritie (IP)	Specific Objective	
<p><b>Reduction of the vulnerability of the population and sectors more exposed to the effects of climate change.</b>  <b>Actions towards natural and technological risk prevention</b> to secure the population and economic activities.</p>	<p><b>TO 5:</b>                      Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management</p>	<p><b>IP 5.b):</b> promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems</p>	<p>Strengthening risks management systems</p>	<p>+++</p>
<p><b>Environmental protection and preservation, restoration and management of the natural resources</b>, that are a touristic attraction factor and have a strong economic impact on the territory: particularly limiting the negative influence of activities on the environment, slowing down the artificialisation of spaces, preserving the quality of the landscapes and the cultural heritage, optimizing the qualitative and quantitative management of water, preserving marine and land biodiversity, air and land’s quality and carrying out communication actions.</p> <p><b>Efficient usage of natural resources and raw materials</b>, notably in a context of circular economy of valorisation of natural resources and waste and of assurance for the food supply.</p>	<p><b>TO 6:</b>                      Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p><b>IP 6.c):</b> conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p>Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems’ services</p>	<p>+++</p>
		<p><b>IP 6.d):</b> protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures</p>	<p>Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.</p>	<p>+++</p>
		<p><b>IP 6.g):</b> supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors</p>	<p>Fostering Green Growth, innovation and environmental efficiency</p>	<p>++</p>

**c) *Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the Portuguese Partnership Agreement for the period 2014-2020***

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The Partnership Agreement proposed to the European Commission by Portugal - named "Portugal 2020" - embraces the programming principles of the Europe 2020 Strategy and establishes the economic, social, environmental and regional development policy headed to stimulate growth and job creation during the upcoming years in Portugal. "Portugal 2020" sets out the interventions, investments and funding priorities needed to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Portugal.

The base line for assessing the AATC-OP contribution for "Portugal 2020" involves the analysis of the strategic formulation drawn by the authorities responsible for programming to support the growth priorities inscribed in the Partnership Agreement.

This AATC-OP's strategic chain (Priority Axis - Investment Priority - Specific Objective) was developed to respond appropriately to the "Europe 2020" Thematic Objectives into the Atlantic area context, taking into account the specific circumstances and development needs of the programme's area. The following table identifies the AATC-OP Thematic Objectives, Investment Priorities and Specific Objectives and related appropriateness for the contribution to the "Portugal 2020" objectives:

Partnership Agreement (Portugal)	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Thematic Objective (TO)	
<p><b>Increase the quality of science production</b>, internationally recognised and oriented to smart specialization in order to stimulate technology-based economy with high added value, favouring excellence, cooperation and internationalisation:</p> <p>The joint effort between businesses and science and technology entities should be promoted by improving existing conditions both for businesses and for R&amp;D institutions.</p> <p><b>Improving the transfer of scientific and technological knowledge to the productive sector</b>, promoting a higher effectiveness of the National Innovation System and creating economic value.</p>	<p><b>TO 1:</b></p> <p>Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p>	<p><b>IP 1.b):</b> promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&amp;D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies</p>	<p>Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness</p>	<p>+++</p>
			<p>Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes</p>	
<p><b>Increasing energy efficiency in public infrastructures</b>, supporting the implementation of energy efficiency measures and rationalization of consumption.</p> <p><b>Reducing the rate of consumption of public buildings</b> of the local administration and promoting efficient lighting.</p> <p><b>Increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy in the housing sector</b>, supporting the implementation of energy efficiency measures and rationalization of consumption.</p>	<p><b>TO 4:</b></p> <p>Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p>	<p><b>IP 4.a)</b> promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources</p>	<p>Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency</p>	<p>++</p>
	<p><b>TO 6:</b></p> <p>Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p><b>IP 6.g):</b> supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors</p>	<p>Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency</p>	<p>++</p>

Partnership Agreement (Portugal)	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Thematic Objective (TO)	
<p><b>Strengthening the level of risk knowledge and planning affecting the national territory and capabilities</b> in terms of information systems and monitoring as well as reinforcing risk management with a resilience approach and by training the related institutions.</p>	<p><b>TO 5:</b> promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management</p>	<p><b>IP 5.b):</b> promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems</p>	<p>Strengthening risks management systems</p>	<p>+++</p>
<p><b>Protect and preserve species and habitats and promote knowledge and valorisation of biodiversity and ecosystems:</b> the priority interventions are primarily associated with three areas: i) completion and reviewing of protected biodiversity knowledge; ii) management of the Natura 2000 network and enhancement of Protected Areas; iii) designation of Natura 2000 network areas for the marine environment, particularly off-shore.</p> <p><b>Prioritize the Natura 2000 investments related to green tourism and employment,</b> emphasize mitigation and adaptation to climate change, other ecosystem benefits and research, education, training, awareness and promotion of cooperation (including cross-border cooperation) addressed to the management of Natura 2000.</p>	<p><b>TO 6:</b> Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p><b>IP 6.c):</b> conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p>Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services</p>	<p>++</p>
		<p><b>IP 6.d):</b> protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures</p>	<p>Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.</p>	<p>+++</p>

Reading the table above and the conclusions supporting it allows us to verify that the AATC-OP's programmatic structure was prepared in accordance with the Europe 2020 Thematic Objectives, globally comprising the dimensions specified in "Portugal 2020", as regards the most relevant thematic areas in the context of transnational cooperation in the Atlantic Area.

Indeed, the "Programming Chain" met the main identified problems in the transnational cooperation area concerning the OP intervention thematic areas summarized in the AATC-OP. Impossible to address all of the outlined challenges, the AATC-OP focus on a limited set of topics in order to maximize the resources allocated to the Programme, providing appropriate answers to issues that cannot be solved on a regional or national basis.

The Priority Axis and Specific Objectives show a strong alignment with the Community guidelines for Sustainable and Smart Growth, which anticipates a generally positive generator effect as a result of its implementation.

Overall, the AATC-OP presents a programmatic structure with expected results emerging as appropriate for the diagnosis and the strategic options defined in "Portugal 2020", ensuring their integration in the national objectives and priorities framework of Portugal, in a context of greater territorial dimension, which comprises five Member States.

The programming structure of the Priority Axis 1 is appropriate for the diagnosis undertaken in terms of stimulating innovation and competitiveness and with the strategic options to promote this thematic area set in "Portugal 2020". Based on table 12 of "Portugal 2020" (cf. p. 102), it is noted that the results provided in AATC-OP are very consistent with the main objectives of the interventions and examples of the main actions identified therein, in particular as regards consolidation and promotion of competence centres for scientific research of strategic interest and in supporting the dissemination and diffusion of new knowledge and technologies generated under R&D, in particular by structuring projects involving entities of technology and knowledge transfer.

In PA 2, there is a high programmatic consistency with the provisions of "Portugal 2020", in particular the proposed by AATC-OP under SO 2.1. (SO 2.2. has no goals in this area, as mentioned). Indeed, it appears that the results provided in this AATC-OP SO denote a high consistency with the provisions in table 24 of "Portugal 2020" (cf. p. 137), in particular as regards energy production from renewable sources associated with emerging or poorly disseminated technologies, including offshore.

Regarding PA 3, the designed programming chain stands out as very appropriate for the diagnosis and strategic options fixed in "Portugal 2020". Indeed, AATC-OP seeks to

contribute to a better cooperation framework and to an increased 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, covering one of the dimensions included in this document on risks prevention and management, i.e., strengthening management against risks, from a perspective of resilience (box 25 of "Portugal 2020" (cf. p. 141).

Finally, also PA 4 programming chain shows appropriateness for the diagnosis on the preservation and protection of the environment and promotion of efficient use of resources and for the strategic options to promote this theme defined in "Portugal 2020". Based on Table 26 of the Partnership Agreement (cf. p. 145), it is noted that the main objectives of the interventions and examples of key actions identified therein are incorporated in AATC-OP, based on the evaluation of its results, in particular as regards the promotion and assertion of regions as tourism destinations through the development of natural and cultural heritage as well as 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.

For the horizontal principle "Sustainable Development", it stands out that AATC-OP supports six specific objectives (out of seven) under which Transnational Cooperation Projects will address environmental needs and challenges and will contribute to improve and enhance regional policies and strategies related to sustainable development. The PA 2 level evidences a complete appropriateness between the OP programming chain and this horizontal principle. However, other strong matches arise though more dispersed across the programming chain, such as the PA 4, not only for the concern shown about the use of local resources, but also for the valuation of territorialized approaches comprising outputs that often directly consider the requirements of environmental protection, efficient use of resources, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, etc.

In order to ensure the integration of sustainable development at the operational level, the AATC-OP embodies a set of actions that find high consistency with "Portugal 2020" on the horizontal principle "Sustainable Development" (cf pp. 160), especially as regards the promotion of the Strategic Environmental Assessment, the inclusion of sustainable development as one evaluation criteria of project applications, the promotion of the required environmental assessments of those projects to be co-financed in order to ensure that requirements of environment protection are met.

**d) Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the United Kingdom's Partnership Agreement for the period 2014-2020**

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As EU funds are implemented by the four countries of the United Kingdom, the UK Partnership Agreement outlines separate priorities set by the individual parts of the UK, hence the countries' complementary varies across the Atlantic Area's strategy objectives, as outlined in the paragraphs below.

**England's** Partnership Agreement has a relatively strong complementarity to the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy. Thematic Objective Areas 1 (Strengthening research, technological development and innovation) and 4 (Supporting the Carbon Economy) both appear relatively well developed and aligned with the Atlantic Strategy. Found in the English Agreement and which is not reflected in the Atlantic Strategy is a part focus on R&D&I activities on i) geographical areas in the country which trail the average in terms of competitiveness, ii) underrepresented minorities; iii) innovation in farming.

Thematic Objectives 5 (Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management and 6 (Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage) also rate well in terms of complementarity. The TO5 risk management systems objective focuses on flood and coastal defences. TO6 has a strong articulated focus on eco-innovation and green technologies, but reveals less about activities relating to restoring, preserving and enhancing the natural environment.

The **Scottish** Partnership Agreement demonstrate relatively lower levels of complementarity, but as the Agreement outlines – Scottish EU Funds are to be used for specific niches and invested in alongside other funding (the English Agreement also expresses a focus on targeted/fewer priorities to increase the effectiveness of EU funds).

TO1 predominantly targets enterprises, with no mention of HEIs or public research institutes. In particular re-processing and re-manufacturing industries are targeted, along with innovation and skills within 'key growth sectors' generally. TO4 on Carbon reduction demonstrate closer complementarity with the Atlantic strategy, and the Scottish approach additionally underlines the inclusion of supply chain growth with the sector.

The Scottish equivalent to TO5 on Climate Change encompasses transport investments and climate change prevention and mitigation, but does not appear to strongly focus on priorities such as ensuring disaster resilience or developing disaster management systems. Similarly, TO6 also lack certain complementarity in particular there is no mention of Fostering Green Growth and Eco-innovation, however this sector may well be incorporated through key growth sectors supported under TO1.

The Partnership Agreements for **Wales** does not outline specific objectives, but instead list thematic objectives. The Welsh TO1 on R&D&I is more specific compared to the Atlantic Area equivalent objective, mentioning specifically the competitiveness of SMEs, agricultural sector and the fisheries and aquaculture sector. TO5 and 6 are also significantly geared towards specific sectors, such as farm businesses, forestry and fisheries. In contrast, TO5 is kept very broad, supporting carbon reduction in all sectors. Judging by these objectives, the Welsh Partnership Agreement takes a comparatively more narrow approach to the Atlantic Area themes.

The Partnership Agreement for **Northern Ireland** indicates a similar approach to that of Wales, preferring to single out specific target groups (SMEs) and sectors (agricultural sector and the fisheries and aquaculture sector). Northern Ireland outlines a single but broad objective for supporting the low-carbon economy and similarly so for TO6 (which along with the majority of the UK parts does not mention risk management-related objectives). The Northern Irish TO5 equivalent is comparatively narrow, partly focusing on nitrous oxide GHG emissions associated with agriculture and partly on carbon sequestration (which may also be covered under TO4).

Partnership Agreement (England) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Increase the number of innovative new products and processes</b> brought to the market by supporting businesses to invest more in innovation, especially in areas with relatively low levels of gross expenditure on R&amp;D as a percentage of GDP.</p> <p><b>Increase collaborative research</b> between enterprises, research institutions and public institutions.</p> <p><b>Increase the capacity of physical innovation infrastructure</b>, particularly in areas which lag behind the EU target.</p> <p><b>Facilitate improved uptake of technological innovation</b>, through support for knowledge exchange and collaboration between farmers piloting new technologies.</p> <p><b>Increase the uptake of improved, innovative business practices, and better cooperation between farm businesses</b> as well as providing support for new farmers in the early years of developing their business.</p> <p><b>Increase entrepreneurship</b>, particularly in areas with low levels of enterprise activity and amongst under-represented groups.</p> <p><b>Build the growth capabilities of SMEs and the number of high growth firms.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 1:</b> Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p>	<p><b>IP 1.b):</b> promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&amp;D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies</p>	<p>Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness</p>	+++
			<p>Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes</p>	++
<p><b>Increase innovation in, and the adoption of, low carbon technologies.</b></p> <p><b>Increase the implementation of low carbon solutions and decentralised energy production.</b></p> <p><b>Increase energy efficiency and the implementation of low carbon technologies.</b></p> <p><b>Improve energy efficiency in farming and forestry businesses.</b></p> <p><b>Improve carbon storage</b> through agricultural and forestry land management.</p>	<p><b>TO 4:</b> Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p>	<p><b>IP 4.a)</b> promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources</p>	<p>Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency</p>	+++

Partnership Agreement (England) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Facilitate economic development through investment in flood and coastal risk management</b> where there is demonstrable market failure.</p> <p><b>Increase farm, forest and ecosystem resilience to the projected impacts of climate change.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 5:</b> Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management</p>	<p><b>IP 5.b):</b> promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems</p>	<p>Strengthening risk management systems</p>	<p>++</p>
<p><b>To restore, preserve and enhance the natural environment.</b></p> <p><b>Investment in Green Infrastructure</b> and actions that support the provision of ecosystem services on which businesses and communities depend to increase local natural capital and to support sustainable economic growth.</p> <p><b>Investment in the uptake of innovative technologies and resource efficiency measures</b> to increase environmental protection, resilience and the performance of businesses and communities.</p>	<p><b>TO 6:</b> Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p><b>IP 6.c):</b> conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p>Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services</p>	<p>++</p>
		<p><b>IP 6.d):</b> protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures</p>	<p>Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.</p>	<p>+++</p>
		<p><b>IP 6.g):</b> supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors</p>	<p>Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency</p>	<p>++</p>

Partnership Agreement (Scotland) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>To increase R&amp;D spending</b> in Scotland and to develop a stronger culture of innovation within enterprises.</p> <p><b>Higher number of growth businesses.</b></p> <p><b>To create more resource-efficient enterprises and to foster the growth of re-processing and re-manufacturing industries</b></p> <p><b>To increase the skills of individuals</b> to support the development of key growth sectors</p>	<p><b>TO 1:</b></p> <p>Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p>	<p><b>IP 1.b):</b> promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&amp;D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies</p>	<p>Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness</p>	++
			<p>Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes</p>	+
<p><b>Exploit opportunities for the low carbon economy, supply chain growth and the development of low carbon communities.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 4:</b></p> <p>Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p>	<p><b>IP 4.a)</b> promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources</p>	<p>Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency</p>	+++

Partnership Agreement (Scotland) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Decrease in greenhouse gas emissions through the uptake of environmentally-friendly transport modes.</b></p> <p><b>To contribute to climate change prevention and mitigation.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 5:</b> Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management</p>	<p><b>IP 5.b):</b> promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems</p>	<p>Strengthening risk management systems</p>	<p>++</p>
<p><b>Maintain and improve viability of rural and marine businesses.</b></p> <p><b>To maintain and improve the condition of Scotland’s natural and marine environment.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 6:</b> Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p><b>IP 6.c):</b> conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p>Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems’ services</p>	<p>++</p>
		<p><b>IP 6.d):</b> protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures</p>	<p>Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.</p>	<p>++</p>
		<p><b>IP 6.g):</b> supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors</p>	<p>Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency</p>	<p>+</p>

Partnership Agreement (Wales) – Thematic objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Strengthening research, technological development and innovation.</b></p> <p><b>Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the agricultural sector and the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 1:</b></p> <p>Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p>	<p><b>IP 1.b):</b> promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&amp;D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies</p>	<p>Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness</p>	+
			<p>Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes</p>	
<p><b>Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 4:</b></p> <p>Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p>	<p><b>IP 4.a)</b> promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources</p>	<p>Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency</p>	++

Partnership Agreement (Wales) – Thematic objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<b>Environment / resource efficiency</b> e.g. (desired results) <b>land-based actions</b> with a particular focus on environmentally sustainable land management; the promotion of sustainable forestry; improved Natura 2000 participation, biodiversity and water quality; discard free fisheries and transition to Maximum Sustainable Yield.	<b>TO 6:</b> Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage	<b>IP 6.c):</b> conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services	++
		<b>IP 6.d):</b> protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures	Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.	++
		<b>IP 6.g):</b> supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors	Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency	+

Partnership Agreement (Northern Ireland) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Strengthening research, technological development and innovation.</b></p> <p><b>Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the agricultural sector and the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 1:</b></p> <p>Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p>	<p><b>IP 1.b):</b> promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&amp;D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies</p>	<p>Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness</p>	+
			<p>Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes</p>	
<p><b>Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 4:</b></p> <p>Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p>	<p><b>IP 4.a)</b> promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources</p>	<p>Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency</p>	++

Partnership Agreement (Northern Ireland) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<b>Climate Change</b> e.g. reduce methane and nitrous oxide GHG emissions associated with agriculture and enhance carbon sequestration.	<b>TO 5:</b> Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	<b>IP 5.b):</b> promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems	Strengthening risks management systems	+
		<b>IP 6.c):</b> conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services	++
<b>Environment / resource efficiency</b> , e.g. implement agri-environment, woodland and forestry schemes to enhance and improve biodiversity, soil and water quality.	<b>TO 6:</b> Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage	<b>IP 6.d):</b> protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures	Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.	++
		<b>IP 6.g):</b> supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors	Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency	+

***e) Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the Irish Partnership Agreement for the period 2014-2020***

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The Irish Partnership Agreement's complementarity (Table below) with the Atlantic Area Strategy is overall strong, in particular vis-à-vis TO1 concerning R&D&I. However the Irish priority areas also go beyond the Atlantic Area objectives, e.g. focusing on the internationalisation and increased innovation capabilities of SMEs (a priority which reflects the comparatively low domestic demand in Ireland), and also particularly expresses support for the creation of new businesses, including through business incubators.

Compared for example to the UK Partnership Agreement, the Irish Agreement is very detailed in its approach to TO4 supporting a Low Carbon Economy, and particularly addresses the Atlantic investment priority of promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources, and Ireland specifically also details both public and private sector energy use and objectives for energy efficiency.

The Irish objectives set for TO5 on Climate Change are detailed and proposes investments in relation to farm advisory services for climate change adaptation, developing the knowledge base in terms of mapping, monitoring and measures relating to increasing the capacity of the landscape to retain water and reduce the risk of flooding. In the area of risk prevention Ireland highlights marine forecasting capabilities, response mechanism for marine accidents, loss of agricultural income and sustainable development of coastal areas as priority areas for investment, indicating overall good complementarity.

The Irish objectives falling within the TO6 remit also largely correspond to the objectives of the Atlantic Area, however the field of eco-innovation appears to largely be taken into account through TO1 on R&D&I.

Partnership Agreement (Ireland) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhancing research and innovation (R&amp;I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&amp;I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest.</li> <li>Promoting business investment in R&amp;I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, of the agricultural sector and of the fishery and aquaculture sector</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators.</li> <li>Developing and implementing new business models for SMEs, in particular for internationalisation.</li> <li>Supporting the creation and the extension of advanced capacities for product and service development.</li> <li>Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>TO 1:</b> Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p>	<p><b>IP 1.b):</b> promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&amp;D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies</p>	<p>Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness</p> <p>Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes</p>	<p>+++</p>

Partnership Agreement (Ireland) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Supporting the Shift Towards a Low Carbon Economy in all sectors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources.</li> <li>Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in enterprises.</li> <li>Supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructures, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector.</li> <li>Promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures.</li> <li>Promoting the use of high-efficiency co-generation of heat and power based on useful heat demand.</li> </ul>	<p><b>TO 4:</b> Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p>	<p><b>IP 4.a)</b> promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources</p>	<p>Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency</p>	<p>+++</p>
<p><b>Investments in relation to farm advisory services for climate change adaptation.</b></p> <p><b>Developing the knowledge base in terms of mapping, monitoring and measures</b> relating to increasing the capacity of the landscape to retain water and reduce the risk of flooding.</p> <p><b>Marine forecasting capability.</b></p> <p><b>Response mechanism for marine accidents.</b></p> <p><b>Loss of agricultural income.</b></p> <p><b>Sustainable development of coastal areas for investment.</b></p>	<p><b>TO 5:</b> Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management</p>	<p><b>IP 5.b):</b> promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems</p>	<p>Strengthening risks management systems</p>	<p>+++</p>

Partnership Agreement (Ireland) – Specific objectives	ATLANTIC AREA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (2014-2020)			Complementarity level
	Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment priority (IP)	Specific objective	
<p><b>Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures.</li> <li>• Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution.</li> </ul>	<p><b>TO 6:</b> Preserve and promote the attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p><b>IP 6.c):</b> conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p>Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services</p>	++
		<p><b>IP 6.d):</b> protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures</p>	<p>Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.</p>	++
		<p><b>IP 6.g):</b> supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors</p>	<p>Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency</p>	++

### 2.1.2. In relation to the Challenges of the Commission's Position Papers and specific recommendations per Member State

This chapter analyses the AATC-OP in relation to the following two documents:

- + The Position Papers produced by the European Commission for each of the Atlantic Area countries based on the experiences from the 2007-2013 programming period 2007-2013 and the Commission's legislative proposals for the 2014-2020 period.

In general, the Atlantic Area countries show a certain alignment regarding its challenges and investment priorities, as they tend to be oriented towards the necessity of improving the competitiveness, increasing the investment in R&D&I, combatting unemployment and promoting an efficient use of natural resources.

- + In June 2012, the EU Heads of State approved the Compact for Growth and Jobs that establishes a clear commitment to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy objectives. In this context, the EU Commission produces biannually a series of recommendations per country related with each country's National Reform Programme and the Stability Programme. In this chapter, coherence between the Atlantic Area Operational Programme and those recommendations will also be evaluated.

The relevance of this coherence is established in the Regulations that determine that the Partnership Agreements as well as the Programmes should respond to the Recommendations to address the macroeconomic unbalances and social and economic difficulties. This is a binding consideration as the Common Provision Regulation establishes that *"where a Member State fails to take effective action in the context of the economic governance process, the Commission should make a proposal to the Council to suspend part or all of the commitments or payments for the programmes of that Member State"*.

It should be highlighted that a certain number of the measures that arise from the recommendations are above the dimensions of the Structural policy and therefore, of the Programme as they refer to national competencies. This is the case of the tax reform, financial sector programmes, the increase in the competitiveness of the different productive sectors and the reform of the labour market through measures related to unemployment benefits.

**a) Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the challenges and recommendations formulated for Spain**

In the case of Spain, the challenges identified and the recommendations focus primarily in recovering from the serious economic crisis by changing an economic model that remains too dependent on low added-value activities to a model that is knowledge-intensive. Spain has a series of structural problems in its economy that have to be overcome by increasing business competitiveness and internationalisation, promoting R&D&I activities and investment, combatting unemployment (particularly youth unemployment) and using resources more efficiently.

As shown in the table below, there is a complementarity between the challenges and priorities for funding identified for the country and the Thematic Objectives selected for the AATC-OP:

CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING		T.O. 1	T.O. 4	T.O. 5	T.O. 6		
		b)	c)	b)	c)	d)	g)
SPAIN	Supporting the adaptation of the productive system to higher added-value activities by enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs	++	+		+	+	+
	Promoting an innovation friendly business environment and strengthening the R&D and innovation system	+++					++
	Increasing labour market participation and labour productivity, as well as improving education, training and social inclusion policies (in particular for youth and vulnerable groups)		+		+	+	+
	Making a more efficient use of the natural resources		+++		++	++	

+ Reduced     
 ++ Moderate     
 +++ High

Source: Produced by Regio Plus Consulting.

The Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation Programme seems like a valid instrument to contribute to Spain’s recovery from the economic crisis and designs a valid framework in order to implement some of the Commission’s recommendations to the Member State.

The table shows a strong support from the Programme to the areas of R&D&I and sustainable growth while an indirect but consistent connection with the areas of SMEs and the labour market. TO 6 should have a role in the consecution of an economic system with more high-value activities as it promotes key sectors with an important potential for the area.

The EU Commission’s specific recommendations to Spain recognise the serious situation of the labour market as a major concern, being the reduction of unemployment the most important challenge that the country will have to face during

the next years. Therefore, three of the nine recommendations linked to the 2013 National Reform Programme address unemployment and poverty reduction.

The intervention of the AATC-OP regarding these challenges has not a direct focus but an indirect influence through the TOs 1, 4 and 6. TO 1 should have an impact on the competitiveness of the region by increasing businesses participation in innovation activities and the development of new products and processes. On the other hand, TOs 4 and 6 promote the development of key economic activities related to the specificities of the Atlantic regions. This should be translated in the long-term into new and more qualified jobs.

Finally, even though during the period 2012-2013 there was no specific recommendation for Spain to take measures in the field of sustainable growth, this is taken on board by the Commission's Position Paper. Spain is identified as one of the countries that suffers more the effects of climate change and is, consequently, exposed to a significant level of risk with respect to natural disasters. The Commission recognises the progress that has been made in this area but it also points out that there is room for improvement: measures for mitigation and adaptation to climate change should be put in place, including risk management and prevention.

These aspects are well addressed by the AATC-OP, particularly by TO 5 regarding the improvement of resilience towards catastrophes but also by TO 6 in the areas of efficient use of resources and protection of biodiversity. TO 4 is also linked as it promotes the change towards a low carbon model giving renewable energy sources a crucial role.

Finally, for Territorial Cooperation Programmes in which Spain participates, the Commission acknowledges the transnational dimension of the Atlantic strategy and the new dynamism that it could bring to the maritime sectors as well as its potential to enlarge economies of scale.

#### ***b) Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the challenges and recommendations formulated for France***

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A more competitive environment through innovation as the differentiating element, the increase of the employment rate and the consolidation of a sustainable economy are the highlighted priorities in the Position Paper for France, together with a dedicated priority for the French overseas territories that it is not applicable for the present evaluation.

The table below shows the complementarity between the challenges and priorities for funding identified for the country and the Thematic Objectives selected for the AATC-OP:

CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING		T.O.1	T.O. 4	T.O. 5	T.O. 6		
		b)	c)	b)	c)	d)	g)
FRANCIA	Favouring a more competitive business environment propitious for innovation	+++			+	+	++
	Increasing the employment rate through a series of measures to improve the adaptability of workers and actions to support the most vulnerable groups.	+	+			+	
	Consolidating a sustainable economy with low levels of CO <sub>2</sub> emissions and an efficient use of the resources		+++		++	++	+++
	Releasing the potential development of the overseas departments and regions and improving their integration in the labour market and in the political landscape						

+	Reduced	++	Moderate	+++	High
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Source: Produced by Regio Plus Consulting

TO 1 of the AATC-OP will ensure the contribution of the Programme to alleviate one of the Commission’s main concerns regarding France, a low intensity of R&D and innovation activities that affects negatively the competitiveness.

The table above shows also a strong coherency between the Thematic Objectives of the AATC-OP and the challenge of consolidating a sustainable economy with low levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and an efficient use of the resources. The whole priority axis 2 within the Programme is dedicated to this aim, on the one hand by promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources and on the other, by supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy.

As in the case of Spain, the labour market is not addressed directly in any of the investment priorities. However, an improvement in the labour market conditions should be achieved by reinforcing certain sectors of what is called “blue economy” (TO 4 and 6) and by acting on the R&D and innovation framework favouring competitiveness of businesses in France.

Although climate change is neither one of the main challenges for France addressed by the Recommendations to this country nor one of the main priorities selected by the Position Paper, the latter acknowledges the need to improve the performance in the field of risk management and prevention as well as in the protection of the environment. Priority Axes 3 and 4 of the AATC-OP are precisely aimed at this aim.

Regarding Territorial Cooperation Programmes, the Commission acknowledges the transnational dimension of the Atlantic strategy and that the new dynamism that it could bring to the maritime sectors as well as its potential to enlarge economies of scale.

**c) Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the challenges and recommendations formulated for Portugal**

The AATC-OP “Programming chain” has fully followed the guidelines set out in the "Position Paper" in relation to the priorities of the European territorial cooperation for 2014-2020

As mentioned in the Position Paper, the Portuguese transnational programmes should adopt, for the period 2014-2020, a more strategic approach and focus on a small number of priorities with tangible impact. Additionally, this document reinforces that the actions to be developed should focus on protecting the environment and promoting an efficient use of resources, especially in the water sector. The AATC-OP met the main problems identified in the transnational cooperation area in the intervention thematic areas of the Programme, incorporating these recommendations of the "Position Paper". Indeed, it focused 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.

On the other hand, the Position Paper also proposes to strengthen the capacities of institutional cooperation, especially the legal and administrative ones between the various participants in the Operational Programmes of the European territorial cooperation. This concern is integrated into various dimensions of AATC-OP, in particular in its programmatic structure.

CHALLENGES AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES		T.O. 1	T.O. 4	T.O. 5	T.O. 6		
		b)	c)	b)	c)	d)	g)
PORTUGAL	Increase the competitiveness of the Portuguese economy	+++			+	+	
	Fight against unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, together with improving the quality of education and training and integration of people at risk of poverty of social exclusion	+	+			+	
	Promoting a sustainable economy and the efficient use of resources (including the appropriate use of marine resources)		+++		++	++	+++

+ Reduced     
 ++ Moderate     
 +++ High

Source: Produced by Regio Plus Consulting

Finally, it must be highlighted the Position Paper recommendation to improve coordination with other funds in the next period, particularly in the context of transnational cooperation programmes, providing a good opportunity to develop synergies between national and regional economy in a wider context. The European document clearly sets guidelines for the Atlantic Strategy, particularly for the need for it to bring a new dynamism to the Portuguese maritime sector and increase its scale economies. In this area, highlights the priorities identified in the Action Plan for the Atlantic, recommending that regional activities and stakeholders are aligned and coordinated under this strategy.

The AATC-OP responds positively to this question in multiple dimensions. In fact, the Integrated Approach to Territorial Development of Programme, the path of the AATC-OP drafting has been defined by taking into account the four overarching priorities and the series of specific objectives set up by the Atlantic Action Plan.

#### ***d) Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the challenges and recommendations formulated for the United Kingdom***

The Commission published its position on the development of Partnership Agreement and programmes in the United Kingdom for the period 2014-2020 in November 2012. The position paper's conclusions largely reflect the Country-Specific Recommendations addressed to the UK in July 2012, namely:

- + Improving the employability of young people, in particular NEETs (not in education, employment or training);
- + Stepping up measures to facilitate the labour market integration of people from jobless households;
- + Raising skill levels to match the economy's demands;
- + Ensuring that planned welfare reforms do not translate into increased child poverty;
- + Fully implementing measures to facilitate access to childcare services;
- + Improving the availability of bank and non-bank financing to the private sector, in particular SMEs.

Consequently, the EC's recommendation is for the UK to focus EU funds on fewer, but timelier, priorities. These include reversing a trend of decreasing labour market opportunities; reversing the increasing risk of social exclusion; improving R&D&I investment; improving the availability of finance to the private sector (especially SMEs); increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of resource use.

The complementarity between the challenges and priorities for funding identified for the country and the Thematic Objectives selected for the AATC-OP are shown in the following table:

CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING		T.O. 1	T.O. 4	T.O. 5	T.O. 6		
		b)	c)	b)	c)	d)	g)
UNITED KINGDOM	Increasing labour market participation through improved labour market and education policies and reducing the risk of social exclusion	+	+			+	
	Promoting R&D investment and the competitiveness of the business sector	+++	+			+	++
	Promoting an environmentally friendly and resource-efficient economy		+++		++	++	+++

+	Reduced	++	Moderate	+++	High
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Source: Produced by Regio Plus Consulting.

The table below shows the EC’s recommended priorities for European Territorial Cooperation in the UK. The left column is juxtaposed with the focus areas complementarity with the Atlantic Area OP (our commentary in the right-hand side column). Judging by this top-down approach, and despite the decision to focus UK ESI Funds input into fewer priorities, there is yet considerable alignment with the Atlantic OP, including on blue economy-related objectives and such Atlantic Area-specific priorities. Although the EC position paper does not distinguish in detail between the four UK regions, the Partnership Agreement does indicate that Atlantic Area OP objectives will be supported throughout the United Kingdom.

EC’s ETC FOCUS AREAS FOR THE UK	COMPLEMENTARITY WITH THE ATLANTIC AREA
EU Fund strategies and investment should, where applicable, be relevant sea-basin and macro-regional strategies at both programming and implementing level. Giving specific reference to UK coastal developments, the Commission recommends that the priorities for funding will contribute to supporting the Common Fisheries Policies. Targeted funding should furthermore support growth in the UK’s blue economy.	High. This priority reflects overall goals of the Atlantic Area OP relating to the blue economy – coastal tourism, aquaculture, yachting, naval and nautical industries, renewable offshore energy, blue biotechnologies
The UK would benefit from broader cooperation through the ETC programmes supporting cooperative approaches developed in coherence with country-specific programmes in areas such as fostering innovation, eco-innovation projects, including comprehensive observation of the ocean environment, renewable energy, energy efficiency and environmental protection, and knowledge transfer and sharing of best practice between business, research and education.	High. This priority is extremely well aligned to Priority Axis 1 – Stimulating innovation and competitiveness, Priority Axis 2 - Contributing to a better resource efficiency in the Atlantic Area and Priority Axis 4 Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and culture heritage in the Atlantic Area and is also relevant to the fourth Risk Management Axis, which is promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems

EC's ETC FOCUS AREAS FOR THE UK	COMPLEMENTARITY WITH THE ATLANTIC AREA
<p>The ETC programmes should mobilise co-investments to identify and realise the smart specialisation potential of cooperative cluster nodes in Europe and should also contribute to leveraging the economic potential of the maritime border areas by bringing about cooperation synergies.</p>	<p>High. This priority corresponds to the overall rationale or objective of the Atlantic Area OP, and the OP's Selected investment priority to concentrate innovation support in key areas with high innovation potential identified by the regional smart specialisation strategies</p>
<p>The Atlantic Strategy covers the UK's western seaboard. The transnational dimension of the Atlantic Strategy can bring new dynamism to the maritime economic sectors and can improve their economies of scale. An Action Plan is being drawn up to ensure that the objectives of stimulating growth and jobs in the marine and maritime economy, preserving the environmental status of the sea and connecting the regions are achieved. The Commission proposes to take on board the priorities resulting from the on-going Atlantic Forum and will request the UK to outline its plans on how it intends to contribute to the Atlantic Maritime Strategy.</p>	<p>High. This high-level priority strengthens the importance of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy and of the Atlantic Area OP.</p>

***e) Complementarity of the Atlantic Area Programme Strategy and the challenges and recommendations formulated for Ireland***

The Commission published its position on the development of Partnership Agreement and programmes in Ireland for the period 2014-2020 in November 2012. Ireland's foremost challenges are interrelated and relate to – on the one hand – weak domestic demand (although real GDP is expected to grow by 0.4% in 2012, this is due entirely to expansion of net exports) – and on the other – high levels of overall and youth unemployment, increasingly long-term in nature, and the Irish unemployed are experiencing an increased risk of social exclusion.

Economic performance and employment rates vary significantly across the Irish regions, with regional inequalities having risen since the crisis. The Border, Midland and Western (BMW) region is faring worse than the Southern and Eastern (S&E) region. This is due to the greater reliance of the BMW region on construction activity, an industry that has contracted sharply since 2007. This regional disparity may be exacerbated as inward investment continues to be attracted to the more populous areas of Greater Dublin and Cork compared with the predominantly rural BMW region.

Ireland also struggles to commercialise basic research and there is, since the financial crisis, low availability of finance for the private sector. Lastly, the position paper flag up an inefficient use of resources.

The overall message of the position paper is to encourage Ireland to:

- + Focus on fostering competitiveness and employment;
- + Address inefficient use and exploitation of natural resources and exploiting the job-creation and commercial opportunities provided by the harnessing of Ireland's substantial renewable energy resource including marine renewables.
- + Exploit to the maximum potential synergies between the CSF Funds and with other sources of EU funding in a strategic and integrated approach including a cooperative and transnational perspective.
- + Unemployment in the BMW region currently stands at 16.5% in the second quarter of 2012, higher than in the S&E region at 14.1%. The structural difference in labour force participation.

The complementarity between the challenges and priorities for funding identified for the country and the Thematic Objectives selected for the AATC-OP are shown in the following table:

CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING		T.O. 1	T.O. 4	T.O. 5	T.O. 6		
		b)	c)	b)	c)	d)	g)
IRELAND	Combatting long-term and youth unemployment and social exclusion	+	+			+	
	Promoting R&D investment and the competitiveness of the business sector	+++	+			+	++
	Promoting an environmentally friendly and resource-efficient economy		+++		++	++	+++

+ Reduced
++ Moderate
+++ High

Source: Produced by Regio Plus Consulting / CEDRU.

Specifically to European Territorial Cooperation the position paper, the EC emphasises that ETC should “take account cooperation frameworks such as the Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Ocean Area”. The EC also underlines that the transnational dimension of the Atlantic strategy can bring new dynamism to the maritime economic sectors as well as enlarge their economies of scale, requesting Ireland to outline its plans and intentions for contributing to the Atlantic Marine Strategy.

The table below shows the EC’s recommended priorities for European Territorial Cooperation in Ireland. The left column is juxtaposed with the focus areas complementarity with the Atlantic Area OP (our commentary in the right-hand side column). A comparison of objectives indicate there is good complementary between the EC recommendation to Ireland and the Atlantic Area OP, with high-level objectives aligning well.

EC'S ETC FOCUS AREAS FOR IRELAND	COMPLEMENTARITY WITH THE ATLANTIC AREAR
Fostering innovation clusters and smart connections between business, research and higher education sectors	High. Increasing competitiveness and innovation is a top priority of the Atlantic Area OP
A focus on results-oriented innovation projects which include actors from beyond the usual scientific and academic partners	Medium. This is implicitly applied through the competitiveness and innovation priority, in particular as the Atlantic Area OP challenges are holistic/crosscutting, and require participation from actors across the board
Develop eco-innovation projects, including a comprehensive observation of the ocean environment	High. This corresponds with the Atlantic Area Specific Objective 2.2: Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency. A comprehensive observation of the ocean environment may also part align with Priority Axis 3 – Risk management systems in the Atlantic Area
Encourage co-operation, sharing of best practice and economies of scale between Irish SMEs and those from other Member States	High. This part or implicitly applies to the Atlantic Area Specific Objective 1.2: Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes. SMEs, and support to SMEs, is highlighted throughout the OP
Promote energy efficiency and the production, distribution and use of renewable energy	High. This priority is reflected in the Atlantic Area Specific Objectives 2.1 + 2.2 Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency and Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency
Addressing shared environmental risks, particularly maritime pollution, across borders	High. Priority Axis 3 – Risk management systems in the Atlantic Area (Thematic Objective 5) Priority Axis 4 Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and culture heritage in the Atlantic Area (Thematic Objective 6) and specific respective objectives
Contributing to leverage the maritime economic potential of the maritime border areas by bringing about cooperation synergies	High. This priority permeates the overall rationale or objective of the Atlantic Area OP

### 2.1.3. In relation to the Atlantic Strategy

The Atlantic Strategy, developed under the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy, focuses on growth and jobs in the Atlantic Ocean area. The strategy identifies challenges and opportunities in the region and takes stock of existing initiatives that can support growth and job creation. It is a collaborative platform to foster the creation of synergies in different areas (energy, fishery, transport or employment) by using the available resources in a rational and efficient way.

To implement the strategy, the Action Plan establishes the following four priorities in order to drive forward the "blue economy" in the Atlantic region:

- + Promote entrepreneurship and innovation.
- + Protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment.
- + Improve accessibility and connectivity.
- + Create a socially inclusive and sustainable model of regional development.

Like the Action Plan, the Atlantic Area Programme is a holistic initiative, incorporating a wide range of geographic specificities, and tackling an array of policy areas; employment and social issues, economic development-competitiveness, the environmental situation, natural resources and energy efficiency.

There also appear to be strong links between the priorities and objectives set out in the AATC-OP and the European Atlantic Area Strategy and in those outlined in the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), firstly, regarding the support to the shift towards a low-carbon economy (TO 4); and secondly, regarding the increase of the research and innovation capacity through education and training and bringing industry closer to research (TO 1) and the development of the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment, especially in sectors such as tourism, fishing and off-shore energy (TO 4, 5 and 6).

Both the AATC-OP Strategy and the Atlantic Area Action Plan make clear that Horizon 2020 will be a key funding instrument to support the OP's implementation, since research and innovation are key to the blue growth agenda, for instance, as regards capitalising on the potential offered by the diversity of marine life, harvesting deep-sea resources in a sustainable way and the development of new technologies for ocean observation.

It is important to note the links between the AATC-OP and the Atlantic Area Action Plan in supporting “blue growth”. There is likewise evidence of a focus through planned activities at the measure level on maritime and environmental protection related activities, including those able to create growth and jobs.

For example, within Specific Objective 4.1: Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems’ services, the Programme will provide support to promote *“cooperation in the field of environmental and natural resources management. The common challenges to tackle here are the following: acquiring an in depth knowledge of the Atlantic ecosystems, their wealth and their vulnerability, and the conditions for their preservation in connection with the development of new marine and activities”*.

More generally, at the programme strategy level, there is support for the *“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) and for the development of tools and exchange of know-how on protected site/areas management”*. These are all areas that are highlighted in the Commission’s Action Plan.

The following table shows the links between the Atlantic Strategy priorities, thematic objectives and investment priorities selected for the Transnational Cooperation Programme:

TABLE 4: COHERENCE OF THE AATC-OP 2014-2020 WITH THE ATLANTIC STRATEGY

PRIORITIES		SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	T.O. 1	T.O. 4	T.O. 5	T.O. 6		
			b)	a)	b)	c)	d)	g)
PRIORITY 1	Promote entrepreneurship and innovation	Sharing knowledge between higher education organisations, companies and research centres	+					
		Enhancement of competitiveness and innovation capacities in the maritime economy of the Atlantic area	+					+
		Fostering adaptation and diversification of economic activities by promoting the potential of the Atlantic area					+	
PRIORITY 2	Protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment	Improving maritime safety and security			+			
		Exploring and protecting marine waters and coastal zones			+	+	+	
		Sustainable management of marine resources					+	
		Exploitation of the renewable Energy potential of the Atlantic area's marine and coastal environment		+				
PRIORITY 3	Improve accessibility and connectivity	Promoting cooperation between ports					+	
PRIORITY 4	Create a socially inclusive and sustainable model of regional development	Fostering better knowledge of social challenges in the Atlantic Area	+	+	+	+	+	+
		Preserving and promoting the Atlantic's cultural heritage				+		

+

Coherence

Source: Produced by Regio Plus Consulting

Two specific objectives of the Atlantic Strategy have only a marginal place in the Cooperation Programme:

- + Promote cooperation between ports, as the Cooperation Programme does not include connectivity or the promotion of sustainable ways of transport and avoiding bottlenecks.
- + Fostering better knowledge of social challenges in the Atlantic area through the exchange of best practices on enhancing the health, social inclusion and well-being of coastal populations and developing appropriate and usable marine socio-economic indicators. This is related to the thematic objectives 8 and 9 that have not been selected for the Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation Programme.

Nevertheless, this could be included in the totality of the investment priorities, taking into account that the ultimate objective of the EU Regional policy is the economic and social cohesion of its territories and its citizens. Furthermore, the exchange of best practices has been a constant in the cooperation experience of the Atlantic area.

In conclusion, the Cooperation Programme defines an intervention strategy that is coherent with the Atlantic Strategy, which allows the creation of positive synergies and a more efficient use of the Atlantic Area's structural policy resources. It also ensures the consolidation of a sustainable growth model for the marine and maritime sectors.

## 2.2. COHERENCE ANALYSIS

### 2.2.1. Analysis of the internal coherence of the programme

In relation to the coherence and consistency of the different levels of objectives and the appropriateness of the priorities identified to achieve these objectives, the programme's strategy has been strongly influenced by the text in the Regulation on European Territorial Cooperation. For instance, the four thematic objectives are the minimum number of objectives to be selected by European Territorial Cooperation Programmes following the ETSI Regulation, which provides a long-list of 11 possible priority areas. The four selected for the Atlantic area Programme appear to be relevant to identified needs and since these are derived from an EU Regulation, correspond well to the Europe 2020 priorities.

It is important to remind the reader of the different levels of priorities identified in the Atlantic Area. The AATC-OP is structured around 4 Priority Axis, three of them corresponding to only one Thematic Objective and comprising one or more of the investment priorities of that TO as stated in Article 8 of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013. Only Axis 2 corresponds to two different Thematic Objectives under a same Axis. Specifically, the strategy of transnational cooperation for the Atlantic Area will focus on Thematic Objectives 1, 4, 5 and 6, structured in 4 Priority Axis dealing with: innovation and competitiveness; resource efficiency; risk management; and biodiversity as well as natural and cultural assets.

The evaluation team confirms that the AATC-OP focuses 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. These issues will be specifically dealt with in posterior chapters of this ex-ante evaluation. In addition, the programme offers appropriate answers to issues that cannot be solved on a regional or national basis.

In particular, the proposal on the table guarantees the viability of the AATC-OP as it presents a thematic coherence in the selected Axis. However, warnings by the Commission on the gathering of different objectives under a single Axis should not be ignored. In the case of the AATC-OP, only Axis 2 gathers two different Thematic Objectives together (4 and 6). However the scope of this Axis, aimed at fostering resource efficiency, would justify the gathering of two different but interdependent Thematic Objectives. The AATC-OP offers also a clear justification stating that Priority Axis 2 covering two Thematic Objectives will permit an integrated approach to address in a holistic manner the challenge of promoting a resource efficient economy based on both the use of renewable energies and an efficient use of resources by industry.

A deeper analysis of the AATC-OP requires an assessment of the potential or existing degree of synergies among the different Specific Objectives. The aim of this analysis is to estimate the degree in which the advance towards the achievement of a given objective facilitates or benefits the achievement of one or more of the other objectives established by the AATC-OP. With a reasonable degree of synergies, the final overall effect of the AATC-OP should be higher than the mere result of adding the individual effects of each individual objective. At the same time, and seen from the opposite angle, this analysis allows also identifying the degree of dependence of each objective, that is to what extent the consecution of an objective depends on the achievement of the others.

The analysis of potential synergies may be carried out following a technique that falls under the so-called input-output applications. The methodology consists in elaborating a squared matrix that gathers potential or existing synergies among the

different objectives of the programme. The final result is a clear picture of two fundamental aspects:

- + The functional existing links among the specific objectives is shown as well as the intensity and direction of these links.
- + The different objectives are categorised according to the function of each specific objective in relation to the others, which offers a clear picture of the reinforcement that each objective exerts on the others and to what extent each objective absorbs the results coming from the progress towards the achievement of the rest of objectives.

To sum up, the procedure for the analysis consists in three differentiated although dependent phases:

- + First, the matrix is developed gathering the specific objectives. The total aggregated values in lines and rows indicate respectively the influence and the sensitivity of each objective in the overall strategy of the OP.
- + Second, the individual values in lines and rows show the degree of direct and indirect interrelations among specific objectives<sup>1</sup>.
- + Third, the final values allow categorising the different objectives according to the obtained results.

Table 4 shows that all the Specific Objectives in the AATC-OP present interdependence relations or mutual reinforcement although in different intensities. As a result, the sum of objectives reinforces the overall strategy of the AATC-OP through an increased efficiency and efficacy of the impact of the selected Investment Priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> The value in each cell shows different degrees of interrelation between Specific Objectives (influence in files or dependence in rows), being "5" strong, "3" moderate and "1" reduced interrelation.

TABLE 5. MATRIX ASSESSING SINERGIES AMONG SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

	SO 1.1	SO 1.2	SO 2.1	SO 2.2	SO 3.1	SO 4.1	SO 4.2	Influence
SO 1.1		5	3	3	1	1	3	16
SO 1.2	5		3	3	1	1	3	16
SO 2.1	3	3		5	1	3	1	14
SO 2.2	5	3	3		1	3	3	18
SO 3.1	1	1	1	3		5	3	14
SO 4.1	1	1	1	3	1		5	12
SO 4.2	1	1	1	3	1	3		10
Sensitivity	16	14	12	20	6	16	18	

(\*) Note:

SO 1.1: Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to Foster competitiveness.

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

SO 2.1: Fostering Renewable energies and energy efficiency.

SO 2.2: Fostering green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency.

SO 3.1: Strengthening risk management systems.

SO 4.1: Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services.

SO 4.2: Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.

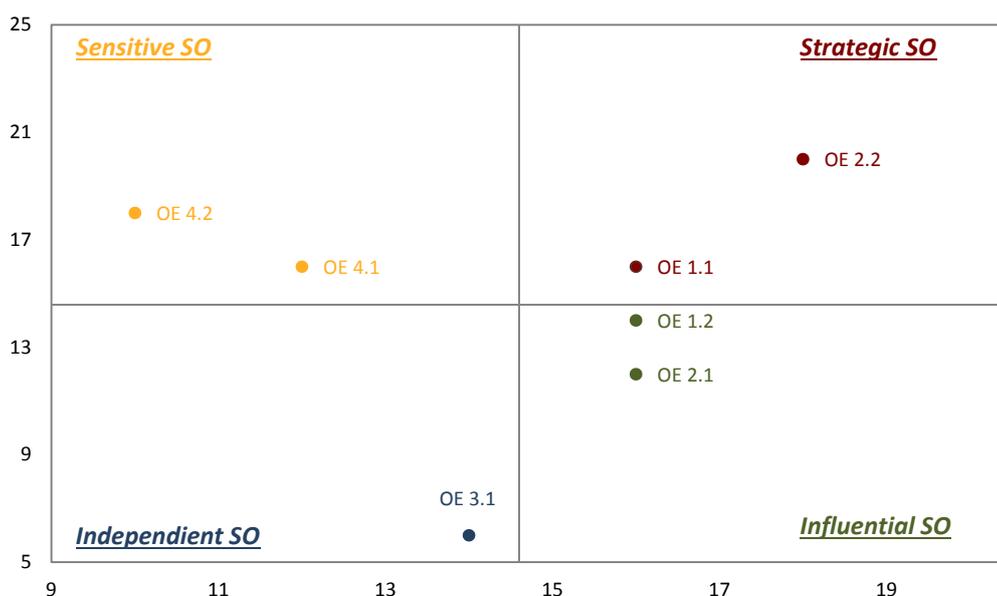
Source: produced by RegioPlus

A further step in the analysis allows establishing a hierarchic categorisation of the objectives, taking as criteria the degree of influence and sensitivity of each objective with regard to the others. These criteria allow gathering the different objectives in the following categories:

- ✦ **Influential Specific Objectives** with a high degree of influence over the rest. Therefore, these objectives have a high degree of influence and will be considered as basic and strategic in the OP.
- ✦ **Sensitive Specific Objectives.** The success in achieving the objectives under this category depends significantly on the achievement of other objectives in the OP. Therefore, these objectives present a high grade of dependence towards the rest.
- ✦ **Strategic Specific Objectives.** These objectives present a high level of influence over the others and, at the same time, they are considerably dependent on the rest of objectives of the OP. Consequently, these objectives are considered as essential due to their multiplier effect.
- ✦ Finally, the **Independent Specific Objectives** with a lower degree of interdependence than other objectives. They do not influence the achievement of other objectives and are not dependent on the rest to advance in their accomplishment.

The results of the analysis confirm that the development of synergies among the Specific Objectives of the OP is coherent. Therefore, the existing potential synergies will favour the attainment of the OP's Strategy. In fact, only one Specific Objective falls under the category of Independent Specific Objectives.

**GRAPH 2. CATEGORISATION OF SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SYNERGIES**



- SO 1.1: Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to Foster competitiveness.
- SO 1.2: Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes.
- SO 2.1: Fostering Renewable energies and energy efficiency.
- SO 2.2: Fostering green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency.
- SO 3.1: Strengthening risk management systems.
- SO 4.1: Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services.
- SO 4.2: Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.

Source: Produced by RegioPlus

SOs under Axis 1 aimed at stimulating innovation and competitiveness in the Atlantic Area come with a high influential condition. In particular, SO 1.1 aimed at enhancing the innovation capacity through cooperation falls under the category of Strategic SOs, whereas SO 1.2, more focused on strengthening the transfer of innovation results, falls under the group of Influential SOs. Evidently, progress in the achievement of SO 1.1 will feed the advancement towards SO 1.2. In addition, both SOs under Axis 1 will have a positive influence in the achievement of the rest of SOs. In particular, the improvement of the innovation environment in the Atlantic Area will surely have a positive impact on the spreading of renewable energies, on eco-innovation and green growth, on the exploitation of cultural and natural assets and to a less extent on the improvement of risk management systems as well as on the protection of biodiversity. All these fields will benefit from an increased innovation capacity in the Atlantic Area

that should translate in innovative solutions (products, services and processes) that may accelerate the achievement of the rest of SOs set out in the AATC-OP. In order to ensure the maximum impact of SOs 1.1 and 1.2, interventions aimed at stimulating innovation must focus, as stated in the AATC-OP, in those common sectors identified in the regional RIS3 strategies in which the Atlantic Area shows comparative competitive advantages and that may clearly accelerate intelligent growth in the cooperation area.

Similarly, SOs under Axis 2 score over the average in terms of influence. Furthermore, SO 2.2 is also strongly permeable to advances in other SOs, hence its Strategic condition. In this sense, the enforcement of green growth and eco-innovation is highly dependent on innovative solutions that may emerge from SOs 1.1 and 1.2. Advancing in SO 2.2 means contributing to smart and sustainable growth based on strategic sectors of the Atlantic Area and, at the same time, means also addressing the important environmental and climate challenges that the Area faces and are consequently addressed by other SOs of the AATC-OP. On the other hand, the consecution of SO 2.1 is also noticeably responsive to advances in SOs 1.1 and 1.2, as research advances and innovative solutions in the field of renewable energy sources will have an impact on its spreading, which keeps a close relation with the technological-driven strand of SO 2.1. Moreover, the development of favourable conditions for the sector of renewable energy will contribute to the achievement of those SOs of the AATC-OP with a clear environmental focus by reducing the pressure that industry, the economy and society is putting on the environment and on natural resources.

On the other side, those SOs under Priority Axis 4 present a higher degree of sensitivity. Obviously, the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, but mainly the exploitation of natural and cultural asset may be enforced by the strengthening of the innovation capacity in the Atlantic Area. Additionally, the spreading of renewable energies (SO 2.1), the fostering of green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency (SO 2.2) as well as the amelioration of risk management systems (SO 3.1) will have a positive impact on the biodiversity and natural heritage of the Atlantic Area. Therefore, SOs 4.1 and 4.2 are highly responsive to the rest of SOs included in the AATC-OP.

Finally, SO 3.1 scores under the average in terms of influence and sensitivity. Its independent character is explained by the fact that SO 3.1 only influences directly environmentally associated SOs 4.1 and 4.2 and to a less extent SO 2.2 related to green growth and eco-efficiency. Evidently, improvements in risk management systems will strengthen the territories' resilience to disasters and consequently will also have a positive impact on the enhancement of biodiversity and natural resources as aimed by those actions under Axis 4 of the AATC-OP.

The main conclusion is then confirmed. All AATC-OP's Specific Objectives present interdependence relations or mutual reinforcement although in different intensities. As a result, the sum of individual objectives reinforces the overall strategy of the AATC-OP through an increased efficiency and efficacy of the impact of the selected Investment Priorities.

### 2.2.2. Analysis of external coherence

From the point of view of the EU Regional Policy, territory does not become a restrictive factor but an enabler and driver of development. Consequently, this policy plays a central role in valorising the territory. However, it is clear that impulses for growth should not only come from the Regional Policy as a structural instrument but also from the rest of sectorial policies and programmes of the EU.

As a consequence, together with Regional Policy, these other EU policies and programmes must contribute to the balanced development of the Union by pursuing a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Following this approach, the implementation of the AATC-OP must not be seen as isolated. Contributions from other EU financial programmes with which the AATC-OP shares action fields, instruments or objectives are essential or even imperative. The complementarity of the different programmes and instruments should allow a higher efficiency in the results and an increased impact of the funded interventions as well as a greater sustainability of the actions undertaken.

The main European financing programmes to be considered in the implementation of the AATC-OP in order to find potential and existing synergies as well as complementarities that optimise results are the following:

	<b>INITIATIVE "HORIZON 2020"</b> : Aims to contribute to building an economy based on knowledge and innovation across the EU, as well as setting up the European Research Area.
	<b>MECHANISM "CONNECTING EUROPE"</b> : Programme to accelerate long-term investments in roads, railways, electricity grids and fast broadband networks.
	<b>INITIATIVE "LIFE"</b> : promotes the integration of environmental considerations into the formulation and execution of policies, contributing to sustainable development.
	<b>PROGRAMME "NER300"</b> : financing commercial demonstration projects of CO2 capture and storage as well as demonstration projects of innovative technologies of renewable energy.
	<b>PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND INNOVATION</b> : will integrate the existing programmes "Progress" (employment and social solidarity), "EURES" (European Employment Services) and the "European Progress Microfinance Facility".
	<b>PROGRAMME "CREATIVE EUROPE"</b> : continuation of the Programmes MEDIA and CULTURE 2007-2013. Seeks to value culture as a factor of the Europe 2020 Strategy to strengthen the competitiveness of the creative and cultural sector, especially SMEs.
	<b>PROGRAMME "ERASMUS"</b> : seeks to meet the teaching and learning needs of all participants in formal higher education and tertiary vocational training.
	<b>PROGRAMME "LEONARDO DA VINCI"</b> : aims to improve the competitiveness of the European labour market, helping to achieve new skills and knowledge. It also supports innovations and improvements in professional training systems.

The analysis of the external coherence of the AATC-OP is based on the estimation of the efficiency and compatibility relations that the programme has with these other Union instruments. The result is a ranking that ranges from a situation of "contradiction", in the most negative side, to a situation of "synergy" in the positive side.

- ✦ **Contradiction**: the interventions of the AATC-OP and the respective programme produce opposite results that limit the positive impact on the territory or the beneficiaries.
- ✦ **Competition**: the interventions of the AATC-OP and the other programme share certain aspects (beneficiaries, kind of activities, productive sector...) but access to finance is different, giving place to "substitution effects".

- ✦ **Duplication:** the respective interventions of both programmes target the same beneficiaries in a common territory and through comparable supporting actions and lines.
- ✦ **Loopholes:** due to a lack of coordination, among other possible reasons, the respective interventions do not cover some areas or fields that are considered critical.
- ✦ **Neutrality:** there is no interaction between the actions of both programmes. Beneficiaries are different and expected measures do not coincide.
- ✦ **Complementarity:** the proposed interventions of both programmes share common objectives.
- ✦ **Synergies:** the potential impact of the actions proposed in both programmes is greater than the mere sum the same actions considered separately.

Conclusions show that there exist potential complementarities to be exploited between the OP and other Union’s programmes. Therefore, the impact of the OP can be reinforced by the intervention of these other programmes. The highest degree of efficiency and complementarity is observed between the OP and Horizon 2020 as well as with LIFE.

Table following table presents an assessment of the different dimensions that have been considered to determine the relations of efficiency and compatibility of the OP with regard to other Union programmes.

TABLE 6. COHERENCE BETWEEN THE AATC-OP AND OTHER EU PROGRAMMES

	H2020	CEF	LIFE	NER 300	PSCI	Erasmus+	COSME	Creative Europe
Contradiction	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
Competition	✦✦	✦	✦✦✦	✦	✦✦	✦	✦✦	✦
Duplication	✦✦	✦	✦✦	✦	✦	✦	✦✦	✦
Loopholes	✦	✦✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
Neutrality	✦	✦✦	✦	✦✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
Complementarity	✦✦✦	✦✦	✦✦✦	✦✦	✦✦	✦✦	✦✦	✦✦
Synergies	✦✦✦	✦	✦✦✦	✦✦	✦	✦✦	✦✦	✦✦

✦ Weak      ✦✦ Medium      ✦✦✦ High

Source: Produce by Regio Plus

✦ **Horizon 2020, the EU Framework programme for Research and innovation 2014-2020 (H2020)**

H2020 is the new EU framework programme for research and innovation to be implemented during the 2014-2020 period. In addition to the traditional support of EU framework programmes to research and innovation, H2020 will support also, for the first time, innovation. Therefore, H2020 will fund the whole innovation chain, from fundamental research to the market. Moreover, H2020 has to help structuring and completing the European Research Area and give impulse to the knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation) in Europe.

H2020 is the main European instrument to implement the innovation Union, one of the Flagships established by the Strategy Europe 2020. Therefore it shares the challenges and objectives of this Strategy. This fact definitely favours the relation of complementarity with the AATC-OP. Although both have distinct objectives, they share the same strategic goals of serving the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Both share the aim to enforce the European scientific system and promote competitiveness and innovation in Europe. However they propose different strategies to achieve these objectives:

- ✦ H2020 focuses on excellence in R+I. Projects are selected at EU level through independent and excellence based reviews stemming from competitive calls for proposals. Considering that capacities, infrastructures and resources devoted to R+I differ from region to region in Europe a balanced geographical participation in the programme is not expected, as there is no pre-defined geographic distribution of funding.
- ✦ The AATC-OP, on the other hand, offers place-based funding and is better suited to develop and enforce the existing R+I capacities along the frontier and, consequently, improve the competitiveness of the Atlantic area. Projects and actions are selected on the basis of economic, social and territorial impact criteria and specifically involve actors from the Atlantic area. The aim is to ensure a sufficient critical mass in the cooperation area able to compete with the best European research centres. The approach is more open than the one of H2020 and more adaptable to the needs of the socioeconomic agents of the Atlantic area in terms of R+I.

Although H2020 and the AATC-OP keep distinct features, interactions of both are expected to be increased during the period 2014-2020. The AATC-OP is a valuable instrument to finance those topics that are important for the Atlantic cooperation area and that may not be covered by H2020 work programmes or calls for proposals. Moreover during the period 2014-2020 Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), and consequently the AATC-OP, may help the Atlantic area to develop stairways to excellence through capacity building and support to an innovation-enabling environment. The AATC-OP is a well-placed upstream instrument to prepare actors of the Atlantic area to participate in H2020 projects (Stairway to Excellence). In particular, the AATC-OP is a valuable instrument for capacity building for R&I excellence and technological change. Nonetheless, Investment Priority 1A is not addressed by the AATC-OP.

However, The AATC-OP may also increase the participation of regional actors in H2020 by joining existing capacities and resources in frontier territories included in the Atlantic cooperation area. This should allow optimising the capacity of attracting resources. In fact, the Investment Priority 1B and the Specific Objective 1.1 will enhance innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness.

At the same time, the AATC-OP may support downstream actions. The programme may be used to provide the means to exploit and diffuse R&I results stemming from H2020 funded research into the market for social and economic benefit or to increase innovation in enterprises through dissemination and adoption of new technologies, technology transfer or applied research. Precisely, the AATC-OP entails the Investment Priority 1B and its Specific Objective 1.2 allow downstream actions from H2020.

Finally it must be highlighted that through its new Priority aimed to tackle the main societal challenges that Europe is facing, H2020 will support R&I projects in all the main intervention areas of the AATC-OP. Consequently, besides its direct relation with the Priority Axis 1 of the AATC-OP, H2020 will also intervene through a challenge-based approach in the fields of renewable energy and resource efficiency (Priority Axis 2 of the AATC-OP), risk management (Priority Axis 2) and enhancing biodiversity and natural and cultural assets (Priority Axis 3). In particular, H2020 deals with these topics through its Societal Challenge 2 (food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime research and Bioeconomy), Societal Challenge 3 (Secure, clean and efficient energy) and Societal Challenge 4 (Climate Action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials).

To sum up, relations of efficiency and complementarity between AATC-OP with H2020 are potentially high. However, there exists also a considerable risk of

duplication because both programmes share objectives, action fields and some potential beneficiaries. However, if an adequate level of political and strategic coordination is in place there is a lot of room for complementarities and synergies. Whereas H2020 will reward scientific and innovation excellence, the AATC-OP is well placed to build this excellence in the Atlantic area and maximise the benefits stemming from actions supported by H2020.

### ✦ Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

The CEF is the new EU's funding mechanism for infrastructure projects of common interest for trans-European transport, energy and telecoms networks. The aim of the CEF is to fill the missing links and, consequently, accelerate the completion of trans-European networks and help to leverage funding from the public and the private sector. By focusing on smart, sustainable and fully interconnected transport, energy and digital networks, the CEF will help to complete the European single market. New infrastructure also needs arise in connection with the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Fostering Europe's transformation into a knowledge-intensive, low-carbon and highly competitive economy requires adequate modern and flexible energy, transport and digital infrastructure networks. Therefore, as in the above-mentioned case for H2020, the alignment of the CEF with the Europe 2020 Strategy favours potential positive interconnections with the AATC-OP.

In terms of coherence between the strategies of the AATC-OP and the CEF, there are not contradiction, competence or duplication aspects in the fields of transport and ICT. The former does not include the Thematic Objective 2 on access to ICT. Just as in the aforementioned case, the Thematic Objective 7 and its Investment priorities devoted to promote a sustainable transport and to the elimination of bottlenecks in fundamental infrastructures are not included in the AATC-OP although weaknesses in this field have been identified in the diagnosis.

On the other hand, energy is a topic included in the Specific Objective 2.1 aimed at Fostering Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency under Priority Axis 2 (Investment Priority 4.A). However, the focus of the AATC-OP differs from the one of the CEF. The former is more oriented to promote renewable energies as well as to increase energy efficiency and to reduce the energy consume. Alternatively, the CEF is more preoccupied with modernising infrastructures of energy transmission and ensuring Europe's energy supply. Nonetheless, the promotion of renewables and a potential increased presence of these sources of energy in the Atlantic Area would benefit from improved trans-European energy interconnections and infrastructures. Moreover, eventual improved transnational infrastructures capable of integrating renewables could stimulate their spread as an extended

source of energy in the Atlantic area. For all these reasons there are certain synergies that can be consolidated in the long-term between the AATC-OP and the CEF.

#### ✦ EU Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE):

LIFE is the financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU. During the period 2014-2020, LIFE will contribute to sustainable development and to the achievement of the objectives and targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy and other relevant EU environment and climate objectives. Once again, the common orientation of LIFE and the AATC-OP towards the Europe 2020 Strategy opens the door to possible synergies and complementarities.

LIFE is structured around two sub-programmes:

- ✦ The *Environment sub-programme* covers three priority areas; environment and resource efficiency; nature and biodiversity; and environmental governance and information.
- ✦ The *Climate sub-programme* includes as priority areas adaptation, mitigation and information.

Priority Axes 2 (Fostering Resource Efficiency), 3 (Strengthening risk management) and 4 (Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and cultural assets) of the AATC-OP share action fields with LIFE. For this reason, the risk of duplications between both programmes should not be underestimated.

The AATC-OP, through its Priority Axis 4, pretends to enhance biodiversity and the natural and cultural assets of the Atlantic Area. In particular, Specific Objective 4.1 aims at improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem's services. Within LIFE's Environment sub-programme, specific funding is also targeted at biodiversity including support for innovative and demonstration projects to tackle wider biodiversity issues. These can range from the creation of green infrastructure, such as species corridors, to climate change adaptation measures and the removal of invasive species. Other projects to be financed by LIFE contribute indirectly to the EU's goal of halting biodiversity loss. Conserving threatened habitats and species is also a priority in LIFE. All these kind of actions can also be supported by IP 6D in order to achieve SO 4.1, aimed at a better protected and preserved biodiversity in the Atlantic area while enhancing environmental resources through and improved cooperation framework to achieve better coordinated environmental management systems.

Furthermore, Priority Axis 3 of the AATC-OP aims at strengthening risk management systems. Risk management has also been a traditional action field of LIFE as several projects have been exploring ways of managing environmental risks, from those associated with human activities to natural risks. This goal is also present in the AATC-OP which, through Investment Priority 5B aims also at strengthening risk management in the Atlantic area. In addition, the sort of actions to be undertaken under both programmes shows *a priori* a high degree of coincidence.

The other field of intervention present in the AATC-OP and traditionally addressed by LIFE is Eco-innovation. Through IP 6G the AATC-OP pretends to achieve the Specific Objective of fostering green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency in the Atlantic area. LIFE has supported eco-innovation in the financing period 2007-2013. However, it seems that in the present programming period, the EU pretends to gather support for eco-innovation under the new Horizon 2020.

If the risk of duplication is high for the AATC-OP and LIFE due to their action fields and objectives, this risk is accentuated by the fact that both programmes target similar beneficiaries: relevant socioeconomic stakeholders in terms of environment and climate action, mainly public authorities in different levels of government. Furthermore, the channels and instruments of both programmes are quite similar: collaborative projects that in LIFE, differently than in other EU programmes, do not require an unavoidable European dimension.

For all these reasons, if an adequate strategic approach is not in place, competition issues may arise (both programmes address the same topics and beneficiaries) and also duplication problems (similar actions in the Atlantic Area). Despite of this fact, with a proper strategic planning, important complementarities and synergies may emerge, especially through the so-called "Integrated projects", for which Member States and regions are requested to promote the complementarity and coordination of ESI Funds with LIFE.

Finally, it is important to mention that LIFE will apply are more "Top-down" approach during the present financing period. Although "bottom-up" projects will still be present, topics to be supported are more detailed and limited than in previous calls for proposals. Consequently, there can be an increased room for AATC-OP to finance those topics and aspects not covered in LIFE and which are of strategic preference for the Atlantic cooperation area.

#### ✦ Programa NER 300:

NER 300 is the EU funding programme for innovative low-carbon energy demonstration projects. The programme is conceived as a catalyst for the demonstration of environmentally safe carbon capture and storage (CCS) and

innovative renewable energy (RES) technologies on a commercial scale within the European Union. NER 300 will support the best possible CCS and RES projects in Europe. The programme intends to support a wide range of CCS technologies (pre-combustion, post-combustion, oxyfuel and industrial application) and RES technologies (bioenergy, concentrated solar power, photovoltaics, geothermal, wind, ocean, hydropower and smart grids).

The AATC-OP promotes, mainly through IP 4A, actions aimed at fostering renewable energies. However, the main aim in this domain is to improve cooperation contributing to an adapted institutional and technical environment that should enable the development of favourable conditions for the sector of local renewable energy. This should result in a better position of the Atlantic area in the sector of renewable energies. Therefore, the focus of the AATC-OP is to develop favourable conditions for the rise of the local renewable energy sector through exchanges on local policies for the development of renewable energies with regard to research resource mapping, sharing of reference as concerns clusters, and the legal framework provided for the sector.

Although improving R&D demonstration in the field of renewables is pretended by the AATC-OP, the main mean proposed to this end is the enhancement of cooperation between private, public and research actors. On the other hand, NER 300 is uniquely focused in the development of solutions close to the market and funding covers only 50%. The rest must be financed by the private sector or Member states that could use Structural and Investment Funds for this purpose. In addition, NER 300 allows also "Trans-Boundary Projects" that could be partly financed by ESIF. In this sense, eventual initiatives or projects of interest for the whole Atlantic Area could use AATC-OP Funds for co-financing the NER300 project.

Therefore, there are some potential complementarities and synergies between the programmes as both have the development of renewable energy as a goal. However, it is also true that their approach to the development of renewables diverge. AATC-OP addresses the challenge from a more policy planning point of view through soft measures mainly aimed at promoting a better political, social and economic environment that should increase the presence of renewables in the Atlantic area. On the other hand, NER 300 targets explicitly demonstration and commercialisation projects.

#### **Programme for Employment and Social innovation (EaSI):**

EaSI will support Member States efforts in the design of employment and social reforms at European, national and regional and local levels by means of policy coordination, capacity-building and the identification, analysis and sharing of best practices. The idea is to implement some pilot actions to be developed afterwards

at greater scale. The general aim is to combat high unemployment rates, poverty, social exclusion and population ageing among others.

Levels of contradiction, competitiveness or duplication between the EaSI and the AATC-OP are low as their thematic scope differs. Furthermore, the action fields of EaSI (employment policies, social integration, working conditions, no discrimination or gender equality) are not directly addressed by the AATC-OP. However, the principles of non-discrimination and gender equality are horizontal in the AATC-OP.

#### ✈ Erasmus+ Programme:

Erasmus+ is the new EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. Erasmus+ aims to boost skills and employability as well as modernising education, Training and Youth Works. The programme will support transnational partnerships among institutions and organisations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of education and work in order to tackle skill gaps that Europe is facing. It will also support national efforts to modernise education, training and youth systems.

At first sight, the AATC-OP does not share fields of action with Erasmus+. None of the objectives or investment priorities of the AATC-OP addresses directly issues related with Education, Training, Youth or Sport.

Having said that, it is true that education, research and innovation are the three sides of the knowledge triangle and the pillars of a knowledge-based economy. Given that the AATC-OP covers Investment Priority 1B and its Specific Objective 1.1 is aimed at enhancing the innovation capacity in the Atlantic area, some general complementarity can be found with Erasmus+. The achievement of the Specific Objective 1.1 can definitely benefit from a high rate of participation of the Atlantic Area in Erasmus+. Boosting skills and employability in the area through participation in Erasmus+ can only increase the innovation performance of the area. The actions of Erasmus+ aimed to the learning mobility of individuals (educational staff and students mobility, joint master degrees or student loans) and those aimed to the cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices (strategic partnerships between education/training organisations or partnerships between education/training organisations and business) are especially relevant for the AATC-OP and its objective to enhance the innovation capacity of the area through cooperation.

Furthermore, inside the Specific Objective 1.1 of the AATC-OP some actions can be taken to increase skills of employees and employability in many sectors and to support programmes for training and the adaptation of training systems in order to uptake and diffuse innovation. Therefore, complementarities are observed

between the AATC-OP and Erasmus+ in this field. These complementarities could even become synergies in the long-term if both programmes are used effectively.

To sum up, Erasmus+ and the AATC-OP do not present problems of competence or duplication of efforts. In fact, there are opportunities in form of complementarities and even synergies between both programmes, especially in the field of education, development of capacities and skills and promotion of entrepreneurship. Actions of Erasmus+ and of its predecessors (especially the Lifelong Learning Programme and the International Higher Education Programmes) aimed to improve education and training should definitely improve human capital in the Atlantic area in order to meet the needs of innovative business and industries. The final result would be an improved overall innovation performance and competitiveness as aimed by Priority Axis 1.

For all these reasons there is a bidirectional relation between the AATC-OP and Erasmus+. The former may be a first step in order to take actions that after could be funded by the latter. At the same time, the AATC-OP can offer funding to successful experiences that had previously obtained support by Erasmus+, or its predecessors, in sectors of interest for the Atlantic area.

#### **✦ Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME):**

COSME aims at encouraging the competitiveness of European enterprises. SMEs, entrepreneurs and business support organisations are the main targets of the programme. The main aims of COSME are: facilitating Access to finance for SMEs; creating an environment favourable to SME creation and growth; encouraging an entrepreneurial culture in Europe; strengthening the sustainable competitiveness of EU enterprises; and supporting the internationalisation of SMEs and improving their Access to market.

Although Thematic Objective 3 of the ERDF Regulation aimed at enhancing SMEs competitiveness is not included in the AATC-OP, there is a direct relation of the operational programme, and in particular of its Axis 1, and COSME. Under the Specific Objectives 1.1 and 1.2, aimed respectively at enhancing innovation capacity and to strengthening innovation results transfer, some actions may be undertaken that open the door to complementarities and opportunities for impact maximisation. However it must be noted that there is a potential risk of duplication, mainly in the field of promoting entrepreneurship and strengthening and internationalising SMEs as well as for innovation and technology transfer.

The main difference between both programmes is the focus. COSME will assign 60% of its resources to improve the access of SME to finance. This kind of actions are not under the scope of the AATC-OP which will, among many other actions aimed to

enhance innovation, devote its efforts to the creation of networks of SMEs and support its internationalisation. Offering direct funding or access to finance for SMEs is not foreseen in the AATC-OP.

Regarding entrepreneurship, actions to be taken under the Specific Objective 1.1 of the AATC-OP may address the need to improve creativity and entrepreneurial mindsets, which coincides with COSME's objective to promote an entrepreneurial culture. Therefore, there is place for complementarity but the risk of duplication should not be underestimated. These precautions must be also raised in the field of innovation and technology transfer to be promoted by the AATC-OP under its Specific Objective 1.2 and by COSME under its chapter aimed to improve access to markets. Duplications are likely to appear in this action field if adequate policy coordination is not in place.

Nevertheless, despite the risk of duplication is high due to the type of actions to be undertaken and the kind of potential beneficiaries, mainly SMEs, the degree of replication is reduced by the divergent funding procedures of both programmes. Similarly to Horizon 2020, COSME will offer funding through competitive calls for proposals at European level, which implies high competition and low rates of success due to expected high number of proposals and reduced available resources. On the other hand, SMEs and entrepreneurs of the Atlantic area will supposedly have easier access to the funding of the AATC-OP. Furthermore, the AATC-OP has a higher potential to meet the specific needs of the potential beneficiaries in the area of cooperation due to its territorialised approach.

As a conclusion, and as it has been said before about Erasmus+, COSME has a potential to contribute to the achievement of the Specific Objective 1.1 of the AATC-OP if sufficient coordination between the actions of both programmes is in place.

#### **✦ Creative Europe Programme:**

Creative Europe is the EU's Framework Programme for support to the culture and media sectors. Following previous Culture Programme and MEDIA programme will support cultural and audio-visual sectors initiatives as well as a cross-sectoral strand.

The AATC-OP includes actions in these fields to achieve its SO 4.2, valorising cultural assets. Above all, it focuses on aspects to enhance these cultural assets in order to stimulate economic development.

However, competitiveness, contradiction or duplication problems are not observed as Creative Europe aims to promote the competitiveness of the cultural sector in Europe through training of professionals and creating platforms and networks. Nonetheless, there is also room for collaborative projects aimed at the promotion of cultural assets. From this point of view, the emergence of complementarities should be promoted. The AATC-OP may help developing the

creative sector taking advantage of the cultural heritage available in the Atlantic Area. The enforcement of this sector would allow a posterior participation in the Creative Europe programme for their follow-up. This would surely contribute at placing the creative industry as one of the pillars for the competitiveness of the area.

#### RECOMEMENDATIONS REGARDIGNEXTERNAL COHERENCE

- + Monitoring calls for proposals of other EU programmes in order to avoid duplications and maximise opportunities in terms of synergies and complementarities that can be established between the AATC-OP and these other programmes.
- + Co-financing through the AATC-OP, whenever allowed, actions from other programmes in topics and action fields that are strategic for the Atlantic cooperation area.
- + Using the AATC-OP to prepare actors and join capacities, resources and efforts in the Atlantic area in order to increase the participation in other EU programmes, especially on those of clear competitive participation such as Horizon 2020.
- + Prioritising projects (in selection phases) that are a follow-up of actions financed by other EU programmes or projects that take advantage of results and methodologies from these other programmes.
- + Introducing in criteria for selection those aspects related to sustainability of interventions that prioritise the continuation of projects or the introduction of improvements through proposals to other financing programmes of the EU.

### 2.3. RELATION BETWEEN SUPPORTED ACTIONS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

#### 2.3.1. Representation of the AATC-OP's Intervention Logic

An assessment of the programme intervention logic of the AATC-OP has been carried out as part of this ex-ante evaluation. The purpose of assessing the Intervention Logic has been to verify whether the overall logic of the Operational Programme is coherent and consistent. The mapping of the intervention logic is also concerned with the identification and analysis of the inter-relationship between different objectives through a logic chain, the main activities planned designed to operationalize the Programme, and how, in turn, the results and outcomes achieved through programme implementation will contribute to the achievement of these objectives.

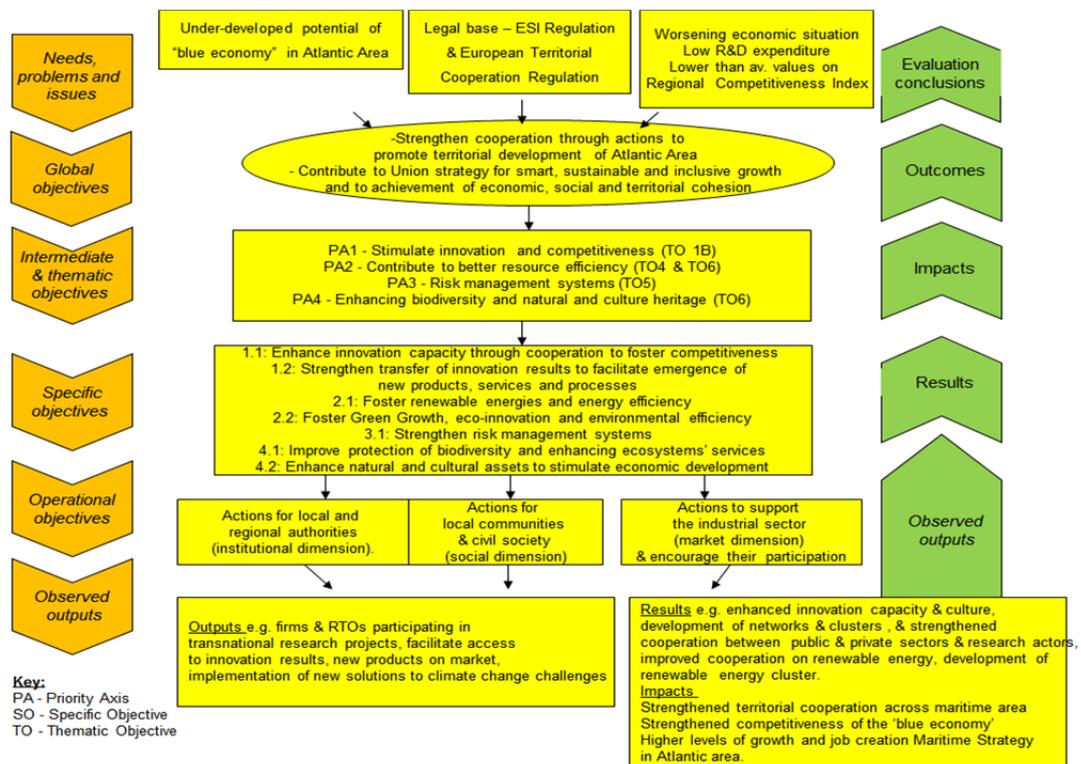
In carrying out the assessment, the ex-ante evaluators have:

- + Assessed the explanation of the overall programme rationale, the hierarchy of objectives and distinction between the global, specific and operational

objectives, the investment and thematic priorities, planned activities and the anticipated programme outcomes and how these will contribute to the achievement of objectives.

- + Reviewed the SWOT analysis and assessment of the macro-economic baseline situation and assessment of the extent of disparities between the Atlantic Area and the EU average.
- + Assessed the extent to which the rationale for intervention takes into account the EU policy context as regards the achievement of the Europe 2020 strategy and the objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and priorities through the European Structural and Investment Funds at national and regional levels set out in Partnership Agreements.

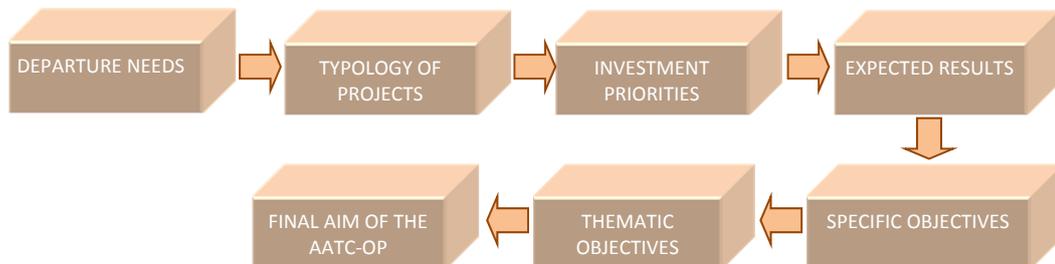
The general intervention logic for the Atlantic Area Programme is set out in the following diagram:



Having seen the overall intervention logic of the AATC-OP, an illustration of the intervention model of each Axis of the AATC-OP is presented following the Logical Framework approach. Departing from the Logical Framework, we can illustrate the

causal relations and describe the sequence of effects, from the developing of activities under a measure to the impacts of these activities.

GRAPH 1. INTERNAL CAUSAL RELATION OF MEASURES



In particular, the following elements are illustrated:

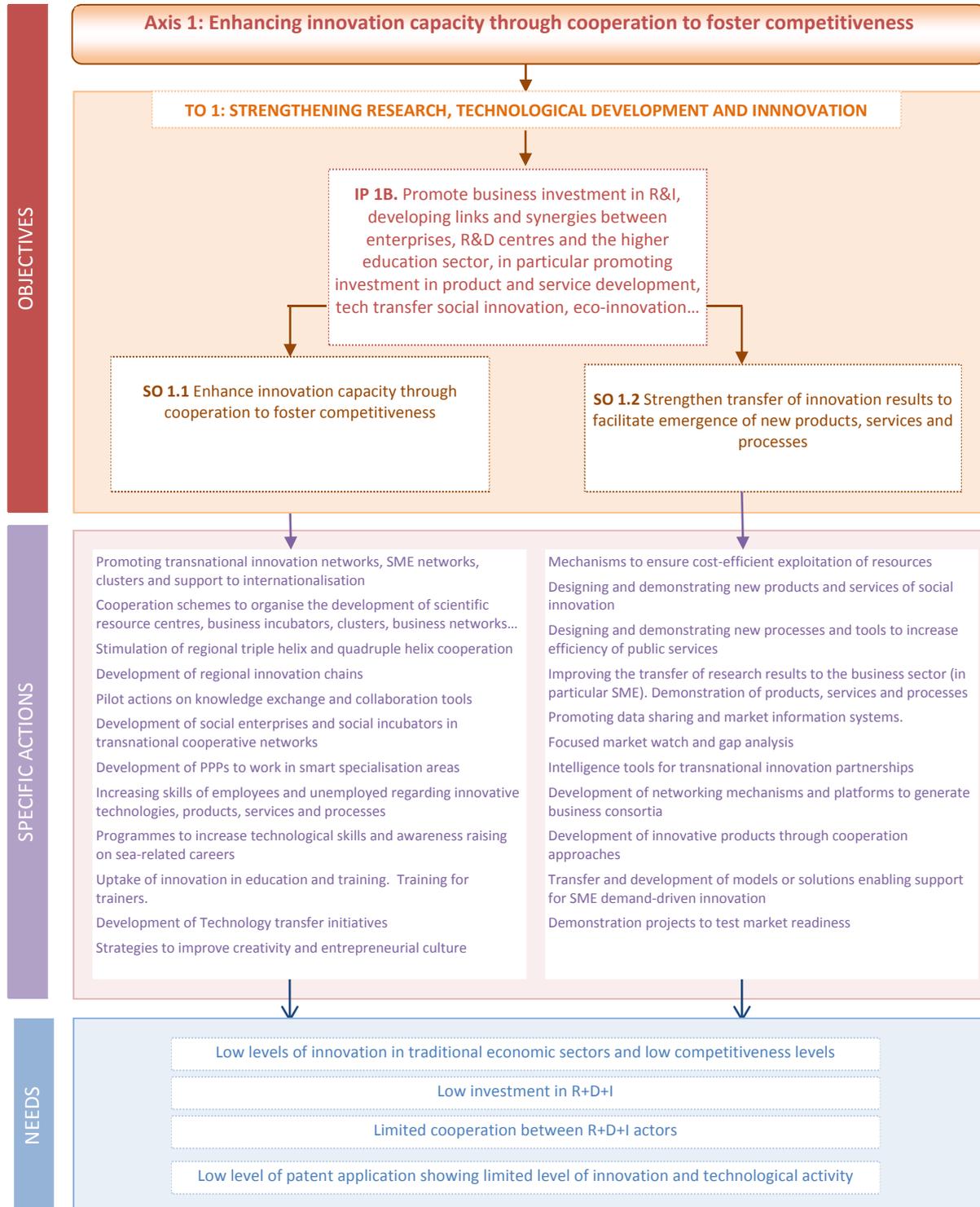
✦ **Effects Transmission channels**, that is, the “expected causality chain” or the “cause-effect” relations. The aim is to establish the links among actions to be undertaken under each Investment Priority and their expected results. Therefore, it is observed if those relations are strong enough to confirm that the actions are a determining factor for the result.

Given that the final result of the implementation of a Project is the consequence of several inputs (some of them controllable due to an internal causal relation already foreseen and other which are exogenous to the Project), considering all or most of them will allow or not to confirm the responsibility of each Investment Priority on the achieved results.

✦ **Information flows** that should be generated in each of the links of the causality chain in order to ensure that the evaluation of the strategy can be done. Two kinds of information are considered to ensure the functionality of the evaluation model. First, Quantitative Information on relevant aspects for the implementation of the programme which can be simplified in indexes and indicators subject to an objective analysis. And second, Qualitative Information or value judgements on the real conditions under which the project has been developed, including other possible non add-on indicators at Investment Priority level.

✦ **Unexpected impacts** that actions may generate. The simulation of transmission channels may give place to unexpected effects that should be integrated in the model. The utility of the evaluation would be enriched by the addition of these unexpected effects.

**a) Axis 1: Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness**

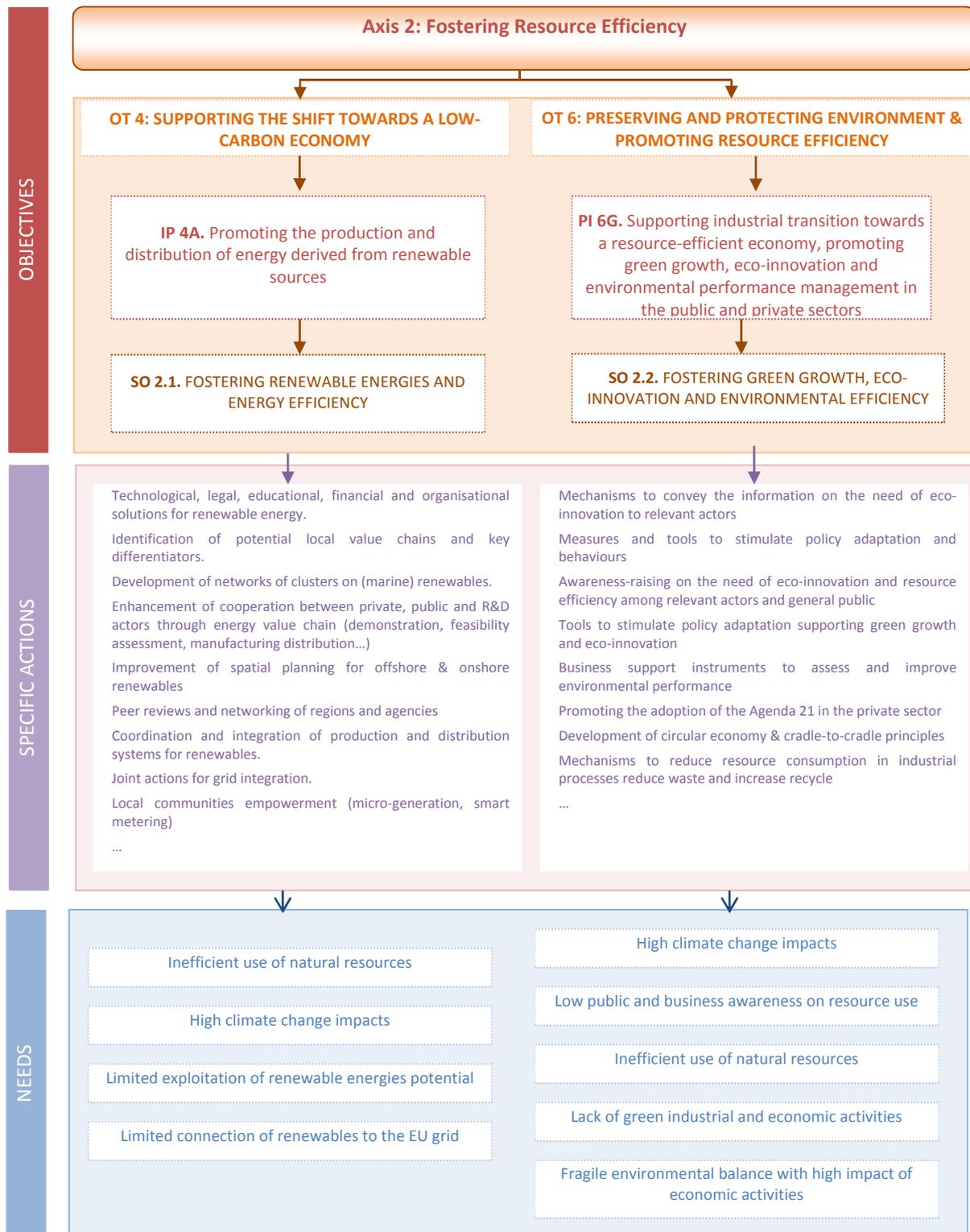


**a.1) IP 1B: Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector.**

INTERVENTION LOGIC		INDICATORS OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE		SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS / EXTERNAL FACTORS	POSSIBLE IMPACTS & UNEXPECTED EFFECTS
TO	Strengthening research, technological development and innovation					Public and private investment in R&I does not decrease.
IP	IP 1.B: Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector...					Increased participation in other programmes that support R&D&I Possible brain drain of R&I human capital
SO	1.1.Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness	1.2 Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for the development of regional innovation systems	Financing absorptive capacity index addressing the access of business, social and public organisations to innovation results	Result Indicators	Regional systems of science and technology are properly articulated Technological externalities coming from dissemination of obtained innovations
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	Promoting transnational innovation networks, SME networks, clusters and support to internationalisation Cooperation schemes to organise the development of scientific resource centres, business incubators, clusters, business networks... Stimulation of regional triple helix and quadruple helix cooperation Development of regional	Mechanisms to ensure cost-efficient exploitation of resources Designing and demonstrating new products and services of social innovation Designing and demonstrating new processes and tools to increase efficiency of public services Improving the transfer of research results to the business sector (in particular SME). Demonstration of	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented Number of technical and scientific publications produced Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results		Common Output indicators	Selected projects focus on those sectors opened to public-private cooperation and address scientific and technological fields with higher potential for the AA Participant Research Centres are efficient in their R&I planning and their results have an impact in the cooperation area. Possible market digressions in local economies

INTERVENTION LOGIC		INDICATORS OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE		SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS / EXTERNAL FACTORS	POSSIBLE IMPACTS & UNEXPECTED EFFECTS
	<p>innovation chains</p> <p>Pilot actions on knowledge exchange and collaboration tools</p> <p>Development of social enterprises and social incubators in transnational cooperative networks</p> <p>Development of PPPs to work in smart specialisation areas</p> <p>Increasing skills of employees and unemployed regarding innovative technologies, products, services and processes</p> <p>Programmes to increase technological skills and awareness raising on sea-related careers</p> <p>Uptake of innovation in education and training. Training for trainers.</p> <p>Development of Technology transfer initiatives</p> <p>Strategies to improve creativity and entrepreneurial culture</p>	<p>products, services and processes</p> <p>Promoting data sharing and market information systems.</p> <p>Focused market watch and gap analysis</p> <p>Intelligence tools for transnational innovation partnerships</p> <p>Development of networking mechanisms and platforms to generate business consortia</p> <p>Development of innovative products through cooperation approaches</p> <p>Transfer and development of models or solutions enabling support for SME demand-driven innovation</p> <p>Demonstration projects to test market readiness</p>	<p>Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects</p> <p>Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects</p>	<p>Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to market products</p> <p>Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products</p>	<p>Specific Output indicators</p>	<p>Participant enterprises have enough absorption capacity</p>
DEPARTURE NEEDS	Low levels of innovation in traditional economic sectors and low competitiveness levels	<p>% R&amp;I / GDP</p> <p>% Private R&amp;I / Total R&amp;I Investment</p> <p>N° patent applications</p> <p>Productive Specialisation Index</p>	<p>Eurostat</p> <p>Regional Innovation Scoreboard</p>	<p>Problems identified in the Diagnosis</p>		
	Low investment in R+D+I					
	Limited cooperation between R+D+I related actors and weak public-private interaction in R&I					
	Low level of patent application showing limited level of innovation and technological activity					
	Low specialisation in intensive technological activities					

**b) Axis 2: Fostering Resource Efficiency**



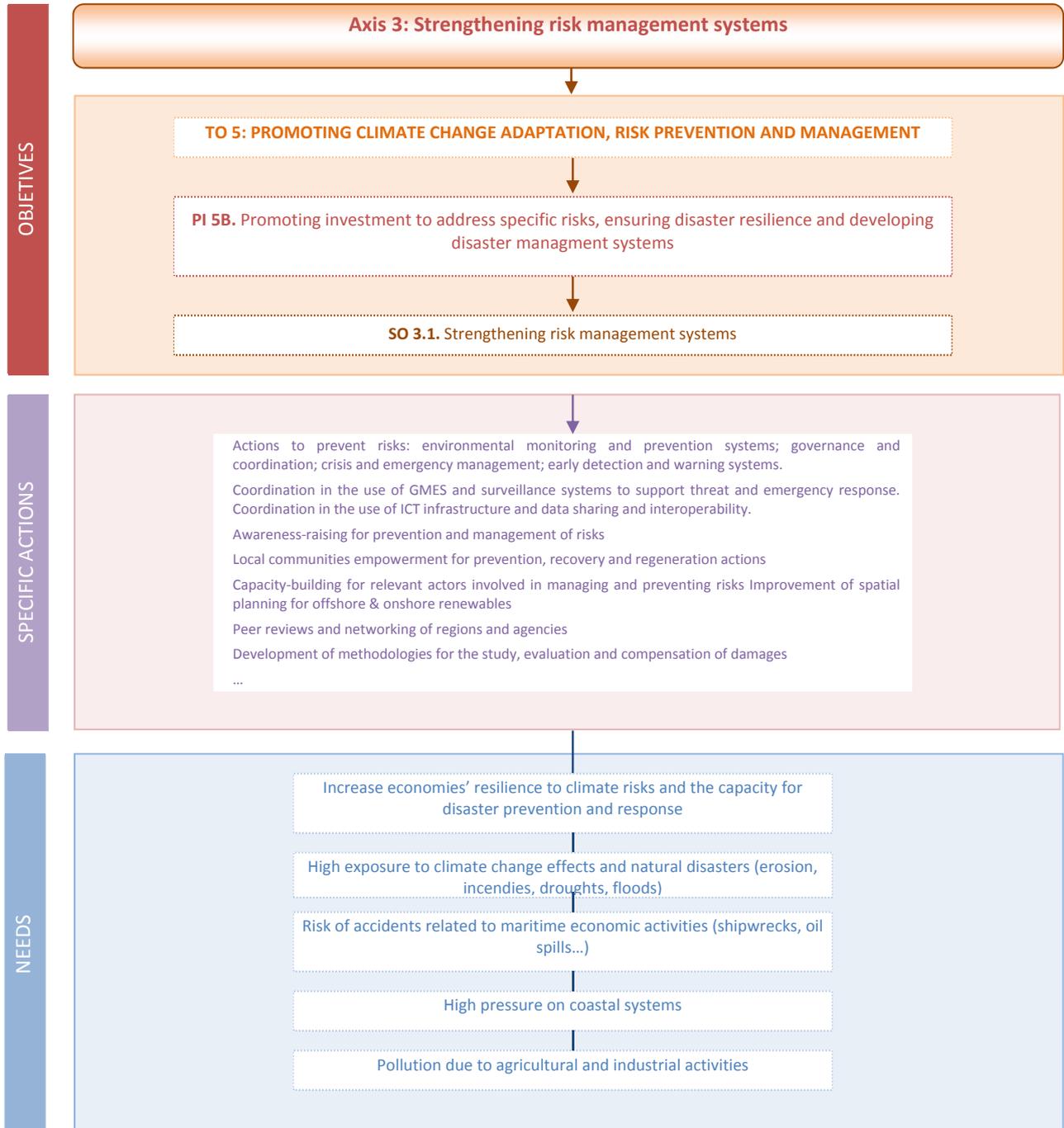
**b.1) IP 4A: Promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources**

INTERVENTION LOGIC		INDICATORS OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE	VERIFICATION SOURCES	ASSUMPTIONS / EXTERNAL FACTORS	POSSIBLE IMPACTS & UNEXPECTED EFFECTS
TO	SUPPORTING THE SHIFT TOWARDS A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY			International commitments regarding climate change are enforced	
IP	4.A Promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources				
SO	Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency	% of population covered by local sustainable energy action plans	Result Indicators	Complementarity with additional EU and other public interventions	Reduction of greenhouse gases emissions
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	Technological, legal, educational, financial and organisational solutions for renewable energy. Identification of potential local value chains and key differentiators. Development of networks of clusters on (marine) renewables. Enhancement of cooperation between private, public and R&D actors through energy value chain (demonstration, feasibility assessment, manufacturing distribution...) Improvement of spatial planning for offshore & onshore renewables Peer reviews and networking of regions and agencies Coordination and integration of production and distribution systems for renewables. Joint actions for grid integration. Local communities empowerment (micro-generation, smart metering) Policies for ultra-low energy buildings and high-energy savings ...	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented Number of technical and scientific publications produced Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Common output indicators		
		Additional capacity of renewable energy production	Specific Output Indicators		
NEEDS	Inefficient use of natural resources High climate change impacts Limited exploitation of renewable energies potential Limited connection or renewables to the EU grid	Renewable energy potential (wave, wind...)	ESPON	Problems identified in the Diagnosis	

**b.2) IP 6G: Supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors**

INTERVENTION LOGIC		INDICATORS OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS / EXTERNAL FACTORS	POSSIBLE IMPACTS & UNEXPECTED EFFECTS
TO	Preserving and protecting environment and promoting resource efficiency			Climate International commitments and the EU Resource-Efficiency Initiative are enforced	
IP	IP 6.G. Supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors			Awareness properly raised among the public and businesses	
SO	Fostering green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for eco-innovation and green growth	Result indicators	Complementarity with additional EU and other public interventions	
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	Mechanisms to convey the information on the need of eco-innovation to relevant actors Measures and tools to stimulate policy adaptation and behaviours Awareness-raising on the need of eco-innovation and resource efficiency among relevant actors and general public Tools to stimulate policy adaptation supporting green growth and eco-innovation Business support instruments to assess and improve environmental performance Promoting the adoption of the Agenda 21 in the private sector Development of circular economy & cradle-to-cradle principles Mechanisms to reduce resource consumption in industrial processes reduce waste and increase recycle ...	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented Number of technical and scientific publications produced Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Common output indicators		
NEEDS	Fragile environmental balance with high impact of anthropic activities High climate change impacts Inefficient use of natural resources Lack of green industrial and economic activities	Aggregate potential impact of climate change	ESPON	Problems identified in the Diagnosis	

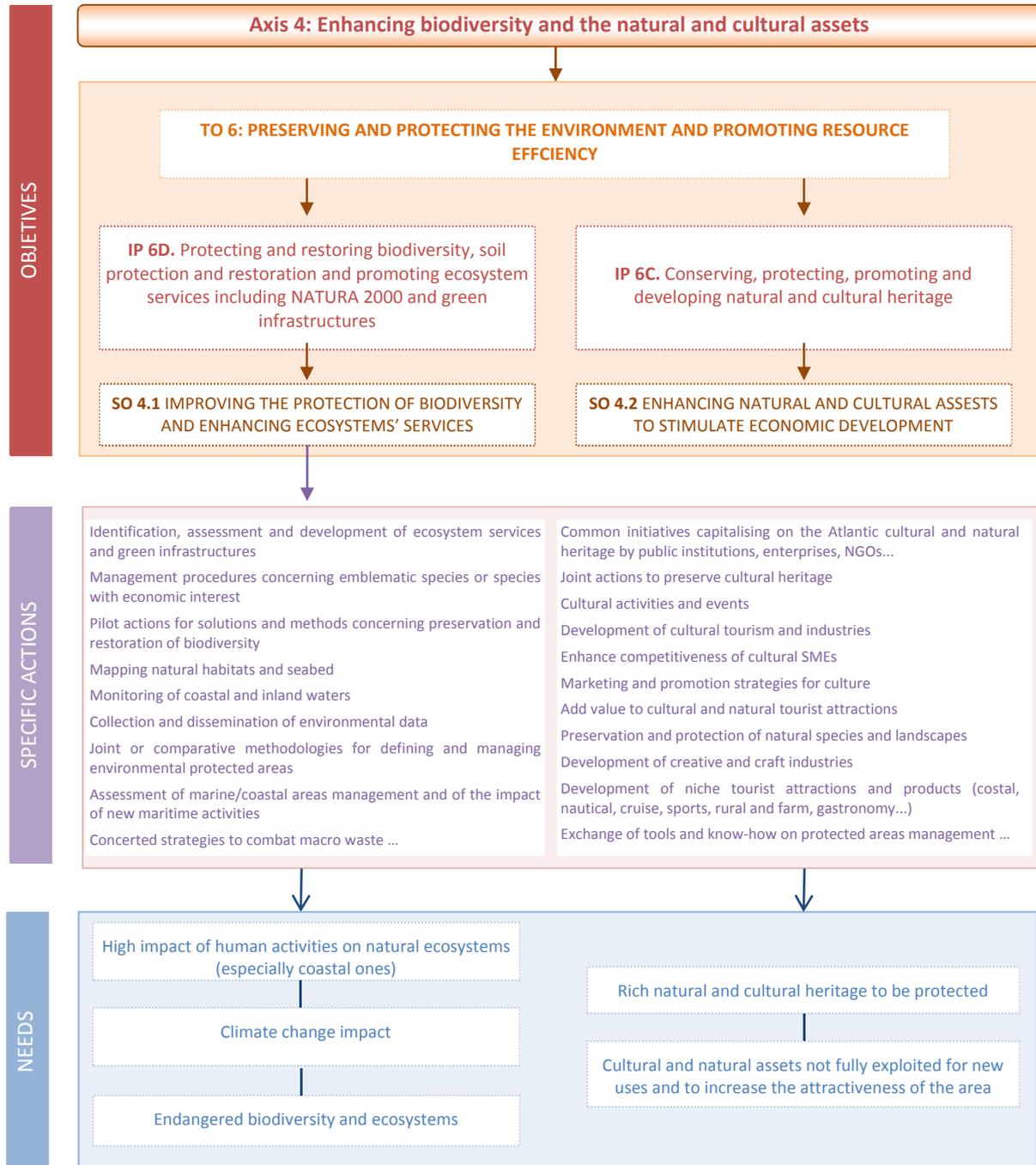
**c) Axis 3: Strengthening risk management systems**



**c.1) IP 5B: Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing management systems**

INTERVENTION LOGIC		INDICATORS OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS / EXTERNAL FACTORS	POSSIBLE IMPACTS & UNEXPECTED EFFECTS
TO	Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management			International commitments regarding climate change are observed	
IP	PI 5.B: Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing management systems				
SO	Strengthening risk management systems	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for the resilience of land and maritime areas to climate and nature changes	Result indicator	Risk management systems are correctly implemented. There exists complementarity criteria with other actions	Development of local economies and populations due to natural heritage preservation
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	<p>Actions to prevent risks: environmental monitoring and prevention systems; governance and coordination; crisis and emergency management; early detection and warning systems.</p> <p>Coordination in the use of GMES and surveillance systems to support threat and emergency response. Coordination in the use of ICT infrastructure and data sharing and interoperability.</p> <p>Awareness-raising for prevention and management of risks</p> <p>Local communities empowerment for prevention, recovery and regeneration actions</p> <p>Capacity-building for relevant actors involved in managing and preventing risks Improvement of spatial planning for offshore &amp; onshore renewables</p> <p>Peer reviews and networking of regions and agencies</p> <p>Development of methodologies for the study, evaluation and compensation of damages</p>	<p>Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented</p> <p>Number of technical and scientific publications produced</p> <p>Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced</p> <p>Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results</p> <p>Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results</p>	Common output indicators	Projects are located where potential risks and their degree are higher.	
NEEDS	<p>High exposure to climate change effects and natural disasters (erosion, fires, droughts, floods)</p> <p>Risk of accidents related to maritime economic activities (shipwrecks, oil spills...)</p> <p>High pressure on coastal systems</p> <p>Pollution due to agricultural and industrial activities</p>	<p>Aggregate potential impact of climate change and Combined adaptive capacity</p> <p>Seismic Hazard Maps; Soil erosion values; Flood Recurrence Index; Forest Fire Danger Index</p>	<p>ESPON</p> <p>European Environment Agency</p>		

**d) Axis 4: Enhancing biodiversity and the natural and cultural assets**



**d.1) PI 6D: Protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including Natura 2000 and green infrastructures**

INTERVENTION LOGIC		INDICATORS OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS / EXTERNAL FACTORS	POSSIBLE IMPACTS & UNEXPECTED EFFECTS
TO	Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency			Climate International commitments and the EU Resource-Efficiency Initiative are enforced	
IP	IP 6.D: Protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including Natura 2000 and green infrastructures				
SO	Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems services	Result indicators	Actions are implemented over elements formally protected or aim at their development	Development of local economies and populations due to natural preservation
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	Identification, assessment and development of ecosystem services and green infrastructures	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Common output indicators	Actions are implemented in cross-border natural areas of high interest from an environmental perspective	Increased pressure on certain resources due to an eventual increase of visitors
	Management procedures concerning emblematic species or species with economic interest	Number of technical and scientific publications produced			
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	Pilot actions for solutions and methods concerning preservation and restoration of biodiversity	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Specific Common Indicators		
	Mapping natural habitats and seabed	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results			
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	Monitoring of coastal inland waters	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results			
	Collection and dissemination of environmental data	Total surface area of rehabilitated land			
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	Joint or comparative methodologies for defining and managing environmental protected areas	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status			
	Assessment of marine/coastal areas management and of the impact of new maritime activities				
NEEDS	High impact of human activities on natural ecosystems (especially coastal and marine areas)	Soil use maps	European Environmental Agency	Problems identified in the Diagnosis	
	Climate change impact				
NEEDS	Endangered biodiversity and ecosystems				

**d.2) PI 6C. Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage**

INTERVENTION LOGIC		INDICATORS OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS / EXTERNAL FACTORS	POSSIBLE IMPACTS & UNEXPECTED EFFECTS
TO	Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency			Climate International commitments and the EU Resource-Efficiency Initiative are enforced	
IP	PI 6.C. Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage			Actions are implemented over elements formally protected or aim at their development	
SO	Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for cultural and natural assets as factor of local economic development	Result Indicator		
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	Common initiatives capitalising on the Atlantic cultural and natural heritage by public institutions, enterprises, NGOs... Joint actions to preserve cultural heritage Cultural activities and events Development of cultural tourism and industries Enhance competitiveness of cultural SMEs Marketing and promotion strategies for culture Add value to cultural and natural tourist attractions Preservation and protection of natural species and landscapes Development of creative and craft industries	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented Number of technical and scientific publications produced Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Common output indicators	Projects are focused on areas with higher touristic attractiveness	Increased pressure on certain resources due to an eventual increase of visitors
	Development of niche tourist attractions and products (costal, nautical, cruise, sports, rural and farm, gastronomy...) Exchange of tools and know-how on protected areas management	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	Specific Common Indicators		
NEEDS	Rich natural and cultural heritage to be protected Cultural and natural assets not fully exploited for new uses and to increase the attractiveness of the area	Number of Cultural Interest Assets Natura 2000 Network	National and regional authorities European Commission	Problems identified in the Diagnosis	

**2.3.2. Assessment of the form of finance**

Article 66 of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 states that “the ESI Funds shall be used to provide support in the form of grants, prizes, repayable assistance and financial instruments, or a combination thereof”.

The AATC-OP has chosen non-repayable grants as the unique form of finance. In this context, the objective of this ex-ante evaluation is to assess to what extent this form of finance is appropriate to maximise the impact of the ERDF support in the Atlantic Area.

To carry out this assessment, different criteria have been taken into account: target groups and beneficiaries; fields of intervention; and the objectives of the type of projects.

The AATC-OP presents the following features:

- ✦ Target groups and beneficiaries gather together public bodies and private entities, with a higher presence of the former.
- ✦ The intervention fields in which projects will be developed are defined by the different Axis of the AATC-OP. Following the programme, the main action fields are linked to the progress towards a real knowledge society and economy (R&I) and to the sustainable development of the cooperation area. Therefore, short and medium term return is not expected from projects to be selected even though the potential social benefit derived from these projects is considerably high.
- ✦ The objectives of the type of projects to be developed are highly linked to general welfare. Those projects will a priori generate an important amount of positive externalities that will contribute to the social welfare of the Atlantic Area.

**TABLE 7. GENERAL CHARACTERISATION OF FORMS OF FINANCE**

	Grants or non-repayable assistance	Repayable assistance	Financial instruments
Target beneficiaries	Public and private bodies	Private bodies	Private bodies
Intervention field	Low or inexistent short/medium term economic return	High short/medium term economic return	High short/medium term economic return
Objectives of the type of actions	General interest	General interest	General interest

To sum up, this characterisation confirms that non-repayable grants are the most appropriate form of finance to support the projects that will implement the AATC-OP. This kind of financial support is expected to maximise the impact of the EU’s funding in the cooperation area (TABLE 7).

Additionally, the experience gathered through the previous programming periods confirms that the selected form of finance is the best placed in order to contribute to an effective European territorial cohesion due to the enforcement of transnational cooperation.

## 2.4. ASSESSMENT OF THE INTEGRATION OF HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

### 2.4.1. Promotion of equality between men and women

Equality between men and women has been one of the fundamental principles of the EU since its creation. This principle is mainstreamed in all EU policies and programmes. Article 7 of the Regulation 1303/2013 establishes that “the Member States and the Commission shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of gender perspective are taken into account and promoted throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes, including in relation to monitoring, reporting and evaluation”.

The objective of this chapter of the ex-ante evaluation of the AATC-OP is to verify the effective integration of gender equality issues (Diagnosis, Strategy, Follow-up and provision for the implementation of the programme) and their contribution to equality between men and women.

#### ***a) The relevance of the equality of opportunities in the AATC-OP's diagnosis***

The integration of the gender perspective is not directly addressed in the diagnosis and needs evaluation of the AATC-OP. Therefore, the inclusion of specific statistical evidence on those aspects included in the context analysis is highly recommended. In addition, and as it has been already stated at the beginning of this ex-ante evaluation “it is convenient to perform the gender breakdown of some of the indicators used (e.g., in the analysis of labour market and educational levels of the population), in order to ensure an optimal integration of the horizontal principle of equal opportunities in the context analysis”.

The inclusion of the gender breakdown of some indicators is particularly necessary in fields related to demography, labour market, education and training as well as research and innovation. All these aspects are dealt with in different degrees throughout the diagnosis accompanying the AATC-OP. Eurostat offers data at NUTS 2 and 3 levels that allow a better understanding of the situation of women in these particular fields that are afterwards present in interventions and specific actions under the selected Thematic Objectives.

Finally, it is suggested to include a specific section gathering the eventual main conclusions and challenges that should be identified with regard to gender equality if the diagnosis is improved. The final aim is to incorporate a general picture of the women’s situation in the Atlantic Transnational Cooperation Area. The findings would also allow a general comparison with the EU28 context.

**TABLE 8. ASSESEMENT ON THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTEGRATION IN THE DIAGNOSIS**

Relevant aspects from the gender perspective	Initial Diagnosis
Existence of indicators disaggregated by gender	+
Description of women’s situation in the fields considered	+
Identification of women’s challenges	++
Identification of inequality causes	+
Results regarding gender equality	+

+++ Elevated integration      ++ Moderate integration      + Low integration

Source: Produced by RegioPlus

**b) Equality of opportunities between men and women in the AATC-OP’s Strategy**

The analysis of the horizontal principle on equality between men and women in the AATC-OP’s Strategy assesses the contribution of the strategic planning of the programme in this field. In particular, the selected Thematic Objectives as well as the Investment Priorities and the Specific Objectives are assessed in terms of their contribution to the effective equality between men and women.

In order to complete this assessment, the different Thematic Objectives of the programme have been gathered in a table illustrating their specific contribution to the equality between men and women. The typology of actions to be taken under each Investment Priority has been taken into account in terms of their potential impact on this horizontal principle.

As a general observation, the Thematic Objectives do not respond directly to the promotion of gender equality. Those Thematic Objectives more aimed to enforce this horizontal principle are not included in the AATC-OP. However, **all the selected Objectives may have a positive indirect impact on the promotion of gender equality.** In this sense, the principle of gender equality is particularly present in PA 1 as with the aim of promoting innovation, actions may be taken contributing to raising the number of women in the R&I sector.

The AATC-OP must promote a stimulation of innovation that ensures a gender-balanced participation not only in research activities, but through activities in the whole innovation chain, included those to be undertaken by industry. Similarly, gender balance should be a priority in all those actions aimed at promoting

entrepreneurship as usually women are a collective highly qualified which are less present in entrepreneurship actions.

Although the potential to contribute to gender equality is high and several actions to be undertaken through the different Investment Priorities will surely contribute to increasing gender equality in the Atlantic Area, a more explicit reference to this horizontal principle is missing in the AATC-OP. In this sense, among the type of actions described under each Specific Objective, some specific actions to tackle gender inequalities could have been included.

**TABLE 9. POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE AATC-OP STRATEGY TO THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY**

Axis	TO	IP	Contribution to Gender Equality	
1	1	1.B	++	Moderate
2	4	4.A	++	Moderate
	6	6.G	++	Moderate
3	5	5.B	++	Moderate
4	6	6.D	+	Low
		6.C	++	Moderate

Source: Produced by RegioPlus

**c) Equal opportunities between men and women in the monitoring of the AATC-OP**

It is highly important to ensure that the gender dimension is introduced in the indicators system in order to facilitate an appropriate monitoring of this principle. This introduction would be particularly needed for those Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities that may have a higher impact on gender equality.

The AATC-OP recognises that project output indicators measuring the positive effect on promoting gender equality, when relevant, will be encouraged.

An analysis of the indicators system has been conducted from a gender equality perspective. As a general conclusion, there are not many indicators in the AATC-OP system that allow a gender breakdown as the unit of measurement for many of them are not based on the number of persons benefiting from the implementation of the AATC-OP. This fact will prevent a substantial quantitative monitoring of the AATC-OP’s impact on gender equality.

**d) Equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the AATC-OP**

The AATC-OP includes in its Chapter on Horizontal Principles a specific section for the issue of equality between men and women. Apart from a short explanation on how

the principle of gender equality is present in the AATC-OP, this section identifies some relevant aspects for gender equality to be considered during the implementation of the programme. These aspects are listed below:

- + The specification of measures aimed at ensuring equality between men and women will be requested to beneficiaries. In particular gender equality will be need to be guaranteed as regards the target groups and en-users as well as the project management team is concerned.
- + Equality between men and women will be taken into consideration during the evaluation of the project.
- + Programme bodies will ensure that activities undertaken under the AATC-OP comply with the gender equality principle.
- + Beneficiaries will be invited to implement specific measures to guarantee equality between men and women.
- + Beneficiaries will be requested to demonstrate in their project reports and final evaluations how activities undertaken and results achieved have contributed to promote equality between men and women.
- + Based on aggregated contributions reported by projects, the contribution of the Atlantic programme to promote gender equality will be assessed.

#### 2.4.2. Non-discrimination

The principle of non-discrimination is embedded in the EU legislation. The above-mentioned Article 7 of Regulation 1303/2013 states “Member States and the Commission shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation and implementation of programmes. In particular, accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes”.

The Horizontal principle on Non-Discrimination is assessed along this section. Similarly than for the evaluation of gender balance, this section assesses how the principle of non-discrimination has been considered throughout the programming process of the AATC-OP. In particular, the assessment analyses how this principle has been included in the diagnosis, strategy and implementation provisions of the programme.

**a) The integration of the principle of Non-discrimination in the AATC-OP's Diagnosis**

As it has been said in the evaluation of the socio-economic diagnosis quality of the AATC-OP, the inclusion of a specific section on Equal Opportunities and Non-discrimination, which collects the main findings of the different areas covered by the diagnosis in relation to this horizontal principle, would undoubtedly increase the quality of this diagnosis.

Although some fields addressed in the diagnosis have a clear social nature, as a general rule there are no specific mentions to issues related to non-discrimination. Unemployment, and also long-term unemployment, is mentioned as a major concern in the diagnosis, but no specific mentions are done to groups at a particular risk situation. As an example, taking explicitly into account the situation of youth regarding their access to the labour market and unemployment would have increased the quality of the diagnosis. However, it must be said that the share of population with higher education and early school leaving are a central part of the diagnosis and obviously these specific challenges are directly related to youth.

On the other hand, mentions to the ageing of the population in the Atlantic area as well as to the share of population at risk of poverty are present in the Diagnosis. Therefore, although the diagnosis does not address directly exclusion and non-discrimination, it takes into account some groups at a special risk situation. However, no specific indicators that highlight this risk have been considered.

To sum up, the diagnosis lacks the presentation of explicit indicators referred to specific social groups at risk. Moreover, although some groups at risk of exclusion are mentioned in the diagnosis, there is not a specific description of these the groups or a detailed description of the main problems affecting them. Apart from general references to societal challenges as the ageing of population or early school leaving, the diagnosis lacks a proper identification of the causes of exclusion or discrimination that surely exist in the Atlantic area. The following table illustrates these conclusions:

**TABLE 10. INCLUSION OF THE NON-DISCRIMINATION PRINCIPLE IN THE AATC-OP 'S DIAGNOSIS**

Relevant aspects from the Non-Discrimination Principle	Initial Diagnosis	
Existence of indicators referred to different social groups	+	Low
Description of the situation of groups at risk of exclusion or discrimination	++	Moderate
Identification of problems affecting groups at risk of exclusion or discrimination	++	Moderate
Identification of the causes of exclusion and discrimination	+	Low
Results regarding the situation of exclusion and discrimination in the territory	++	Moderate

Source: Produced by RegioPlus

Nonetheless, it must be highlighted that the absence of a satisfactory consideration of issues related to non-discrimination, do not directly undermine the potential contribution of the AATC-OP to the enforcement of this horizontal principle in the Atlantic Area. As it will be stated in the following sections, the AATC-OP deals with many topics and include several objectives that allow the inclusion of a non-discrimination dimension and, consequently, the programme may strengthen this horizontal principle in the cooperation area through its implementation.

**b) Non-discrimination in the AATC-OP’s Strategy**

As in the case of gender equality, the AATC-OP does not intend to develop specific actions uniquely aimed at the prevention of discrimination. The Thematic Objectives selected for the AATC-OP do not address directly the issue of non-discrimination. However, some of the Priority Axis selected will surely have a positive impact on this principle.

In particular, IP 1.B on innovation foresees the promotion of technological innovation but also of social innovation and creativity in order to ensure smart but also inclusive growth. Therefore, it must be highlighted the potential of this Investment Priority to promote innovative solutions for the benefit of population at risk of exclusion or facing particular social problems.

Other activities may also have a high social impact. This may be the case of projects under IP 4A aimed at guaranteeing renewable energy affordability for local communities or projects under IP 5B that pretend to empower vulnerable communities to confront and recover from natural threats. Those projects aimed at enhancing traditional economic activities may also contribute to create new jobs and economic development opportunities for groups facing unemployment problems. However, there is no direct impact from any of the Investment priorities on social issues.

**TABLE 11. POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE AATC-OP STRATEGY TO NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Axis	TO	IP	Contribution to non-discrimination	
1	1	1.B	++	Moderate
2	4	4.A	++	Moderate
	6	6.G	+	Low
3	5	5.B	++	Moderate
4	6	6.D	+	Low
		6.C	++	Moderate

### ***c) Non-discrimination in the implementation of the AATC-OP***

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In the chapter on Horizontal Principles of the AATC-OP, there is a dedicated section to the principle of non-discrimination. The section describes the commitment of the programme with the principle and explains how it has been taken into account during the programming work and how the compliance with this important principle is foreseen in the implementation phase.

Evidently, the AATC-OP recognises that the programme does not intend to develop specific actions uniquely aimed at the promotion of equal opportunities and the prevention of non-discrimination. Therefore, the provisions to enforce non-discrimination under the selected Thematic Objective become especially important.

Some aspects are foreseen by the AATC-OP in order to comply with and contribute to the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. The anticipated aspects thoroughly coincide with those already mentioned for gender equality in the previous section. Therefore, provisions to ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination will be required to participants and taken into account in the evaluation. These provisions will ensure the contribution of the AATC-OP's implementation to this Horizontal principle. As in the case of gender equality, a greater emphasis on the compulsory nature of the proposed provisions could improve the commitment towards equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

In addition, the inclusion of criteria related to non-discrimination should not be constrained to the actions and the implementation of the project. An invaluable way to reduce discrimination is to reward during the evaluation process those projects that bet at technological solutions and instruments that can improve social inclusion. This is especially relevant in IP 1B.

#### **2.4.3. Sustainable development**

Sustainable development is one of the horizontal principles of the European Union. Article 8 of the EU Regulation 1303/2013 establishes that “The objectives of the ESI Funds shall be pursued in line with the principle of sustainable development and with the Union's promotion of the aim of preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment”. It also states that “The Member States and the Commission shall ensure that environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, disaster resilience, and risk prevention and management are promoted in the preparation and implementation of Partnership Agreements and programmes”.

Furthermore, following the SEA Directive (2001/42/CEE) that applies to a wide range of public plans and programmes, a Strategic Environmental Assessment has been

carried out and its considerations taken into account during the programming of the AATC-OP.

**a) The integration of the principle of sustainable development in the AATC-OP's Diagnosis**

The principle of sustainable development has been present in the AATC-OP diagnosis analysis. Section 4 of this diagnosis is dedicated to *Environment, natural resources and energy efficiency*. There is a qualitative description of the challenges that the Atlantic area faces in these particular fields and some ESPON maps regarding NATURA 2020 sites, the impact of climate change and the adaptive capacity to climate change as well as the presence of renewable energy sources. Although problems, challenges and opportunities are clearly and correctly described, this description could be better supported by evidence and indicators.

As it has already been pointed out in the evaluation of the socio-economic diagnosis, there is scope for improvement as regards a higher utilisation and processing of statistical information available. This improvement would improve knowledge on the situation of the Atlantic Area in terms of sustainable development. Furthermore, there are no conclusions regarding some possible areas of interest related to thematic objectives such as the prevention and management of natural risks such as erosion, seismicity or flooding threats. However, it is also true that the lack of statistical evidence or the absence of some areas of interest have not prevented an adequate treatment of issues related to sustainable development in the AATC-OP strategy.

**TABLE 12. INCLUSION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE IN THE AATC-OP 'S DIAGNOSIS**

Relevant aspects from the Sustainable Development	Initial Diagnosis	
Existence of indicators referred to sustainable development	++	Moderate
Description of the situation regarding environmental protection, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, biodiversity, risk prevention and management.	+++	High
Identification of problems (situation, causes and problems) of sustainable development	++	Moderate
Specific section analysing sustainable development in the area	+++	Low

Source: Produced by RegioPlus

**b) Sustainable development in the AATC-OP's Strategy**

The strategy of the AATC-OP integrates the Horizontal principle of sustainable development. All Priority Axis and several Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities deal with aspects linked to sustainable development. Moreover, Axis 2, 3 and 4 address Thematic Objectives and include Investment priorities that contribute

directly to sustainable development. This is the case of all those action that address climate change and risk prevention, renewable energies and energy efficiency, protection of the environment, natural heritage and biodiversity. Therefore, there are five Specific objectives out of seven under which transnational cooperation projects will address environmental needs and challenges and will contribute to enhance regional policies and strategies related to sustainable development.

On the other hand, TO 1 has also a great potential in the field of sustainable development. In particular, IP 1.B. can contribute to the technological development and to the provision of innovative solutions with huge potential to contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development. Actions under this priority should not only contribute to the economic competitiveness but also to the environmental assertiveness of the Atlantic Area.

**TABLE 13. POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE AATC-OP STRATEGY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Axis	TO	IP	Contribution to non-discrimination	
1	1	1.B	++	Moderate
2	4	4.A	++	Moderate
	6	6.G	+++	High
3	5	5.B	+++	High
4	6	6.D	+++	High
		6.C	+++	High

**c) Sustainable development in the implementation of the AATC-OP**

As for the horizontal principles on non-discrimination and on equality between men and women, the AATC-OP includes some operational provisions in order to guarantee the enforcement of the principle of sustainable development during the implementation of the programme. In particular:

- + Potential beneficiaries will be requested to include in their project application concrete and real measures to contribute to sustainable development
- + Sustainable development will be included as one specific evaluation criteria in the assessment of project applications
- + Programme bodies will devise specific measures to reduce the impact of projects implementation on the environment such as using environmentally-friendly equipment, adopting greening measures for the organisation of events
- + Beneficiaries will also be invited to implement specific measures to reduce the impact of projects implementation on the environment

- + Beneficiaries will also be invited to implement specific measures to reduce the impact of projects implementation on the environment
- + The use of Green public procurement criteria will be promoted both at Programme and project level
- + Although travelling is considered essential for transnational cooperation activities, beneficiaries and programme bodies will be encouraged to use, whenever possible, alternatives modes of interaction that do not require travelling in order to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In any case, environmentally friendly mobility options will be giving preference.
- + Beneficiaries will be requested to demonstrate in their project reports and final evaluations how the activities undertaken and the results achieved have contributed to the sustainable development principle. Project output indicators measuring the positive effect on the environment, will be encouraged
- + The contribution of the Atlantic Area programme to sustainable development, will be assessed on the basis of aggregated contributions reported by projects,

**d) Sustainable development in the AATC-OP Monitoring System**

Sustainable development is also present in the monitoring system of the AATC-OP through the inclusion of a system of indicators that allows the evaluation of the progress in this field. This is particularly relevant for those indicators linked to Investment Priorities under Axis 2, 3 and 4.

The following table shows the indicators that have been proposed by the Strategic Environmental Assessment and that have been included in the AATC-OP. These indicators will allow the assessment of the established environmental objectives.

IP	Indicators
SPECIFIC OUTPUT INDICATORS	
ALL	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented
	Number of technical and scientific publications produced
	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced
	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results
	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results
COMMON OUTPUT INDICATORS	
4A	Additional capacity of renewable energy production
5B	Population benefiting from flood protection measures
	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures
6D	Total surface area of rehabilitated land
	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status
6C	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions

IP	Indicators
RESULT INDICATORS	
4A	Percentage of population covered by local sustainable energy action plans
6G	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for eco-innovation and green growth
5B	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for the resilience of land and maritime areas
6D	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for the improvement of biodiversity and ecosystems services
6C	Degree of coverage of regional policies in relation to most relevant EU recommendations for cultural and natural assets as factor of local development

**2.5. TRACKING OF THE EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS		RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
INTERNAL COHERENCE	Enforce those SO with higher dragging effect for the achievement of the overall AATC-OPs objective (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2) and those with a higher sensitive nature (4.1, 4.2)	Investment in Strategic and Influential SOs (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2) represents 58,40% of the total. If Sensitive SOs are added, the allocation represents 88,40% of the total.	++
EXTERNAL COHERENCE	+ Monitoring calls for proposals of other EU programmes in order to avoid duplications and maximise opportunities in terms of synergies and complementarities that can be established between the AATC-OP and other EU programmes.	Adequate provisions are in place in Section 6 of the AATC-OP. As stated in this section, Thematic links with other programmes, instruments and policies will be regularly assessed and reviewed.	++
	+ Using the AATC-OP to prepare actors and join capacities, resources and efforts in the Atlantic area in order to increase the participation in other EU programmes, especially on those of clear competitive participation such as Horizon 2020.	SO 1.1 is specifically aimed at Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation. This represents a clear example of joining capacities, resources and efforts that should allow a higher participation in H2020. Furthermore, the AATC-OP mentions that programme bodies will seek active cooperation with other EU programmes (creation of cooperation networks, information exchange platforms, capitalization events...)	++
	+ Co-financing through the AATC-OP, whenever allowed, actions from other programmes in topics and action fields that are strategic for the Atlantic cooperation area.	Beneficiaries will be asked to identify and exploit links with other programmes. Project exchanges will be promoted between beneficiaries of different programmes. To promote coordination beneficiaries will be asked to inform about participation in other EU projects. Specific criteria will be established, also to avoid double funding.	++
	+ Prioritising projects (in selection phases) that are a follow-up of actions financed by other EU programmes or projects that take advantage of results and methodologies from these other programmes.	Similar to the previous point. Selection criteria will be developed and projects must comply with them. But as stated in the AATC-OP there is an aim to capitalise and promote cooperation.	++
	+ Introducing in criteria for selection those aspects related to sustainability of interventions that prioritise the continuation of projects or the introduction of improvements through proposals to other financing programmes of the EU.	The Monitoring Committee will define admissibility conditions and selection criteria, as well as specific conditions, for project selection. In its Section 6, the AATC-OP clearly states that coordination and complementarity will be sought with other EU programmes. These criteria should include aspects related to sustainability of interventions translating into specific principles the general positive approach of AATC-OP's Section 6 to complementarities with other EU programmes.	+

EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS		RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
INTERVENTION LOGIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reinforce the AATC-OP's intervention logic by including indicators that facilitate the display of actions' achievements and the progress towards the achievement of the included objectives</li> </ul>	All Investment Priorities include, at least, an output indicator and all Specific Objectives are linked to, at least, a result indicator. At the same time, the weaknesses identified in the cooperation area are or may be easily supported by context indicators.	++
FORM OF FINANCE	Due to the target beneficiaries, intervention fields, objectives of the type of actions, non-repayable grants are the most appropriate form of finance to support the projects that will implement the AATC-OP.	Non-repayable grants are maintained as the only form of finance in the AATC-OP.	++
CROSS-BORDER PRINCIPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Convenience to perform the gender breakdown of some of the indicators used in the Diagnosis with the possibility to include a specific section gathering findings on the situation about equal opportunities between men and women.</li> </ul>	Gender breakdown of Diagnosis' indicators could be further developed. However, the AATC-OP recognises that project output indicators measuring the positive effect on promoting gender equality, when relevant, will be encouraged. The conducted analysis of the indicators system concludes that there are not many indicators in the AATC-OP system that allow gender breakdown.	+
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Convenience to introduce in the Diagnosis a specific section on the situation in the cooperation area regarding non-discrimination and social exclusion.</li> </ul>	Although Non-discrimination and social exclusion is not directly tackled by the diagnosis, some references to groups at risk and causes are included. Unemployment, early school leaving and ageing are considered. Some data regarding social exclusion is also present.	+
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Anticipate clear provisions to ensure that the principles of gender equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development are enforced during the AATC-OP's implementation</li> </ul>	The AATC-OP includes clear operational provisions that ensure that horizontal principles will be enforced during the implementation. These principles will be present during the application and selection of projects, where the contribution to them will be required, assessed and awarded. as well as during the evaluation and monitoring of projects.	++
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Promote the inclusion of implementation and execution data with the necessary desegregations to evaluate the impact on gender equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development.</li> </ul>	As stated in the AATC-OP, whenever possible, indicators will be disaggregated to assess the positive effect on the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination. In the case of sustainable development, output and result indicators related to TO 4, 5 and 6 would offer a valuable picture of the contribution of the AATC-OP to this principle.	++

### 3. ASSESMENT OF THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

#### 3.1. RELEVANCE AND CLARITY OF THE INDICATORS PROPOSED FOR THE PROGRAMME

One of the main changes regarding the new programming period 2014-2020 is the orientation of the EU Cohesion Policy towards results. This means that actions must always address the objectives and challenges of the context where they will be carried out and implies that opportunities for change arising from those actions must be assessed. The final aim is to improve the quality in the management of programmes as well as the effectiveness and the take-up of funding on the basis of output criteria.

Therefore, guidance from the European Commission gives a growing importance to the monitoring of outputs and results. This translates into a reinforcement of the indicators' system in order to advance towards a more effective use of the ESI Funds.

The analysis of the indicators' system pretends to assess the quality of the selected indicators with regard to the achievement of the objectives in order to allow:

- + The verification of the effectiveness degree of the realisation.
- + The description of the programme following a logical coherence, from the most immediate level (actual expenditure) to the wider level (effects derived from the actual expenditure).

##### 3.1.1. Analysis of the indicators' relevance

The selection of indicators has been a highly discussed item during the present programming period. The ex-ante evaluation has actively participated in the work aimed at defining the indicators' monitoring system of the AATC-OP. Evidently, the indicators' system is also built on the common output indicators included in Annex I of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013.

Since the beginning the evaluation team has focused not only in the quality attributes that individual indicators must comply with, but also on the design and appropriateness of the indicators' system as a whole. In this sense, the aim has been:

- + To include a limited number of indicators avoiding a large number of output and result indicators for each Investment Priority and Specific Objective.
- + To restrict the selection, as far as possible, to the regulatory common indicators.

- ✦ To reinforce the intervention logic of the AATC-OP by offering a picture of the actions' attainments and the progress towards the achievement of the selected objectives.

Consequently, the AATC-OP lays out a monitoring system based on two kinds of indicators as established by EU Regulations:

- ✦ The **output indicators** that relate to the operations supported and are defined in terms of projects deliverables obtained in exchange of ERDF support.
- ✦ The **result indicators** that relate to the Priority Axis concerned and are defined in terms of the programme impact on changes delivered for a Specific Objective and attaining the cooperation territory as a whole.

It must be highlighted the preference of the European Commission for those common output indicators included in the *Annex of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013*. The aim is to achieve the necessary degree of homogenisation to aggregate achievements at EU level. However, this common approach inevitably introduces a degree of rigidity that restricts, in certain cases, the selection of those indicators that are seen as more appropriate in order to assess the progress towards outputs.

The evaluation team understands that the general use of common indicators is not justified from the point of view of the programming needs because it does not match the greater variety of intervention types present in each of the Investment Priorities. Moreover, setting out common provisions on indicators does not ensure either the effectiveness of a programme or of its operations. Additionally, those indicators included in the *Annex of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013* anticipate and restrict priorities and types of operations for all territorial cooperation programmes.

Furthermore, the indicators proposed in the Annex of the mentioned EU Regulation do not always match the specific requirements attached to the European territorial cooperation and are not always well suited to assess the quality of this kind of cooperation.

With the aim of a better adjustment of what output indicators assess and what is to be done, the AATC-OP sets out Specific Output Indicators. This definition pretends to overcome the restrictions imposed by the closed list of common indicators of the EU Regulation's Annex and respond more accurately to the established cooperation strategy. This approach introduces more flexibility and a better adjustment between what indicators assess and the actions to be carried out under the AATC-OP. However, the simplification objective translates in a limited and reduced number of indicators that prevents the coverage of all types of interventions, which restricts the assessment of the relative weight and importance of these interventions under each Investment Priority. This relative importance will highly depend on the demand from potential beneficiaries.

In particular, the AATC-OP includes five Specific Output Indicators. The definition of these indicators is established in general terms in order to ensure their applicability to all Specific Objectives. The five output indicators that will be applied to monitor each of the Specific Objectives are:

- + A1-Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented.
- + A2-Number of technical and scientific publications produced.
- + A3-Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced.
- + A4-Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results.
- + A5-Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results.

Apart from these specific output indicators, the following table identify the common output indicators to be used in the monitoring:

SO	Common indicators	Unit
1B	Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Enterprises
	Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Organisations
	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	Enterprises
	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	Enterprises
4A	Additional capacity of renewable energy production	MW
5B	Population benefiting from flood protection measures	Persons
	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures	Persons
6D	Total surface area of rehabilitated land	Hectares
	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	Hectares
6C	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	Visits/year

The evaluation of the indicators' relevance departs from a set of basic criteria that allows analysing the degree of relevance with regard to the functions attributed to them. Consequently, following the recommendations of the European Commission, a proper indicator must fulfil the following requirements:

- + **Relevance:** indicators must allow the assessment of the incidence on the socioeconomic environment through the measurement of the outputs arising from supported projects.
- + **Significance:** indicators must be useful for the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, to invigorate local agents, and to allow an effective communication with the population. At the same time they must focus on essential problems of the programme-axis-objective on which actions are to be carried out.

- ✦ **Quantifiable:** independently of its elemental, derivative or compound nature, an indicator must result from the aggregation of quantifiable phenomena. Indicators must be included in those projects that materialise the objectives and programmed measures.

Consequently, indicators must be the result of adding quantifiable inputs and they must be easily added on and offer representative information of the actions in order to allow the identification and differentiation of the relevant fields of action in the programme.

- ✦ **Reliability:** it refers to the credibility of the information provided by the indicator. The reliability depends on the way that the supportive information is gathered and treated, on the credibility of the sources and the quality of the information control processes. To sum up, the reliability of a give indicator depends on the possibility of its quantification and updating. Official statistics or the same validated proposals offer a higher reliability than other sources.
- ✦ **Utility:** this criterion refers to the capacity of the indicator to respond to the reasons that motivated its selection. Indicators must allow their use at key moments of the programme's monitoring and evaluation. It must be possible to make strategic adjustment in case of bottlenecks.

Taking into account the above-mentioned criteria of relevance, significance, quantification, reliability and utility, **the assessment of the relevance of the AATC-OP's Output Indicators confirms that the qualitative level of these indicators is satisfactory and adequate for the monitoring of the types of actions foreseen in the AATC-OP** (Table 14).

In fact, the **indicators cover all the investment Priorities, allow a realistic quantification of the attainments** (directly linked to the immediate effect of the investment) **and satisfactorily reflect the scope of the selected Investment Priorities as well as their degree of achievement. The evaluation team celebrates the removal of some indicators present in previous versions of the AACT-OP that were not seen as significant or relevant enough** for the monitoring of the actions to be carried out under the AATC-OP framework. In this sense the following common output indicators have been rightly deleted: *the number of households with improved energy consumption classification, the decrease of annual primary energy consumption of public buildings, the additional waste recycling capacity, the additional population served by improved wastewater treatment, the population living in areas with integrated urban development strategies and the open space created or rehabilitated in urban areas.* Furthermore, this deletion brings the AATC-OP closer to the recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation that propose the inclusion of a limited number of relevant indicators without endangering the use of common output indicators.

However, there have been considerable difficulties to find the right balance between a system based on a low number of indicators and the capture of all the effects attached to the different kind of actions of the AATC-OP with the final aim of establishing a model that integrates all the specificities of the programming.

TABLE 14. ASSESMENT OF THE OUTPUT INDICATORS' RELEVANCE

IP	Output Indicators	Relevance	Significance	Quantification	Reliability	Utility
SPECIFIC OUTPUT INDICATORS						
ALL	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
	Number of technical and scientific publications produced	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
COMMON OUTPUT INDICATORS						
1B	Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
	Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
4A	Additional capacity of renewable energy production	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
5B	Population benefiting from flood protection measures	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
6D	Total surface area of rehabilitated land	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
6C	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	Adequate	Adequate	Yes	Adequate	Adequate

Adequate
  Sufficient
  Yes
  No

Source: Produced by regioPlus

Regarding result indicators, they must reflect and be linked to the desired result stated in the Specific Objective. Due to the fact that the progress in the objective implies a change from the departing situation (baseline), not only for direct beneficiaries but also for the agents operating in the cooperation area, it is important that the contribution of the supported actions is significant in relation to the expected result. That is, achievements concern the global changes in the whole Atlantic Area territory independently of partnerships funded to deliver projects' outcomes. In this

sense, the AATC-OP may influence changes in behaviours (e.g. population, economy), changes in awareness or attitudes (e.g. population, economy) and changes in policies and processes.

However, although what was mentioned in the previous paragraph is a prerequisite, the budgetary limitations of the AATC-OP prevent a substantial quantifiable change in the cooperation area. In fact, in programmes with relative low budget but including a large cooperation area as the AATC-OP, the expected socioeconomic impact is less obvious due to the fact that the available resources are not enough to allow a significant impact on the main macroeconomic variables.

Therefore, transnational cooperation programmes as the AACT-OP have limited capacity to significantly produce direct influence on behaviours or attitudes in the whole intervention area due to its limited scope and resources. That is why result indicators in the AATC-OP have been defined in terms of changes on policies and processes and of their impact and consequently in the well-being of society and economic progress. By directly influencing policies and processes, it is expected that transnational cooperation in the Atlantic Area induce impacts, including behaviours and attitudes (through the influence on policies and processes impacting on those behaviours and attitudes).

The conclusion is that the expected leverage effect of the ERDF funding in the Atlantic area to trigger economic growth is not significant enough to change the overall economic performance of the area or the performance of a specific economic sector.

Nonetheless, previous assertions do not prevent the real impact of the EU funding in the cooperation area to surpass this narrow budgetary interpretation. Microeconomic and qualitative effects exceed the limited financial relevance of co-finance actions, although these effects are not easily quantified through the result indicators as proposed by the European Commission.

However, the effort made by national and regional authorities in order to select territorially homogeneous and comparable indicators must be highlighted. The list of result indicators defined for the AATC-OP requires specific actions to be organised in view of their quantification.

Axis	TO	IP	Specific objectives	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective	Unit	Sources
1	1	B	Specific Objective 1.1. Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness	Comprehensiveness of public policies in the development of the Atlantic Area innovation systems	%	Regional Administrations
			Specific Objective 1.2. Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes	Financing effectiveness for the diffusion of innovation results	%	DG REGIO & DG RTD
2	4	A	Specific Objective 2.1. Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency	Degree of political commitment to foster local dynamics aiming to increase energy efficiency and develop renewable energy sources	%	Covenant of Mayors
	6	G	Specific Objective 2.2. Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency	Comprehensiveness of public policies for eco-innovation and green growth	%	Regional Administrations
3	5	B	Specific Objective 3.1. Strengthening risk management systems	Comprehensiveness of public policies in view of improving the resilience of land and maritime areas to climate and nature changes	%	Regional Administrations
4	6	C	Specific Objective 4.1. Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services	Comprehensiveness of public policies in view of improving the biodiversity and the ecosystems services.	%	Regional Administrations
		D	Specific Objective 4.2. Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development	Comprehensiveness of public policies valuing the cultural and natural assets in view of local economic development	%	Regional Administrations

The previous table shows that the relation between result indicators and specific objectives allows to reasonably figuring out the degree of achievement of the different AATC-OP's specific objectives. In particular, there is a satisfactory coverage by the proposed result indicators of all the specific objectives present in the programme.

The analysis of the result indicators' relevance, based on the quality criteria previously described, reveals that acceptable quality levels are in place as it is shown in the next table. All result indicators measure changes in the cooperation area. In particular, and it has already been said above, indicators are defined in view of changes in policies and processes in the Atlantic Area and of their impact and consequently in the social well-being and economic progress. Not only changes related to the beneficiaries of the funding will be assessed but also on all agents acting in the cooperation area, which gives a considerable degree of appropriateness to the chosen indicators. By directly influencing policies and processes, it is expected that transactional cooperation induce impacts on behaviours and attitudes in the cooperation area.

TABLE 15. ASSESMENT OF THE RESULT INDICATORS' RELEVANCE

SO	Result Indicators	Relevance	Significance	Quantification	Reliability	Utility
1.1	Comprehensiveness of public policies in the development of the Atlantic Area innovation systems	Adequate	Sufficient	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
1.2	Financing effectiveness for the diffusion of innovation results	Adequate	Sufficient	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
2.1	Degree of political commitment to foster local dynamics aiming to increase energy efficiency and develop renewable energy sources	Adequate	Sufficient	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
2.2	Comprehensiveness of public policies for eco-innovation and green growth	Adequate	Sufficient	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
3.1	Comprehensiveness of public policies in view of improving the resilience of land and maritime areas to climate and nature changes	Adequate	Sufficient	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
4.1	Comprehensiveness of public policies in view of improving the biodiversity and the ecosystems services.	Adequate	Sufficient	Yes	Adequate	Adequate
4.2	Comprehensiveness of public policies valuing the cultural and natural assets in view of local economic development	Adequate	Sufficient	Yes	Adequate	Adequate

Adequate
  Sufficient
  Yes
  No

Source: Produced by Regio Plus

The list of indicators defined requires specific actions to be organised in view of their quantification. As stated in the indicators conceptual framework of the AACT-OP, result indicators have been constructed specifically for the programme follow-up and they are not directly available in any information system. As a consequence, almost all result indicator baselines require a survey implying a resource and time consuming

procedure. However, an indicative timeline is foreseen in order to get a clear definition of baselines and targets by February 2015 that should be approved and submitted to the European Commission in March of that year. This approach ensures the reliability and utility of the indicators. However the actions foreseen in the procedure to establish baselines and targets should be timely carried out and the inclusion of a detailed evaluation plan and the availability of resources to carry out those action should be ensured in order to comply with the information requirements attached to indicators based on surveys.

Finally, the significance of the proposed indicators seems the most complex element to evaluate. Although result indicators have been specifically designed for the AATC-OP, their value must be influenced not only by the action lines of each Investment Priority, but also by external factors that may have a considerable influence on the indicator's performance and that are not controllable by the intervention.

### 3.1.2. Assessment of the indicators' clarity

The indicators' clarity refers to the accuracy degree in their definition and to the correct understanding of what can be measured by them. From this point of view, three main conclusions are reached:

- ✦ The **definition** of indicators is generally concrete and refers to the concept to be measured. For common output indicators units are already predefined in the Annex of the EU Regulation. For specific output indicators units are also clear as they refer to the absolute number of outputs derived from the implementation of the AATC-OP. Regarding result indicators, collecting mechanisms and procedures are stated in the *Indicators Conceptual Framework*. The sources and the frequency of reporting are also included in this Framework.

Baselines and target values linked to output indicators are defined in the AATC-OP. In the case of result indicators, a specific procedure is described in the *Indicators Conceptual Framework*. As it has been said before, this procedure should end in March 2015 with the approval of the definition of baselines and targets and its submission to the European Commission.

- ✦ With the information included in the AATC-OP regarding indicators and the attached Indicators Conceptual Framework, the **interpretation of value changes** will not be complicated. Variations to one side or the other may unequivocally be considered as favourable or unfavourable results.

- ✦ The **consistency** of the indicators included seems elevated enough with a sufficient capacity to be unaffected by extreme or atypical values in order to allow a satisfactory assessment of real scale of the change.

### 3.2. ASSESSMENT OF BASELINE AND TARGET VALUES

The relation between achieved results and used resources measures the efficiency of any investment policy. Therefore, the global assessment of this concept offers an idea about the capacity of the programme to achieve the expected results with the available financial allocation. Usually, unit costs indicators of the projects are used to assess the efficiency because they allow setting a departure point to analyse the operations' efficiency.

**In the case of output indicators, baseline values depart from zero and the estimation of the target values has been carried out from historical data, the experience of the Atlantic transnational cooperation for the period 2007-2013 and the predictions of the managing authorities.**

It must be pointed out that the quantification of indicators is a complicated task due to a series of limitations:

- ✦ The absence of an exact relationship between the financial execution of a measure and the physical advance of the indicator, mainly of result indicators.
- ✦ The difficulty of estimate the minimum cost necessary to implement a project.
- ✦ The heterogeneity of actions that are developed in the framework of some measures.

Unavoidably, the assessment of the estimations will be influenced by these limitations. Therefore, quantitative values must be based in the achievement assessment by the selected indicators of the features attached to the so-called SMART indicators:

- ✦ **Specific:** practical and concreted, focused on those objectives to be measured and quantified. Therefore, they target a specific area for improvement.
- ✦ **Measurable:** quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
- ✦ **Achievable/Affordable:** human and material means are in place to get the information and the cost is not excessive or disproportioned with regard to the desired information.

- ✦ **Realistic:** the achievement is possible. State what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
- ✦ **Time-bound:** a time period is set to complete them. Specify when the results can be achieved.

TABLE 16. SMART TEST FOR OUTPUT INDICATORS

IP	Indicator	SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	REALISTIC	TIME-BOUND
SPECIFIC OUTPUT INDICATORS						
ALL	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	++	++	++	++	++
	Number of technical and scientific publications produced	++	++	++	++	++
	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	++	++	++	++	++
	Number of actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	++	++	++	++	++
	Number of participants in actions for the dissemination and capitalisation of results	++	++	++	++	++
COMMON OUTPUT INDICATORS						
1B	Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	++	++	++	++	++
	Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	++	++	++	++	++
	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	++	++	++	++	++
	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	++	++	++	++	++
4A	Additional capacity of renewable energy production	+	++	++	++	++
5B	Population benefiting from flood protection measures	++	++	++	++	++
	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures	++	++	++	++	++
6D	Total surface area of rehabilitated land	++	++	++	++	++
	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	++	++	++	++	++
6C	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	++	++	++	++	++



Indicator fulfilling the criterion



Indicator moderately fulfilling the criterion



Indicator not fulfilling the criterion

Source: Produced by Regio Plus

TABLE 17. SMART TEST FOR RESULT INDICATORS

SO	Indicator	SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	REALISTIC	TIME-BOUND
1.1	Comprehensiveness of public policies in the development of the Atlantic Area innovation systems	++	++			++
1.2	Financing effectiveness for the diffusion of innovation results	++	++			++
2.1	Degree of political commitment to foster local dynamics aiming to increase energy efficiency and develop renewable energy sources	++	++			++
2.2	Comprehensiveness of public policies for eco-innovation and green growth	++	++			++
3.1	Comprehensiveness of public policies in view of improving the resilience of land and maritime areas to climate and nature changes	++	++			++
4.1	Comprehensiveness of public policies in view of improving the biodiversity and the ecosystems services.	++	++			++

SO	Indicator	SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	REALISTIC	TIME-BOUND
4.2	Comprehensiveness of public policies valuing the cultural and natural assets in view of local economic development	++	++			++



Indicator fulfilling the criterion



Indicator moderately fulfilling the criterion



Indicator not fulfilling the criterion

Source: Produced by Regio Plus

In general, output indicators are specific, measurable, realistic (because their values have been set taking into account the experience of the 2007-2013 period) and time-bound.

Regarding result indicators, the lack of a specific quantification prevents assessing at this stage of the programming if they are achievable and realistic. However, they are clearly specific, measurable and time-bound. In this sense, the Indicators Conceptual Framework includes a clear description of the specific actions to be organised in view of their quantification. The result concept is also clearly defined as well as the sources and dates to collect data although result indicators are not directly available in any information system.

### 3.3. ASSESSMENT OF MILESTONES

Milestones are intermediate targets, directly linked to the achievement of the specific objective of a priority, where appropriate, expressing the intended progress towards the targets set for the end of the period. Article 55.3.k) of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 establishes that the ex-ante evaluation shall analyse the suitability of the milestones selected for the performance framework and, consequently, if these milestones reveal the expected advance towards the goals established for the end of the period. Additionally, Annex 2 of that same Regulation establishes that *“the performance framework shall consist of milestones for each priority, with the exception of priorities dedicated to technical assistance and programmes dedicated to financial instruments in accordance with Article 39, for the year 2018 and targets established for 2023”*.

In this context, it is necessary to verify if the established milestones are:

- + Realistic, achievable, relevant, capturing essential information on the progress of a priority.
- + Consistent with the nature and character of the specific objectives of the priority;

- + Transparent, with objectively verifiable targets and the source data identified and, where possible, publicly available
- + Verifiable, without imposing a disproportionate administrative burden;
- + Consistent across programmes, where appropriate.

Having in consideration the weak relevance of common output indicators to transnational cooperation deliverables, these indicators are not integrated in the performance framework of the AATC-OP. Only specific output indicators integrate the performance framework. However, in view of focusing on what is most relevant, while ensuring effectiveness in the follow-up and analysis of the Programme progress, the Indicators Conceptual Framework of the AATC-OP proposes to include only the two most pertinent specific output indicators in the performance framework:

- + A1-Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented
- + A3-Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced.

**TABLE 18. MILESTONES OF THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OF THE AATC-OP AXIS**

Axis	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or execution phase	Unit	2018 Milestone	2023 Milestone	Data
1	Output Indicator	P1.1	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	3	33	Programme Monitoring
	Output Indicator	P1.1	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	6	66	Programme Monitoring
2	Output Indicator	P2.1	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	2	21	Programme Monitoring
	Output Indicator	P2.2	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	4	42	Programme Monitoring
3	Output Indicator	P3.1	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	1	9	Programme Monitoring
	Output Indicator	P3.2	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	2	18	Programme Monitoring
4	Output Indicator	P4.1	Number of case studies and pilot actions implemented	Number	2	26	Programme Monitoring
	Output Indicator	P4.2	Number of policy, strategy and operational instruments produced	Number	4	52	Programme Monitoring

The evaluation team considers that milestones are realistic and achievable as they are based in the previous experience of the Atlantic cooperation during the period 2017-2013 and its data. It also takes into account the average dimension of projects and its rate of conclusion. In this sense, the number of projects to be carried out by the end of 2018 is 3 for Priority Axis 1, 2 for PA2, 1 for PA3 and 2 for PA 4. This estimation is considered completely realistic by the evaluation team.

In addition, indicators will be treated transparently and the verification of their target value will be carried out objectively with the support of secondary sources related to the records and the financial monitoring without incurring in a disproportionate administrative burden.

### 3.4. ANALYSIS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY, DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES AND EVALUATION

#### 3.4.1. Administrative capacity

The institutional architecture of the AATC-OP is organised following the requirements set out by the Regulation (EU) 1303/2014, which defines the Authorities of the operational programmes:

- + The managing authority is the Comisao de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte de Portugal.
- + The Certifying Authority is the Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesao de Portugal.
- + The Audit Authority is the Inspeção-Geral de Finanças de Portugal.
- + Finally, the body to which payments will be made by the Commission is the Certifying Authority.

Furthermore, the management institutional structure is complemented with other instruments that ensure its correct functioning. In this sense it is important to highlight the role of the Monitoring Committee, the Joint Technical Secretariat, the Network of National Correspondents and the Group of auditors that complete the management structure of the AATC-OP. The functions and responsibilities of each of these bodies are clearly stated in the AATC-OP.

This ex-ante evaluation considers that the complexity of this structure will not be a problem due to the experience accumulated in previous programming periods. This experience will favour an efficient organisation despite the different administrative

structures present in the countries and regions that are part of the Atlantic cooperation area.

All parts have been involved in the process that has led to this concrete organisation and division of tasks and competences. Therefore, in general terms the evaluation team considers that there exists a precise definition and repartition of the different management tasks among the involved national and regional bodies. There is a high degree of decentralisation that ensures the effective functioning of the programme.

The AATC-OP includes provisions regarding the generation of projects, the project application procedure and the assessment and selection of projects as well as clear provisions regarding the role of each programme body in the different stages leading to the effective implementation of the programme.

As a consequence, the existence of this solid institutional framework will allow the emergence of common projects and the building and consolidation of partnerships for territorial cooperation. The use of appropriate dissemination systems should provide the necessary information from the calls for proposals and the following allocation of projects to the subsequent execution of the actions.

#### 3.4.2. Data collection procedures

As stated in the AATC-OP *“it is the Managing Authority’s responsibility to collect, store and make the required information available to the MC, beneficiaries and intermediate bodies the information for them to carry out their tasks”*. Therefore, the Managing Authority is responsible for the development and maintenance of the AATC-OP’s information system (general computer record and data storage of the AATC-OP, including programming and applications). It is also responsible for collecting data related to operations that are necessary for the monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audits, including data about participants. In addition, the Managing Authority is also accountable for its creation and functioning.

The information system of the AATC-OP is based on a computer application for the integral management of the programme. This application must be used as a support for all co-financed projects in the framework of the AATC-OP.

In particular, the computer application gathers information at project level from the presentation of applications by potential beneficiaries until the closure of projects, including all the documentation related to the Agreement Managing Authority-Main Beneficiary, certifications of expenditure, performance reports and the information for the monitoring of the project. Consequently, the computer application provides a useful tool for the instruction but also for the monitoring of projects. In this sense, it

facilitates the tasks of beneficiaries as well as the responsibilities of the Joint Secretariat and the Managing Authority.

The experience gained during the 2007-2013 period constitutes the operational base for the present programming. This background provides a usefulness guarantee of the management and monitoring application regarding data collection on financial performance and the availability of reliable data (allowing aggregation whenever possible) for a better control over the programme. Therefore, the computer application facilitates:

- + The statements and declaration of expenditure by beneficiaries and the availability of control documentation.
- + An electronic management of projects, including those procedures attached to modification requests, notifications, electronic signature, monitoring of projects...
- + The electronic exchange of information with beneficiaries but also with the Programme's Authorities, which implies an advance towards e-cohesion because beneficiaries have the opportunity and obligation to interact with the digital available system.

In short, taking into account the fragmentation of the management structure, the evaluation team considers that a management tool providing rigorous and updated information about the physical and financial performance is essential. It is also necessary that adequate manuals and actions support the data and information collection procedures in order to guarantee their correct and effective functioning.

On the other hand, in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the information collecting system, the evaluation team puts forward the following recommendations:

- + To increase the performance of the computer system beyond the realm of management, justification and funds control with the aim of providing a system that is useful for the evaluation of outputs, results and impacts. This requires:
  - + Introducing the output and result indicators selected for the different Thematic Objectives of the AATC-OP.
  - + Promoting the inclusion of qualitative information about the changes that have been achieved due to supported interventions. This can be done through the inclusion of open fields (or similar) that allow including this kind of information related to beneficiaries.

- ✦ Organising meetings with involved agents and stakeholders in order to analyse and assess the relevance of result and output indicators in order to adjust the indicator's system and targets to the reality of intervention.

### 3.4.3. Evaluation Plan

Evaluation is a basic principle of the Cohesion Policy functioning. In fact, the effectiveness of the funding depends among others on the setting up of a reliable evaluation system. The Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 states clear requirements in this field. These normative requirements in the field of evaluation translate, in practice, in an Evaluation Plan.

The Evaluation Plan will present orientations with regard to the planning of activities linked to the strategic monitoring and continuous evaluation for the period 2014-2020. This Plan should constitute a practical instrument to improve the quality, effectiveness and coherence of the ERDF funding and of the AATC-OP's strategy and implementation with regard to the specific structural problems of the transnational cooperation area.

Therefore, the idea is to present a global instrument for the evaluation tasks that is integrated into the ordinary management of the intervention as a complementary tool that will favour the adequate implementation of evaluation tasks.

In this sense, the Technical Assistance Axis of the AATC-OP includes the development of evaluations and analysis related to the programme's execution. This should improve the evaluations' performance. In particular, the design and implementation of the programme evaluation plan is among the actions to be supported under the Technical Assistance Axis.

**3.5. TRACKING OF THE EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS		RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
INDICATORS' RELEVANCE AND CLARITY	Build an indicators' system based on a limited number of output and result indicators	The AATC-OP includes 5 Specific Output Indicators, 10 Common Output Indicators and 7 Result Indicators. Satisfactory balance between the number of indicators and interventions to be covered.  5 Common Output Indicators that were not considered relevant by the ex-ante evaluation have been deleted in the last version of the AATC-OP.	++
	Maximise the use of common indicators prescribed by EU Regulations.	10 out of 15 output indicators are from the Annex of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013. The 5 Specific Output indicators are included to help covering the variety of intervention types present in each of the Investment Priorities and taking into account the specificities of the European territorial cooperation.	++
	Ensure, through Specific Output Indicators, a better adjustment between what is to be measured and what is going to be done.	<i>The previous answer applies</i>	++
	Indicators meeting relevance, significance, quantification, reliability and utility criteria	The qualitative level of included indicators is satisfactory and adequate for the monitoring of the types of actions foreseen and the changes in the cooperation area.  Indicators allow a realistic quantification of the attainments and reflect satisfactorily the scope the AATC-OP strategy.  An ad-hoc Indicators Conceptual Framework has been developed. The framework includes provisions on the definition, scope and justifications.	++
ASSESSMENT OF BASELINES, TARGETS AND MILESTONES	Make use of the existing information for the 2007-2013 period when setting and estimating the objective values for the indicators	Baselines, targets and milestones are based in the previous experience of the Atlantic cooperation during the period 2017-2013 and its data. It also takes into account the average dimension of projects and its rate of conclusion.	++
	Indicators must comply with SMART criteria	The Ex-Ante Evaluation ratifies the quality of the selected indicators and its appropriateness to monitor the programme's attainments as well as the advance towards the achievement of the AATC-OP's objectives.	++
ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY	Actions to reinforce and update the capacities of the management bodies, intermediate organisations and potential beneficiaries in certain key areas such as the result-based approach or the impact assessment among others.	The Technical Assistance Axis includes a two-fold objective. On the one hand, it aims at ensuring an efficient and effective management of the AATC-OP. On the other, it pretends to support project applicants and beneficiaries. Therefore, appropriate actions are foreseen to reinforce and update capacities.	++

#### 4. CONSISTENCE OF FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS

The total FEDER contribution allocated to the Atlantic cooperation area under the framework of the AATC-OP represents 1.311.612.403 euros. This contribution is allocated through four different TOs in the following manner:

**TABLE 19. FINANCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE AATC-OP BY THEMATIC OBJECTIVES**

Draft financing plan of the Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation Operational Programme						
Priority Axis	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d)	(c) National Public funding	(d) National Private Funding	Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)	Co-Financing Rate
P1	47.117.240	15.705.748	12.564.598	3.141.150	62.822.988	75%
P2	29.744.404	9.914.802	7.931.842	1.982.960	39.659.206	75%
P3	15.267.039	5.089.014	4.071.211	1.017.803	20.356.053	75%
P4	39.483.720	13.161.241	10.528.993	2.632.248	52.644.961	75%
<b>Total</b>	<b>131.612.403</b>	<b>43.870.805</b>	<b>35.096.644</b>	<b>8.774.161</b>	<b>175.483.208</b>	<b>75%</b>
TA	8.400.791	1.482.493	1.482.493	-	9.883.284	85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140.013.194</b>	<b>45.353.298</b>	<b>36.579.137</b>	<b>8.774.161</b>	<b>185.366.492</b>	<b>76%</b>

Source: AATC-OP 2014-2020 Draft

The annual allocation of the ERDF is still to be decided. An increasing path from lower allocations in the beginning towards progressively higher allocations in the following years would enforce the implementation and impact of the AATC-OP. The lower concentration of support in the first years of the programming period would ensure the necessary time to set out the calls for proposals and a faster delivery of funds, which will facilitate the observation of the N+3 rule.

In this particular context, the analysis of financial allocations' consistency pretends to address three particular issues:

- + The observation of the normative requirements regarding thematic concentration.
- + The coherence and appropriateness of the financial contribution to address the needs of the cooperation area
- + The potential of the financial allocation to maximise positive synergies under the OP.

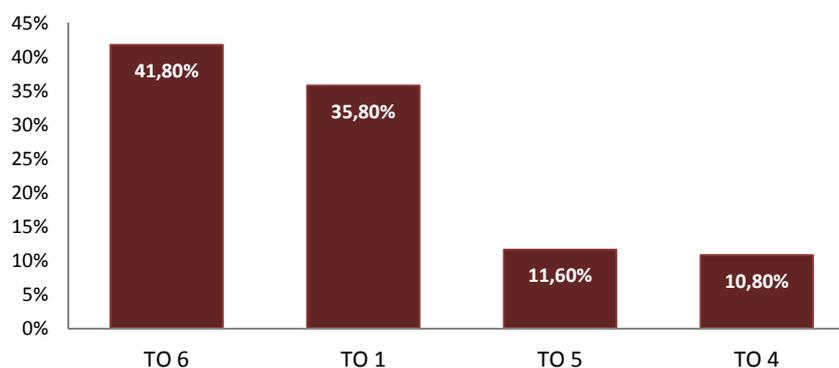
#### 4.1. COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENT OF THEMATIC CONCENTRATION

The intention to improve the strategic approach with a clear orientation towards the Europe 2020 Strategy objectives, together with the result oriented approach of the new Cohesion Policy explain that the present AATC-OP has a more robust proposal regarding investment priorities than previous programmes.

In Transnational Cooperation Programmes this approach translates into a concentration of at least 80% of the total FEDER contribution in a maximum of four Thematic Objectives (Article 6 of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013).

Addressing only four Thematic Objectives the AATC-OP complies explicitly with this requirement, gathering the total ERDF allocation in those four objectives.

GRAPH 3. THEMATIC CONCENTRATION IN AATC-OP 2014-2020



Source: Regio Plus. Data from AATC-OP 2014-2020 Draft.

#### 4.2. ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMME'S FINANCIAL COHERENCE

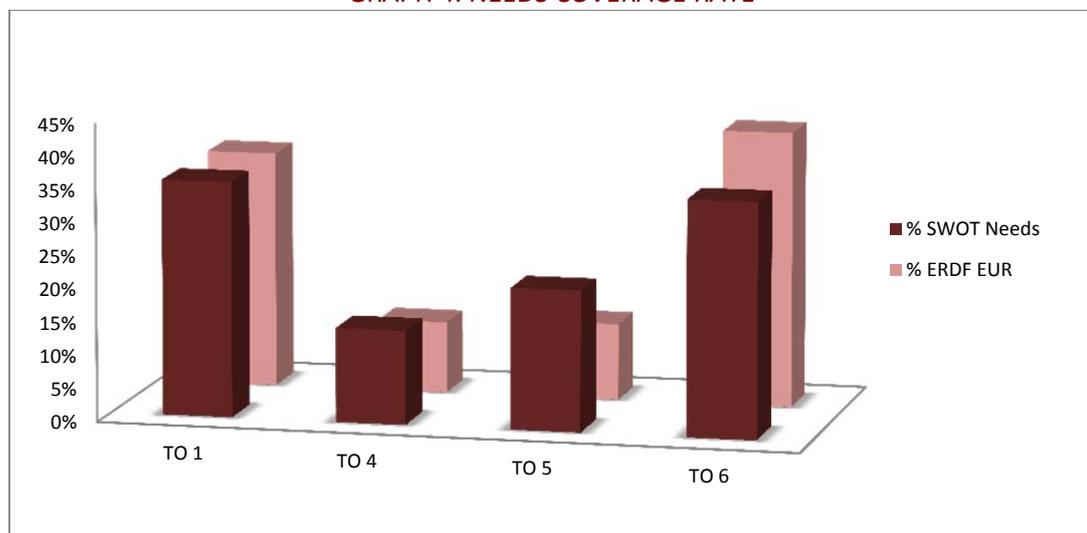
The AATC-OP financial coherence analysis addresses two specific dimensions: the coverage degree of the different needs identified in the SWOT analysis and the degree of potential exploitation of positive synergies inside the programme.

Regarding the coverage degree of identified needs, the analysis consists in assessing the linkage between the selected Thematic Objectives with the identified needs. These linkages are facilitated by the socioeconomic and territorial diagnosis and the consequent financial allocation. The coverage percentage of each Thematic Objective is obtained through the ratio between the number of needs addressed by the TO and the total of needs identified in the diagnosis.

The AATC-OP does not explicitly state which needs identified in the SWOT analysis included in the OP are addressed by each of the Thematic Objectives. However, the description of the different SO and a specific section of the AATC-OP dealing with justification for the choice of Thematic Objectives, which is more detailed than the initial SWOT analysis, allow the scrutiny of the needs' coverage rate.

This analysis shows that there exists a clear coherence in the AATC-OP. Those Thematic Objectives that address a higher number of needs (TO 1 and 6) receive a higher amount of ERDF support, whereas those TO which address less needs (TO 4 and 5) receive a lower ERDF allocation. To sum up, there exists a clear match between the number of needs addressed by the different Thematic Objectives and the internal financial allocation of the AATC-OP.

GRAPH 4. NEEDS COVERAGE RATE

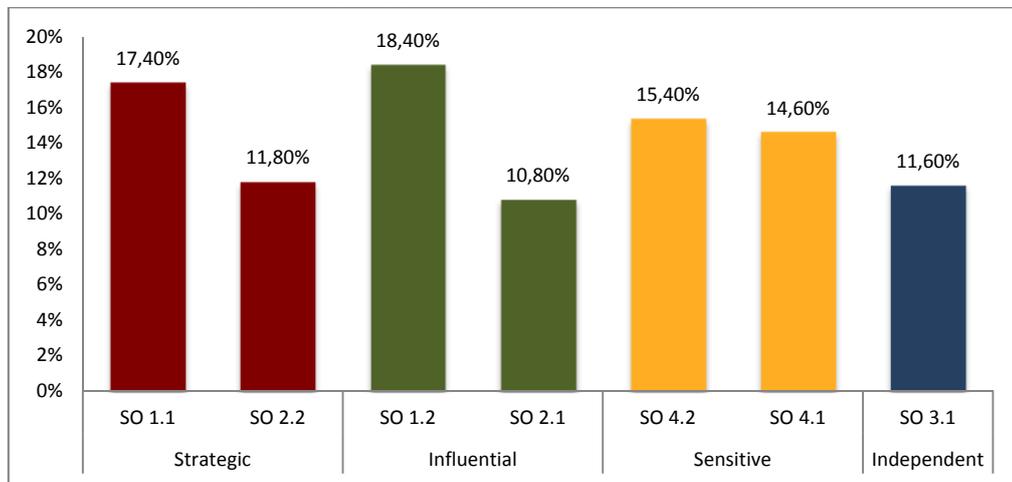


Source: Produced by Regio Plus

In this context, it is also advisable to analyse the degree of potential positive synergies of the AATC-OP that emerges from the given financial allocations by Specific Objective.

The following graph shows the relative importance of each of the Specific Objectives supported by the ERDF. These objectives are classified under the groups of strategic, influent, sensitive and independent SO following up the analysis carried out in the section of this evaluation dealing with the internal coherence of the AATC-OP.

GRAPH 5. POSITIVE SINERGIES EXPLOITATION



Source: Produced by Regio Plus

The graph illustrates that those SOs that fall under the category of strategic gather a 29.20% of the ERDF investment. Furthermore, if the influent SOs are added to the strategic ones, the investment concentration reaches a 58.40% of the ERDF support. The dragging effect of such Specific Objectives ensures a positive effect over the progress in the rest of objectives and over the overall impact of the AATC-OP.

Furthermore, positive cross-cutting synergies will be promoted through the selection of projects covering several themes addressed by different SOs as stated in the guiding principles for the selection of operations of the AATC-OP, which specifically states that such kind of projects would be highly encouraged.

It must be pointed out that those SOs with a clear sensitive nature (SO 4.1 and 4.2) gather a significant amount of the total ERDF allocation (30% of the total). Although the contribution of this SO to the achievement of the others is not elevated, the strategic nature for the Atlantic Area of the challenges related to biodiversity and ecosystems and the significant potential contribution that enhancing natural and cultural assets has on economic growth in the cooperation area justifies this significant allocation.

Therefore, the evaluation team does not see a need for reallocating the ERDF support. However, if further changes were to be introduced, it would be advisable to increase the allocation of Strategic and Influential SOs at the expense of those SOs with a sensitive or independent condition.

**4.3. TRACKING OF THE EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS		RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
THEMATIC CONCENTRATION	Compliance with the requirements of Thematic Concentration attached to the European Territorial Cooperation: at least 80% of the total ERDF contribution in a maximum of four Thematic Objectives (Article 6 of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013).	By Addressing only four Thematic Objectives the AATC-OP complies explicitly with thematic concentration requirements, gathering the total ERDF allocation in those four objectives.	++
FINANCIAL COHERENCE	Financial allocations by TO should determined by the number of identified needs (SWOT) addressed by each TO.	Those TOs that address a higher number of needs (TO 1 and 6) receive a higher amount of ERDF support, whereas those TO which address less needs (TO 4 and 5) receive a lower ERDF allocation.	++
	Enforce those SO with higher dragging effect for the achievement of the overall AATC-OPs objective (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2) and those with a higher sensitive nature (4.1, 4.2)	Investment in Strategic and Influential SOs (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2) represents 58,40% of the total. If Sensitive SOs are added, the allocation represents 88,40% of the total.	++

## 5. CONTRIBUTION TO THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

Europe 2020 is the EU's ten-year growth and jobs strategy that was launched in 2010. It is about to help Europe emerge stronger from the economic and financial crisis. In particular, Europe 2020 aims at providing "more jobs and better lives" by stimulating "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth":



- ✦ **Smart Growth:** developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
- ✦ **Sustainable growth:** promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
- ✦ **Inclusive growth:** fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

To monitor the progress made and quantify the objectives to be met by 2020, headline indicators and targets are set in the areas of employment, R&I, climate/energy, education and poverty. In particular, the five targets for the EU in 2020 are:

- ✦ **Employment:** 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed.
- ✦ **R&D / Innovation:** 3% of the EU's GDP (public and private combined) to be invested in R&D/innovation.
- ✦ **Climate Change / energy:** greenhouse gas emissions 20% (or even 30% if conditions are right) lower than 1990; 20% of energy from renewables; 20% increase in energy efficiency.
- ✦ **Education:** reducing school drop-out rates below 10%; at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education.
- ✦ **Poverty / Social exclusion:** at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The strategy involves integrating EU efforts related to development through greater coordination of national and European policies. In this context, EU Regulations promote the best use of Structural and Investment Funds in order to advance towards the achievement of the Europe 2020 objectives. In this sense, Cohesion Policy constitutes a key investment framework and system to deliver these objectives. ESI Funds and other financing instruments of the EU support the political commitments reached through the Europe 2020.

### 5.1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE AATC-OP DRIVING SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

The AATC-OP 2014-2020 is structured in four Priority Axis and an additional Axis devoted to Technical Assistance. They are aimed at achieving the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy. The AATC-OP's strategic chain (Priority Axis - Investment Priority - Specific Objective) has been developed to respond appropriately to the Europe 2020 Objectives into the Atlantic area context, taking into account the specific circumstances and development needs of the programme's area.

In particular, the contribution of the AATC-OP strategy clearly focuses on those objectives related to research and innovation as well as to those dealing with energy, sustainability and fighting against climate change.

Previous analyses have shown that there is a strong commitment in the AATC-OP to tackle R&I shortages in the Atlantic cooperation area. Moreover, improving environmental protection and increasing the spread of clean energy in the area are also priorities of the programme. Finally, the transnational cooperation in the Atlantic aims at valorising natural and cultural heritage. Therefore, the AATC-OP will clearly contribute to the Europe 2020 objectives in the fields of R&I and climate/energy.

Priority Axis 1 pretends to reinforce the R&I, a crucial aspect to advance towards a more intelligent growth through transnational cooperation. The innovation profile of several regions included in the cooperation area is still low. Therefore, increasing the investment and efforts in R&I is one of the main priorities of the AATC-OP 2014-2020.

Measures included in Axis 1 provide an excellent opportunity to connect the regional R&I systems and increase the efficiency of the actions in this particular field. In addition, Axis 1 focuses on an increased exploitation of research results to facilitate the emergence of new and innovative products, services and processes.

Priority Axis 2, 3 and 4 will clearly contribute to a more sustainable growth through the transnational cooperation in the fields of fostering resource efficiency, risk resilience and prevention and enhancement of biodiversity and natural and cultural assets. These Axes will surely contribute to the EU objectives in terms of sustainable growth.

The reduction of greenhouse emissions is one of the main challenges not only for the Atlantic area but also for the whole EU. The Atlantic area suffers in a high degree the consequences of climate change. Furthermore, an eventual consolidation of the economic recovery may have negative effects on the emission of greenhouse gases because the crisis has reduced the pressure on the environment coming from industrial activities. The AATC-OP does not include only actions to improve the

resilience of the area to disasters and climate change under Axis 3 but includes also actions aimed to reduce the pressure on the environment in Axis 2 and 4.

Another of the objectives is the spreading of renewable sources of energy. The EU 2020 Strategy aims at reaching a 20% of energy from renewables. Some countries and regions in the Atlantic Area are performing well in this field. However there is still considerable potential to increase the use of renewables in the Atlantic Area and the climate and geographical conditions in some of the regions clearly support this argument. Therefore, Axis 2 of the AATC-OP clearly encourages the spreading of renewable energy sources in the area and the increasing of energy efficiency.

Employment is another key objective in Europe 2020. Although employment is not directly addressed in the AATC-OP, actions undertaken under the different Axes may have a positive impact on employment. That is clearly the case for Axis 1 that aims at reinforcing the area's competitiveness through cooperation in R&D&I. But also Axis 2, 3 and 4 may boost employment in the Atlantic area in important sustainable and added value sectors as those of renewable energy, Eco-innovation or even in tourism thanks to the enhancement of the region's cultural and natural heritage.

However, those social structural challenges and weaknesses such as education or poverty are not directly addressed in the AATC-OP. Whereas some educational and training activities may be undertaken under Axis 1, structural needs as early school leaving -pointed out in the diagnosis- are not addressed by the programme's strategy. However, these challenges can be tackled in the cooperation area through other instruments as the European Social Fund.

To sum up, the strategy set by the AATC-OP is in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy and actions to be undertaken under the programme will contribute through a territorialised strategy to the achievement of the EU framework objectives. However, due to its limited resources and geographical boundaries, the potential impact of the programme's strategy must not be overestimated. The AATC-OP is clearly in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy but the achievement of the Strategy's objectives requires a full-sustained support of Member State Governments as well as regional and local public authorities. The AATC-OP focus evidently in a limited set of topics in order to maximise the resources allocated to the Programme but responds to the Europe 2020 Strategy providing appropriate answers to issues that can be only solved through territorial cooperation and not on an individual regional or national basis.

## 5.2. EXPECTED RESULTS FROM A EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY PERSPECTIVE

The following table shows the impacts of each AATC-OP's Investment Priority on the objectives and indicators set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy

AXIS	IP	EMPLOYMENT	R&I	CLIMATE AND ENERGY			EDUCATION		POVERTY AND INCLUSION
		75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed	3% of the EU's GDP (invested in R&D&I)	-20% emissions	20% renewables	+20% efficiency	school drop-out rates below 10%	40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education	20 million fewer people at risk of poverty and social exclusion
1	1B	+++	+++	+	+	+			+
2	4A	+	+	+++	+++	+++			
	6G	+	+	+++		+++			
3	5B			++					
4	6D			++					
	6C	+		+					

+++	ELEVATED IMPACT	++	MODERATE IMPACT	+	REDUCED IMPACT
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Source: Produced by Regio Plus

Each of the investment priorities significantly contributes at least to one of the Europe 2020 objectives. Therefore, all objectives are positively influenced by the AATC-OP's investment. Furthermore, several Investment Priorities have a positive impact on more than one objective.

The AATC-OP has a an evident influence on the objectives related to climate change and energy as 3 of the Priority Axis are directly devoted to environmental and energy related issues. The influence on the R&I objective comes mainly from Axis 1. Finally the table shows the impact that the progress towards knowledge-based economy and the enforcement of strategic economic sectors for the Atlantic Area may have on employment in the Atlantic Area.

6. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**7. ANNEX: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

	EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS		RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIAGNOSIS	SCOPE	Enrich the initial diagnosis with higher use and processing of statistical information available to improve knowledge and obtain additional evidence in areas such as population density, labour productivity, sectorial production, business density or level of expertise.	The Diagnosis (Section 1) has been extended with regard to its initial versions. New statistical information on variables initially not included has been introduced. However, this recommendation for improvement has not always been taken into account, as it is the case of the productive structure or the business density.	+
		Address the lack of conclusions in ERDF areas of interest: ICT, SME competitiveness and management of natural risks.	The data and information and conclusions reached on the Thematic ERDF areas tackled in the OP showed evidence of clear potential for cooperation, making it unnecessary to research all potential areas, when the OP needs to concentrate on a few Priority Axes and Specific Objectives.	+
		Analysis of the present situation of regional RIS (conclusions comparison)	The Draft Strategies for Smart Specialisation of the involved regions have been examined and no divergences are appreciated.	+
		Include a specific section on Equal Opportunities	Question dealt with under a dedicated paragraph 8.2	+
	INDICATORS SYSTEM	Obtain more recent information for some indicators	The data used was the most recently available, when the data was not recent this was for lack of them.	+
		Need for a gender breakdown of some indicators (labour market, educational levels...)	The programme does not go into greater detail in terms of educational level or labour market as both areas remain as macro indicators for the OP that offer general information about the overall situation of the AA.	-
		Identify the initial situation of the cooperation area with regard to the indicators-objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy.	References to the initial situation are only included for the employment and R&I related objectives of the EU2020 Strategy.	+
	SWOT	Increase the quantitative dimension supporting the SWOT analysis, which would allow a real approximation to the weaknesses' and strengths' dimension.	The SWOT analysis is the result of a quantification work included in the Diagnosis and presents valuable and supportive information for the design of the AATC-OP's strategy.	+
		Assess if new elements should be included following an eventual extension of the diagnosis' scope.	The SWOT analysis has been improved with the inclusion of new elements as a consequence of the Diagnosis revisions.	++
		Further motivate all SWOT components in the socio-economic analysis	The weaknesses-challenges and strengths-opportunities classification has been reconsidered. However some SWOT elements are still not clearly supported by the Diagnosis.	+

		EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
PROGRAMME STRATEGY	INTERNAL COHERENCE	✦ Enforce those SO with higher dragging effect for the achievement of the overall AATC-Ops objective (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2) and those with a higher sensitive nature (4.1, 4.2)	Investment in Strategic and Influential SOs (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2) represents 58,40% of the total. If Sensitive SOs are added, the allocation represents 88,40% of the total.	++
	EXTERNAL COHERENCE	✦ Monitoring calls for proposals of other EU programmes in order to avoid duplications and maximise opportunities in terms of synergies and complementarities that can be established between the AATC-OP and other EU programmes.	Adequate provisions are in place in Section 6 of the AATC-OP. As stated in this section, thematic links with other programmes, instruments and policies will be regularly assessed and reviewed.	++
		✦ Using the AATC-OP to prepare actors and join capacities, resources and efforts in the Atlantic area in order to increase the participation in other EU programmes, especially on those of clear competitive participation such as Horizon 2020.	SO 1.1 is specifically aimed at enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation. This represents a clear example of joining capacities, resources and efforts that should allow a higher participation in H2020. Furthermore, the AATC-OP mentions that programme bodies will seek active cooperation with other EU programmes (creation of cooperation networks, information exchange platforms, capitalization events...)	++
		✦ Co-financing through the AATC-OP, whenever allowed, actions from other programmes in topics and action fields that are strategic for the Atlantic cooperation area.	Beneficiaries will be asked to identify and exploit links with other programmes. Project exchanges will be promoted between beneficiaries of different programmes. To promote coordination beneficiaries will be asked to inform about participation in other EU projects. Specific criteria will be established, also to avoid double funding.	++
		✦ Prioritising projects (in selection phases) that are a follow-up of actions financed by other EU programmes or projects that take advantage of results and methodologies from these other programmes.	Similar to the previous point. Selection criteria will be developed and projects must comply with them. But as stated in the AATC-OP there is an aim to capitalise and promote cooperation.	++
		✦ Introducing in criteria for selection those aspects related to sustainability of interventions that prioritise the continuation of projects or the introduction of improvements through proposals to other financing programmes of the EU.	The Monitoring Committee will define admissibility conditions and selection criteria, as well as specific conditions, for project selection. In its Section 6, the AATC-OP clearly states that coordination and complementarity will be sought with other EU programmes. These criteria should include aspects related to sustainability of interventions translating into specific principles the general positive approach of AATC-OP's Section 6 to complementarities with other EU programmes.	+

		EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
PROGRAMME STRATEGY	INTERVENTION LOGIC	➤ Reinforce the AATC-OP's intervention logic by including indicators that facilitate the display of actions' achievements and the progress towards the achievement of the included objectives	All Investment Priorities include, at least, an output indicator and all Specific Objectives are linked to, at least, a result indicator. At the same time, the weaknesses identified in the cooperation area are or may be easily supported by context indicators.	++
	FORM OF FINANCE	➤ Due to the target beneficiaries, intervention fields, objectives of the type of actions, non-repayable grants are the most appropriate form of finance to support the projects that will implement the AATC-OP.	Non-repayable grants are maintained as the only form of finance in the AATC-OP.	++
	CROSS-BORDER PRINCIPLES	➤ Convenience to perform the gender breakdown of some of the indicators used in the Diagnosis with the possibility to include a specific section gathering findings on the situation about equal opportunities between men and women.	Gender breakdown of diagnosis' indicators could be further developed. However, the AATC-OP recognises that project output indicators measuring the positive effect on promoting gender equality, when relevant, will be encouraged. The conducted analysis of the indicators system concludes that there are not many indicators in the AATC-OP system that allow gender breakdown.	+
		➤ Convenience to introduce in the diagnosis a specific section on the situation in the cooperation area regarding non-discrimination and social exclusion.	Although Non-discrimination and social exclusion is not directly tackled by the diagnosis, some references to groups at risk and causes are included. Unemployment, early school leaving and ageing are considered. Some data regarding social exclusion is also present.	+
		➤ Anticipate clear provisions to ensure that the principles of gender equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development are enforced during the AATC-OP's implementation	The AATC-OP includes clear operational provisions that ensure that horizontal principles will be enforced during the implementation. These principles will be present during the application and selection of projects, where the contribution to them will be required, assessed and awarded.	++
		➤ Promote the inclusion of implementation and execution data with the necessary desegregations to evaluate the impact on gender equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development.	As stated in the AATC-OP, whenever possible, indicators will be disaggregated to assess the positive effect on the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination. In the case of sustainable development, output and result indicators related to Tos 4, 5 and 6 would offer a valuable picture of the contribution of the AATC-OP to this principle.	++

	EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS		RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM	INDICATORS' RELEVANCE AND CLARITY	+ Build an indicators' system based on a limited number of output and result indicators	The AATC-OP includes 5 Specific Output Indicators, 15 Common Output Indicators and 7 Result Indicators. Satisfactory balance between the number of indicators and interventions to be covered.	++
		+ Maximise the use of common indicators prescribed by EU Regulations.	15 out of 20 output indicators are from the Annex of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013. The 5 Specific Output indicators are included to help covering the variety of intervention types present in each of the Investment Priorities and taking into account the specificities of the European territorial cooperation.	++
		+ Ensure, through Specific Output Indicators, a better adjustment between what is to be measured and what is going to be done.	<i>The previous answer applies</i>	++
		+ Indicators meeting relevance, significance, quantification, reliability and utility criteria	The qualitative level of included indicators is satisfactory and adequate for the monitoring of the types of actions foreseen and the changes in the cooperation area. Indicators allow a realistic quantification of the attainments and reflect satisfactorily the scope the AATC-OP strategy. An ad-hoc Indicators Conceptual Framework has been developed. The framework includes provisions on the definition, scope and justifications.	++
	ASSESSMENT OF BASELINES, TARGETS AND MILESTONES	+ Make use of the existing information for the 2007-2013 period when setting and estimating the objective values for the indicators	Baselines, targets and milestones are based in the previous experience of the Atlantic cooperation during the period 2017-2013 and its data. It also takes into account the average dimension of projects and its rate of conclusion.	++
		+ Indicators must comply with SMART criteria	The Ex-Ante Evaluation ratifies the quality of the selected indicators and its appropriateness to monitor the programme's attainments as well as the advance towards the achievement of the AATC-OP's objectives.	++
	ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY	+ Actions to reinforce and update the capacities of the management bodies, intermediate organisations and potential beneficiaries in certain key areas such as the result-based approach or the impact assessment among others.	The Technical Assistance Axis includes a two-fold objective. On the one hand, it aims at ensuring an efficient and effective management of the AATC-OP. On the other, it pretends to support project applicants and beneficiaries. Therefore, appropriate actions are foreseen to reinforce and update capacities.	++

		EX-ANTE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSE	LEVEL OF ATTENTION
FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS	THEMATIC CONCENTRATION	<p>✦ Compliance with the requirements of Thematic Concentration attached to the European Territorial Cooperation: at least 80% of the total ERDF contribution in a maximum of four Thematic Objectives (Article 6 of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013).</p>	<p>By Addressing only four Thematic Objectives the AATC-OP complies explicitly with thematic concentration requirements, gathering the total ERDF allocation in those four objectives.</p>	++
	FINANCIAL COHERENCE	<p>✦ Financial allocations by TOs should be determined by the number of identified needs (SWOT) addressed by each TO.</p>	<p>Those TOs that address a higher number of needs (TO 1 and 6) receive a higher amount of ERDF support, whereas those TO which address less needs (TO 4 and 5) receive a lower ERDF allocation.</p>	++



INCLUSION OF RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENT



PARTIAL INCLUSION OF THE RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENT



RECOMMENDATION NOT CONSIDERED

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