



Atlantic Transnational Network

"Towards a revision of the TEN-T for the Atlantic Area"

April 2021

The members of the Atlantic Transnational Network (ATN-RTA), which brings together representatives of civil society from different socio-professional organisations – Spanish, French economic, social and environmental councils (CES and CESER) and Forum Oceano in Portugal - are seeking to develop partnerships and joint initiatives within the Atlantic area. European transport policy is one of the key EU policies for ensuring territorial and socio-economic cohesion, as well as economic development and the creation of sustainable, high-quality jobs.

In October 2018, the ATN-RTA initiated a comprehensive study of the socio-economic and environmental challenges of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) on the Atlantic façade and the Channel area, thus demonstrating its interest in a European initiative aiming at coordinating EU Member States' transport policies and developing a balanced and coherent territorial planning policy in the EU.

The members of the ATN-RTA have prepared these proposals in order to actively contribute to the overall legislative proposals concerning the TEN-T, scheduled for 2021.

The context

After 2020, the changes in future European transport policies will have an impact on the configuration of future transport networks, but also on the territories they cover. The members of the ATN-RTA have drafted these proposals in order to contribute to the ongoing developments. Its objective is to:

- ◆ **formulate the ATN-RTA's initial proposals in response to the presentation made by the European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism on 22 June 2020** of its draft initiative report on the "Revision of the guidelines for the Trans-European transport network (TEN-T)";
- ◆ **contribute to the European Commission's consultation process** on assessing the impact of the TEN-T revision;
- ◆ **prepare the ATN-RTA's position ahead of the European Commission's presentation of its legislative proposal concerning the revision of the TEN-T, scheduled for 2021.**

This contribution also takes into consideration the current **revision of local and territorial policies in light of climate change**, particularly in relation to the European "Green Deal" guidelines. The members of the ATN-RTA therefore underline that all these proposals are elaborated in correlation with developments that will take place in the field of energy transition.

Finally, this contribution takes into account **the necessary adjustments made by regions of the Atlantic area and along the Channel in the face of BREXIT**, as well as other European, national or regional measures implemented within the context of the sanitary crisis since March 2020.

The members of the ATN-RTA come from regions in and around the Atlantic Corridor, and share the following objectives:

- ◆ improving the economic, social and territorial cohesion of their regions through the implementation of projects approved as part of the TEN-T;
- ◆ addressing the challenges of a social, economic and ecological transition by relying on prospective components (energy, technological innovations, acceptability by the population).

The Atlantic Corridor is one of the nine multimodal transport corridors (rail, road, inland waterways, maritime routes) included in the European Union's Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).

The Atlantic Corridor enables communications between the South-western and Central regions of Europe, linking the ports of the Iberian Peninsula to the Western-most part of France and Northern Europe. The European Atlantic area is also connected to the North Sea corridor and to the Baltic corridor, in articulation with the other European corridors, particularly the West-East links towards Central and Eastern Europe.

The 8 overall priorities of the ATN-RTA

❖ Horizon 2030 and 2050

The upcoming revision of the TEN-T must **ensure interconnection between the core network and the comprehensive network in order to ensure accessibility to all EU territories, notably for EU's peripheral and rural regions, whose economic and social development depends on the quality of transport infrastructures**. The core network, consisting of the nine multimodal corridors, is the strategic backbone identified to streamline and facilitate the coordinated implementation of projects from the comprehensive network.

The ATN-RTA is aware that completing the work underway is a priority, but considers that the completion of the core network by 2030 should not result in abandoning or suspending work on the comprehensive network (2050), since this would prevent such important objectives as territorial cohesion or the need for greater network coverage from being achieved.

> **PROPOSAL 1:** The members of the ATN-RTA share the goal of **completing the comprehensive network by 2050 and the core network and corridors by 2030**. In terms of governance, they would like to **see greater cooperation between the European, national, regional and local decision-making levels and greater involvement of regional and local bodies so as to improve infrastructures to the very last mile**.

They suggest initiating discussions on the articulation between the core network and the comprehensive network, addressing topics such as:

- ◆ **implementation delays that prevent** the 2030 and 2050 targets from being achieved;
- ◆ the political and financial support from Europe and the Member States to **enable the comprehensive network to achieve the objectives set out in the European transport policy** (economic, environmental, territorial cohesion, etc.);
- ◆ **the way in which European transport networks promote the inter-connection between, on one hand, territorial cohesion at European level, and internal cohesion** on the other hand (intra-regional but also inter-regional as in the case of the Atlantic façade).

To achieve these objectives, the members of the ATN-RTA recommend **reinforcing the governance methods**, notably:

- ◆ **the role of the regions** in the governance and achievement of the TEN-T objectives should be recognised and reinforced in the European Commission's future proposal. The implementation of TEN-T should involve close dialogue between regional, national and European authorities, according to each authority's areas of competence;
- ◆ **the coordinators of each corridor should be given broader responsibilities** and a greater scope of in-

tervention at all stages of the development;

- ◆ **an independent agency should be set up** to monitor and supervise the work of TEN-T projects. The agency should focus not only on the financial management of EU funding, but also on monitoring the timely implementation of approved infrastructure projects, ensuring better coherence between the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and the TEN-T in order to ensure infrastructure quality, as well as the efficiency and capacity of the network, i.e. "a TEN-T adapted to the future".

❖ Routes with an international dimension

The current map should be complemented since the trade routes with Eastern Europe, beyond the Rhine and onwards towards Asia, need to be reinforced. The aim is to facilitate access to the economic and industrial heartland of the EU, which stretches from the Benelux countries to northern Italy, notably drawing on the use of internal waterways.

The ports on the Atlantic, Cantabrian and Channel coasts are in good strategic positions in relation to the commercial maritime routes of Northern Europe, which pass through the Atlantic corridor in both directions to or from America, Africa and the Mediterranean area. At the same time, connecting the South-western part of the EU is essential for the development of trade with the Southern Mediterranean countries.

BREXIT will change the flows of passengers and, even more so, the flows of goods through the ports in Northern Europe, notably in France, as regards the link between Ireland and the European continent via the Channel. For some ports on the Atlantic façade, there is an urgent need to establish new routes to adapt to the changing reality of maritime and airport connections, while reassessing the location of port hubs and redistribution platforms at the same time.

> **PROPOSAL 2:** The members of the ATN-RTA believe the **TEN-T infrastructures need to be adapted to improve the links between the Atlantic regions and the rest of Europe, notably through a better integration in the comprehensive network.** In this respect, BREXIT has profoundly modified the geopolitical context and created new external borders with the EU in the Atlantic and Channel regions, thus aggravating the effects of these areas' peripheral position in relation to the rest of the EU.

The future TEN-T guidelines should therefore facilitate and reinforce the integration of these regions into the comprehensive network, as well as their ultimate connection to the core network and, notably, to the Atlantic corridor. **The members of the ATN-RTA also underline the need for consistency between the European objectives of the TEN-T and regional strategic priorities.**

The Atlantic corridor could be developed as the backbone of the Western section of the Network in Europe. The ATN-RTA underlines the complementarity between the Atlantic corridor and the Mediterranean corridor as regards trade relations with the southern Mediterranean.

❖ Accessibility, missing links and bottlenecks

The map shows that the **Atlantic area has a less dense network, which hampers easy connections between the area's different regions and fails to address the realities of isolation and confinement in some of these territories.** In order to ensure "cost-effective, fluid, competitive and sustainable transport", the effective integration of the Portuguese, Spanish and French rail networks with the rest of the Atlantic Corridor that flows through Europe must eliminate existing bottlenecks between these countries, either due to offloading, capacities or track gauges. Thus, the main obstacle between Spain and France is the change in track gauge, which is a handicap for efficient and sustainable transports on the Atlantic route.

> **PROPOSAL 3:** The members of the ATN-RTA would like to complement the current route of the Atlantic Corridor and develop the complementarity of road/rail/port intermodal transport in order to improve

transregional and transnational exchanges as well as links with the hinterland. As a question of urgent priority, it is necessary to:

- ◆ **create bypasses around the national capitals**, Paris, Madrid and Lisbon, and to **improve the fluidity of transport routes** (reduction of traffic jams and urban nodes) **in major regional cities** and other key urban centres;
- ◆ **modernise interregional and cross-border rail links and improve access to high-speed rail hubs (TGV)**, in which insufficient investment is made; technical obstacles continue to hamper the circulation of passengers and goods and threaten the safety of the lines (maximum basic length a train can circulate on the conventional network, certification of equipment, existence of gradients greater than 15mm/m (maximum gradient adopted in Spain for new routes), electrification, obsolescence of track elements (ballast, sleepers and rails), problems linked to signalling, etc.). Moreover, the aim is to **develop rail motorway services between Portugal, Spain and France**, underlining their strong potential, and to speed up cross-border links between the Basque Country and France, and between Galicia, Castilla y León, Extremadura and Portugal;
- ◆ **consider the objectives of improving connections and territorial balance given the issues of isolation when revising the Atlantic freight corridor**, which must include itineraries that link up with the various routes of the core network. The Atlantic Corridor must be complemented with links between Andalusia, Extremadura and Castilla y León via the La Plata route, as well as links with Normandy, Brittany, Pays de la Loire and Nouvelle Aquitaine. Further North, cross-border links must be organised between the ports in Ireland and those in the North-West and North of France (Brittany, Normandy, Hauts-de-France) for both passenger and freight transport.

❖ Energy and digital transitions

The recurrence and significance of climate change events are affecting our economic systems and our living conditions. **The members of the ATN-RTA approve the green focus of the European transport policy**, as well as the orientations of the "Green Deal". Combatting global warming is crucial, and it is essential to accelerate fundamental research in finding mitigation solutions.

In the field of digital technologies, **the members of the ATN-RTA fully support every type of technological and social innovation created around the Atlantic corridor**, and notably actions that will help companies to digitise their operations, especially SMEs and very small businesses with specific needs¹. These transitions must take place in a fair and balanced way.

> PROPOSAL 4: The members of the ATN-RTA want the legislative proposal for the TEN-T revision to reflect the effects of technological developments and climate change. The effects of transport on the environment must also be considered more broadly, not just in terms of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. With this in mind, beyond the facilities and infrastructures that will involve ambitious research and innovation projects, the members of the ATN-RTA underline the importance of establishing a common entrepreneurial and social project for Atlantic regions, in line with the future orientations of the comprehensive and core networks. This project must foster acceptance by the local populations, by focusing on the safety of businesses and citizens with a high-level digital data exploitation and protection. In this context, coordination between local authorities and the various public and private organisations involved is essential to effectively manage these transitions.

In order to **develop low-emission vehicles**, it is necessary to:

- ◆ increase research for alternative fuels and markets (mainly electricity and hydrogen);
- ◆ deploy the corresponding recharging infrastructures (roads/platforms/inland navigation) or refuelling facilities (especially in Green Ports);
- ◆ prepare the transformation of existing vehicles for the different types of transport:

¹ Including data analysis, open data processing, the impact of sensitive information, economic intelligence, artificial intelligence, etc.

- road transport: greening buses and trucks,
- rail transport: smart self-propelled wagons, battery-powered and/or hydrogen-powered trains,
- air transport: electric aircraft and changes in practices on the ground in airports;
- ◆ develop collaborative modes of transport;
- ◆ pay particular attention to logistics platforms. For example, the transport of waste of all forms has increased significantly: plastics, paper, vehicles, etc.

❖ Rebalancing the modal and multimodal transport split

There is an urgent **need to accelerate efficient interconnections between the different modes of transport and infrastructures², and to boost multimodal capacity**, both in the core network and in the comprehensive network, in order to avoid competition between countries or regions. Developing the intermodal capacity of ports would make it possible to capture more traffic, attract new companies, new activities and more investments in the port installations. Day-to-day transport must be improved to open up medium-sized towns and rural areas.

> PROPOSAL 5: The members of the ATN-RTA want to develop rail and maritime links and optimise the connections between them to reduce network congestion, meet climate-related objectives and provide European citizens with a better quality of life.

To achieve this will require:

- ◆ improving modal shifts towards the modes of transport with the lowest emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases;
- ◆ reinforcing European support for initiatives aimed at decarbonising uses.

This will involve **adopting and managing national plans to maintain TEN-T infrastructures**; this aspect has been underestimated in several European countries, which have obsolete infrastructures in some areas. A plan should be put in place to ensure the supervision of the main network at European level.

❖ Strategic role of rail and maritime transport

Rail and maritime links play a major role in EU's international and intra-community trade. **There is an urgent need to reduce saturation in the major cross-border rail hubs, setting priorities between freight and passengers, which represent different challenges.**

As regards promoting maritime transport, **the role of ports is important in terms of multimodal capacity**. This must be strengthened because ports will become epicenters of synergy between the energy, transport and telecommunications sectors, as hubs with good connections with the back office. The Motorways of the Sea (MOS) - a priority in the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) - are a pillar to facilitate short distance connections and services.

> PROPOSAL 6:

Concerning the railway network:

- ◆ The members of the ATN-RTA believe it is crucial to **complete the electrification projects on the Central-Atlantic railway lines, modernise the entire rail network, propose new routes, ensure the complementarity between rail and heavy goods traffic over long distances, develop rail motorway services and, finally, reduce saturation at cross-border bottlenecks**. All this needs to be done while taking into account the different types of challenges facing freight and passenger transport.
- ◆ The members of the ATN-RTA welcome the fact that **2021 has been declared the "European Year of Rail"** to promote the role of trains, particularly for commuting.

² Port and air routes, rail, road and waterway networks.

As regards ports:

- ◆ In addition to **reinforcing cooperation between seaports and improving infrastructures**, the actions implemented in port areas should aim to support their efforts to promote **multimodal connections and the decarbonisation of port usages**.
- ◆ **Within the context of BREXIT**, it is essential to develop **new maritime links** (particularly with Ireland), and **adapt maritime links with the United Kingdom** while facilitating the **connection of seaports with the hinterlands**.
- ◆ Emphasis should be placed on the need to **establish synergies between the different players involved and to share the public/private effort (operators)**. In that respect, the members of the ATN-RTA note with great interest the recent revision of the Action Plan 2.0 of the Atlantic maritime strategy, which includes a specific pillar on Atlantic ports. They will continue to pay close attention to the actions developed by the regions and the Member States to implement the goals of this Pillar I of the Action Plan.

The members of the ATN-RTA ask the EU to clarify its strategy regarding the Motorways of the Sea (MoS) by setting time-frames for their implementation, and also to consolidate existing services and promote new uses, by reinforcing the commitment to green, sustainable, attractive and efficient connections and their integration into the transport chain. As regards the potential of the MoS (and of ports in general), the members of the ATN-RTA underline the need to ensure smart and sustainable connections between the different transport modes.

❖ Function of transport in the event of a major crisis in the European Union

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that, in the event of a major crisis situation at European level, it is crucial to **plan and put in place adaptation measures in order to maintain essential supply flows in the European area**. Moreover, the question of passenger movement during the health crisis (cross-border workers, health care personnel, patients, business travellers, etc.) is paramount.

> **PROPOSAL 7:** The members of the ATN-RTA ask to carry out **an in-depth reflection concerning the areas of strategic interest that should be prioritised in the event of a major crisis impacting the transport sector on a European-wide scale**.

They underline the importance of considering the impact of COVID-19 on the aviation industry (airlines and airports) and on travel behaviour. This impact should also accelerate the development of rail freight (notably through the installation of private sidings).

On a more general level, they wish to have a better appreciation of the different types of risks (social, environmental, sanitary, economic, etc.) and to inform and raise awareness among inhabitants, in order to improve practices and ensure that vital needs are met.

❖ Financing

To meet all these priorities, adequate funding is needed. **The members of the ATN-RTA are concerned about the cuts made to the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) in the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework**. They recommend **greater flexibility between EU funding programmes³ so that regional projects do not rely exclusively on ERDF funds** aimed at social and territorial cohesion. The members also insist that a sufficient level of investment is guaranteed for projects related to the completion of the TEN-T in the different territories.

The synergies between these centrally managed EU instruments (such as the CEF) and shared management funds (such as the ERDF) must be reinforced while **ensuring that regions are fully involved, in line with the objective of achieving harmonious and balanced development of EU territories**.

³ For example, EU programmes that support research in the field of smart, green, integrated transport.

> **PROPOSAL 8:** The members of the ATN-RTA call for the **simplification of the rules in order to facilitate the engineering of projects and the assessment of their eligibility**. The members underline the importance of assessing the environmental and social impact and the territorial balance before the projects are selected. As regards evaluation and assessment, the reports must be drafted in a coherent manner, in synergy with the participation of the regions involved in the governance and by taking the civil society's concerns into greater consideration.

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Established in 2003, the Atlantic Transnational Network (ATN-RTA) is a cooperation platform for civil society in the Atlantic area. The network currently brings together representative socio-professional organisations from France, Spain and Portugal (CESER of Brittany, Pays de la Loire, Centre-Val de Loire, Nouvelle Aquitaine, Normandy; CES from the Basque Country, Galicia, the Canary Islands, Andalusia, Extremadura, Castilla y León; Forum Oceano) that are interested in the specific issues linked to the development of Europe's Atlantic coast.

For more information:
<http://rta-atn.org>

