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The Atlantic Arc: New Translations for an Old Identity

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Abstract

For more than thirty years, the Atlantic Arc has been used as a concept to defend the stance of the regions and cities in South Western Europe. Several factors, from geographical features to cooperation agreements have had a strong influence in the evolution of the notion and its uses. Nowadays, with a new EU programming period on its way and transnational initiatives like the Atlantic Strategy being discussed, the time has come to clarify the meaning, the incidence and the implication of the Atlantic Arc as a brand and as a common identity, part of the European citizenship broader concept.

Keywords: Atlantic Arc; Atlantic Area; branding; territorial marketing; territorial cooperation

The Atlantic Area is characterised by great differences in development regarding capital regions of each State, and also by relatively important heterogeneity, particularly between the north and south, whilst it is supported by a network of medium-sized cities and constitutes Europe's main maritime façade.

Rooted in identity signs like the Way of Saint James, the Discoveries or the Celtic heritage, the revival of the Atlantic Arc concept as a cultural transformation represents today an opportunity for the territories located in South-West Europe. The concept has endeavoured several interpretations, provided by the cooperation bodies that are installed, the European Institutions and other international actors.

So, after a short overview of symbols, this paper will provide several definitions of the Atlantic Arc, trying to define the geographical scope, the agents and their interactions. These definitions provide the basis to examine the implementation of the Atlantic Arc concept on the ground, exploring how it is declined and perceived as a European identity. Thus, this