# ALL-ATLANTIC OCEAN RESEARCH ALLIANCE

Creating an Atlantic Ocean Community by Implementing the Galway and Belém Statements

## AA-MARINET Report:

### Development and Management Group (DMG) and Community Group (CG)

## Report Identifier

| Report Name | **AA-MARINET Report: Development and Management Group (DMG) and Community Group (CG)** |
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## ALL-ATLANTIC JOINT PILOT ACTIONS

Following a year-long collaborative process among more than 70 stakeholders at the Atlantic level, the All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance Multi-Stakeholder Platform, divided into 5 sub-multi-stakeholders platforms, identified more than 1000 initiatives towards strengthening marine research and innovation collaboration at the Atlantic level, 56 gaps and 79 needs/recommendations to achieve the All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance ambition, guided by a total of 20 Strategic Objectives, 20 Operational Objectives, and 10 Key Performance Indicators.

Based on these findings and on the idea of collaboration, alignment, and use of existing resources, they have developed six ambitious and long-term collaborative Joint Pilot Actions:

- **All-Atlantic Training Platform (AA-TP)**
- **All-Atlantic Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Platform (AA-ATiP)**
- **All-Atlantic Marine Biotechnology Initiative (AA-BIOTECMAR)**
- **All-Atlantic Data Enterprise 2030 (AA-DATA2030)**
- **All-Atlantic Blue Schools Network (AA-BSN)**
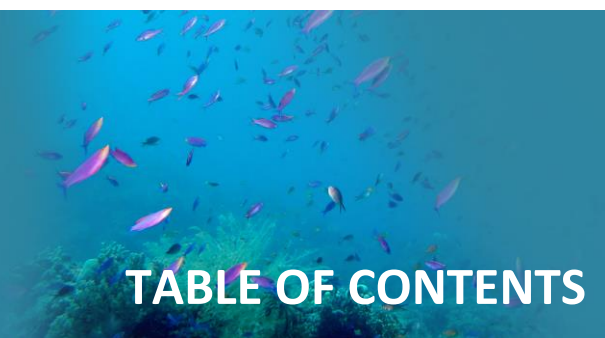- **All-Atlantic Marine Research Infrastructure Network (AA-MARINET)**

This report is developed by **All-Atlantic Marine Research Infrastructure Network (AA-MARINET)**, that provides tools to support a transatlantic network of Research Infrastructures initiatives, promoting Trans-National Access and other methods for sharing infrastructures in the Atlantic area. It will work as a platform where stakeholders can share information about planned observation activities and available spare capacities, creating a forum where thematic networking and synergies will bring a better articulation of infrastructure-related activities in the Atlantic basin, improving the support of multidisciplinary science to address global societal challenges.

This report is a deliverable in scope of AA-MARINET Task 1 "Governance: Set up of the Development and Management Group (DMG) / Community Group (CG)", which has two components: D1.1. Terms of Reference DMG / CG - Settlement of DMG/CG and D1.2. Report from DMG on vision, structure, and implementation details of the web portal and strategy to communicate and engage users (incl. support to pilot actions).

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# TERMS OF REFERENCE DMG / CG - SETTLEMENT OF DMG/CG

The scope of this activity was the implementation of a Development and Management Group (DMG) and a Community Group (CG), which provided requirements for the Collaborative Portal (https://aanchor.hidrografico.pt/actions-map) and the AA-MARINET Website (https://www.aa-mari.net/) as well as actionable information for the for the "Guidelines for optimizing the use and sharing of research infrastructures in the All-Atlantic region". The main goal was to assemble a team of key stakeholders who could contribute with valuable insights and provide specific user needs of information for the implementation of the Collaboration Portal and the Website. These were the steps followed:

1. Determine Key Stakeholders: identify relevant marine research infrastructures, research teams, or individuals in the All-Atlantic region that could engaged throughout the development process. For the Collaborative Portal, the identified stakeholders included Instituto Hidrográfico (IH, Portugal), COPPE-Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (Brasil), Atlantic International Research Centre (AIR Centre, Portugal), Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE, Brasil), and Institut Français de Recherche pour L'Exploitation de la Mer (IFREMER, France), many others were involved in the testing phase. Concerning the Website, all stakeholders involved in the Thematic Areas Networking Piloting contributed with for the functional requirements (Plankton imaging – I/ITAPINA; Coastal Observation – AA-COASTNET, and Polar research infrastructures – NMRI-PR). Research networks such as EU MARINE ROBOTICS, EUROFLEET and AtlantOS provided information for the "Guidelines for optimizing the use and sharing of research infrastructures in the All-Atlantic region."

2. Set Clear Objectives: definition of the purpose and goals of the collaborative portal, the Website and the guidelines, namely what problems they could solve, what functionalities they should offer, and how they align with AANChOR's overall strategy.

3. Gather Requirements: AA-MARINET facilitated discussions, meetings and workshops[1] requirements for the collaborative portal, the Website and the Guidelines. Open communication and collaboration were encouraged to ensure that all perspectives were considered.

4. Document Requirements: All requirements were diligently documented making sure they were clear, concise, and actionable.

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[1] E.g.: Organisation of a global stakeholders event "All-Atlantic marine research infrastructure network" on 3 June 2021 as a side-event to the "All-Atlantic 2021 R&I for a Sustainable Ocean Ministerial & High-level Stakeholder Conference" (All-Atlantic2021 Conference) which was co-organised by the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union Council and the European Commission. A result of this side event was the development of a list of potential members for the "community group".

5. Prioritize Requirements: The DMG prioritized the requirements based on their importance, urgency, and feasibility. Some features were considered critical, while others can be considered for future updates.

6. Validate with Stakeholders: Once the requirements were documented and prioritized, they were validated with the relevant stakeholders to ensure accuracy and alignment with their needs.

7. Involve IT Developers: In the cases of the Collaboration Portal and the Website, the DMG collaborated with the IT developers throughout the process to get their technical insights, feasibility assessments, and recommendations on implementing the requirements effectively.

8. Review and Finalize: The DGM reviewed and finalize the set of requirements before publishing the Collaborative Portal and the Website or adopting the Guidelines.

9. User Testing and Feedback of the Collaborative Portal and the Website: Before full implementation, user testing were conducted with representative end users to gather feedback and make necessary improvements.

10. Launch and Monitor: After successful testing, launch the Collaborative Portal and the Website, DMG will continue monitoring its usage and gather feedback from users to identify areas for further improvement.

11. Monitor Progress: DMG will stay involved to provide feedback and address any emerging issues.

It's unfortunate that the creation of the DMG and the implementation of its related activities were hindered by the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic had widespread effects on research organizations worldwide, disrupting various aspects of operations, including team formation and collaboration. Nonetheless, remote tools have played a crucial role in helping the DMG to overcome the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These tools have facilitated remote work, communication, collaboration, and various other activities, offering numerous advantages that have proven to be essential during the pandemic.

One important aspect is the continuity of the Collaboration Portal and the Website. Promoting and creating new content for the Collaboration Portal and the Website is essential to encourage user engagement and maximize the platforms' effectiveness. Setting up a content hackathon in conjunction with dissemination activities can be a practical and productive way to generate content for the Collaboration Portal. A content hackathon brings together a group of researchers and infrastructure operators and managers to provide information of their observation activities that are conducted in the All-Atlantic region within a specific timeframe.

**BUILDING AN ALL ATLANTIC OCEAN COMMUNITY**
Implementing the Belém Statement

AANChOR is a Coordination & Support Action project aimed to support the implementation of the Belém Statement. It has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 818395.

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# Report from DMG on vision, structure, and implementation details of the web portal and strategy to communicate and engage users (incl. support to pilot actions) – (D1.2.)

The development of the first stage of implementation of the Collaboration Portal took place between April 2021 and September 2021. The basic idea that was offered to the seed-funding programme was refined throughout this stage. A realistic idea that could take into consideration the demands of possible users, the actual IT environment in which the portal was intended to run (servers at the System Administration Service of Institute Hidrográfico - IH), and the operational needs were also designed.

The many members of the above-mentioned DMG were closely involved in the development of this first stage. To align the initial vision and general idea of the web portal with the needs for implementation and operation in the IT structure of the IH, discussions were initially held at IH amongst the many institute elements involved in the web portal design and implementation. Parallel to that, virtual meetings were used to have conversations with components from the other institutions. These concentrated on the improvement of the first suggested vision, further defining the services made available to users and the portal's design. A preliminary draught of the mockups to be utilized in the creation of the collaborative web portal was produced because of this debate process, which was particularly intense in July and August 2021.

The first meeting between the members of IT provider and the IH marked the beginning of the work towards the installation of the online portal, which took place in June 2022. From June through the end of December 2022, the implementation work was developed. It entailed many in-person meetings between the various accountable individuals from IH and the IT provider, which were held at IH. In these sessions, among other things, the structure of the portal design was adjusted to better suit the operational needs, the host system's characteristics were examined and considered in the implementation, and the operational characteristics definition was established.  By the end of November 2022, the online portal was built and operational in a preliminary version. A number of tests for operational usage and the adjustment of numerous features were created in December 2022; work on these tests continued in January 2023.

A variety of initiatives were developed to promote the Collaboration Portal throughout the larger All-Atlantic community in tandem with the various stages of its design and deployment.

These activities included a presentation of the Collaboration Portal on the 3 June 2021, at the AA-MARINET side session conducted during the All-Atlantic Ministerial and Stakeholder Conference 2021 (2-4 June 2021). And a participation in the side event "*Connecting Communities: Partnering on Ocean Health to Address Climate Change*" which occurred on the 14 July 2022, as part of the All-Atlantic Ocean Research Forum 2022 held 12-14 July, 2022 in Washington D.C. Additionally, on March 3, 2023, the All-Atlantic projects and initiatives were given an online presentation of the AA-MARINET collaboration portal with the aim of explaining the portal's functionalities and user profiles and asking them to register their Atlantic infrastructures as being available for collaborative activities in the portal.

The vision for sustaining and evolving a non-profit collaboration portal involves continuous effort and adaptation to meet the changing needs of users and stakeholders in a very dynamic ocean science and technology landscape.

1. **Refine Objectives:** Have a clear and well-defined narrative and purpose for the collaboration portal. Ensure that all stakeholders understand the goals and how the portal aligns with their own observation activities and programs needs and goals.

2. **Engage New Stakeholders:** Involve key stakeholders, including members, volunteers, NGOs, donors, and partner organizations, in the decision-making process for the portal's evolution. Gather feedback regularly to understand their needs and expectations.

3. P**rovide Valuable Content:** Ensure the portal offers valuable and relevant content that addresses the interests and timely needs of the research community in the All-Atlantic region. Regularly update the content to keep it fresh and engaging.

4. **Foster Community and Collaboration:** Create an inclusive and supportive online community that encourages collaboration, networking, and knowledge sharing among users. Implement discussion forums, chat features, or virtual events to facilitate interaction.

5. **Offer Training and Support:** Provide training and support through content hackathons for users to maximize their experience with the portal. This may include tutorials, user guides, and responsive customer service.

6. **Promote User-Generated Content:** Encourage users to contribute content and share their expertise within the community. User-generated content can increase engagement and diversity of perspectives.

7. **Monitor Metrics and Analytics:** Regularly track and analyze portal usage metrics, such as user engagement, content popularity, and member growth. Use these insights to make data-driven decisions for improvement.

8. **Embrace Technology and Innovation:** Stay abreast of new technologies and trends in collaboration portals. Continuously update and enhance the platform to leverage emerging tools and features.

9. **Seek Partnerships and Alliances:** Collaborate with other organizations that share similar goals. Partnering with like-minded entities can expand your reach and increase the value of the portal.

10. **Fundraising and Sustainability:** Ensure the portal's financial sustainability through effective fundraising strategies, grant applications, or sponsorship opportunities. Identifying additional funding sources to reduce dependence on a single revenue stream.

11. **User Experience (UX) Design:** Prioritize a user-friendly and intuitive interface updates to enhance user experience. Conduct user testing and gather feedback to make iterative improvements.

12. **Measure Impact and Success:** Regularly assess the impact of the collaboration portal on All-Atlantic research community. Use success stories and case studies to demonstrate the portal's value to stakeholders.

13. **Regular Communication:** Maintain transparent and regular communication with the portal's community through newsletters, announcements, and updates on the portal's progress.

14. **Adapt to Changing Needs:** Be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and the evolving needs of your community. Respond to feedback and make necessary adjustments to keep the portal relevant.

15. **Celebrate Milestones:** Recognize and celebrate milestones and achievements within the collaboration portal community. Express gratitude to contributors and highlight the positive impact of the portal on the organization's mission.

By following these strategies and consistently focusing on the needs of your community, a non-profit collaboration portal can thrive and continue to evolve, creating a lasting and meaningful impact on its users and stakeholders.

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