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**EU-PolarNet**

**CONNECTING SCIENCE WITH SOCIETY**

Deliverable No. 1.20  
Synthesis report on policy briefings

## Submission of Deliverable

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## Introduction

The European Commission and other decision-makers critically need better evidence-based information on the ongoing changes affecting the Polar Regions, and their feedbacks to global and regional processes. Informed policy advice allows them to identify and support relevant research themes, and to develop and implement effective policies in response. The European Polar research community is therefore benefiting from a close cooperation with decision makers.

EU-PolarNet has enhanced the coordination of the European Polar research during in the last five years to strengthen a common unified European voice towards decision makers and to provide evidence-based policy on behalf of the European Polar research community. The project developed different types of policy advice and support to decision makers. It provided ad-hoc written replies on policy-related questions asked by any entity deemed relevant, identified experts for assessments, published documents for policy makers, organised side-events at conferences that were visited by policy makers and actively invited policy makers to policy briefings and a Townhall event in Brussels.

## EU-PolarNet's approach to policy advice

One of EU-PolarNet's tasks was to provide evidence-based guidance to questions related to Polar Regions and directed towards public and private decision makers at regional, national and EU level. The project has thus established a Policy Guidance Panel (PPGP) at the beginning of the project. The PPGP supported EU-PolarNet in policy-related questions asked by the EC or other decision makers. Its mission was to provide evidence-based advice through EU-PolarNet. The PPGP consisted of 14 experts from economic, scientific, and societal sectors nominated by the EU-PolarNet partners. It was chaired by Frej Sorento Dichmann from the Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. The terms of reference and the members of the PPGP are described in [D1.5 Policy Guidance Panel implemented incl. terms of reference](#).

To ensure further input from the European Polar Community, EU-PolarNet cooperated with the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) of the European Polar Board (EPB) on requests for policy advice. The PAG is chaired by Nalan Koç (NPI) and Vito Vitale (CNRS).

The procedure for answering requests for policy advice has been standardised within the project: the project manager received the requests and consulted the PPGP, the PAG and informed the official representatives of the consortium partners. She collected all answers and compiled a homogenous document out to them aiming at including all replies, which were then sent in response to the request.

## Policy advice on request

EU-PolarNet gave advice based on several requests from the EC, among them were to improve the call descriptions of the work programme calls for Arctic Research and providing ideas for polar research themes for the work programme 2016-20. EU-PolarNet helped the EC in preparing their new Arctic Strategy and contributions to the Arctic Observing Summit in Fairbanks, March 2016, and the Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM) Meetings in Washington, 28 September 2016 and in Berlin, 25 and 26 October 2018. The project helped to summarise the EU contribution to Arctic Research for the ASM reports. The executive manager of EU-PolarNet attended the science conference of the ASM2 as a member of the EU delegation.

EU-PolarNet provided the EC with a list of experts for consideration as Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead authors, and Review Editors for the "Special IPCC Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate".

EU-PolarNet, represented by its project manager, became partner in the DG RTD–ESA Earth Observation Programmes strategic partnership Pilot activity on Arctic and participates in regular teleconferences. It works with the EC and ESA on future programming activities, such as the ESA Envelop 5 and H2020 WP18-20 harmonisation and the preparation of a scoping paper. EU-PolarNet supported the EC/ESA in identifying Earth Observation data requirements that support climate and Polar Research. EU-PolarNet also contributed to the

preparation requirements of a future Polar and Snow satellite mission (post 2025) by Copernicus in cooperation with DG GROW.

EU-PolarNet provided experts to the IMOBAR (Impact assessment study on societal benefits of Arctic observing systems) project of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. In addition, the EU-PolarNet project manager acted as a reviewer for the JRC Science for Policy Report of IMOBAR.

### Townhall event and policy Briefings:

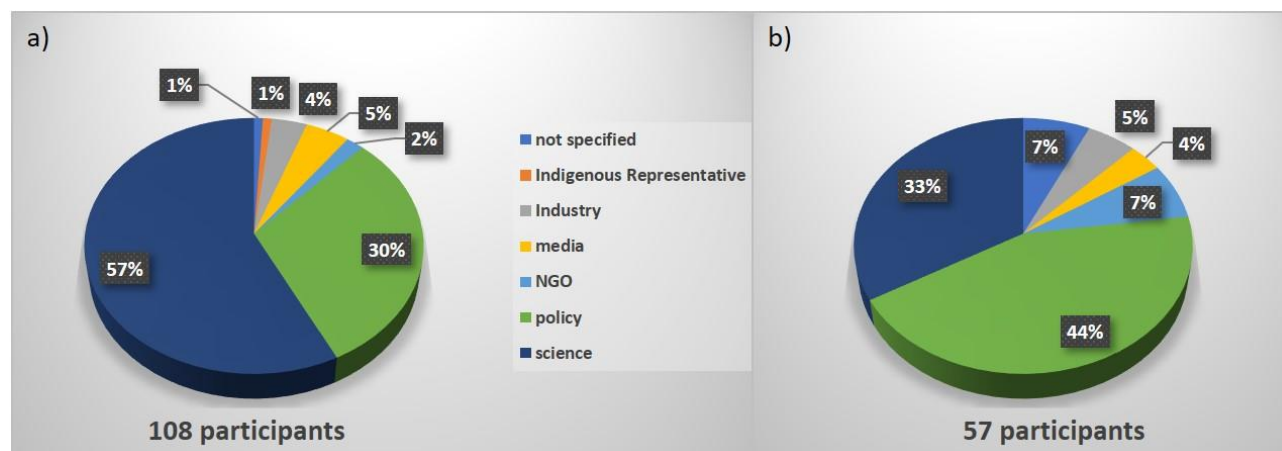
EU-PolarNet organised its first major **Townhall event** themed “Towards the 1.5°C climate goal – Perspectives from the Polar Regions” at the Museum of Natural Science in Brussels on 27.09.2016 (Fig. 1). The event’s objective was to stimulate a dialogue between policy makers, polar scientists, industries, local communities and civil society to explore how future polar research can contribute to the “1.5°C target” previously agreed at the Paris COP meeting in 2015. Keynote addresses and high-level expert panels set the scene for thought-provoking discussions focused on what European society needs from polar research and what Europe’s priorities for polar research should be. A summary of the presentations and discussion from the Townhall meeting is available in [D2.2 Report of first Town Hall meeting](#).



**Fig. 1:** EU-PolarNet Townhall Meeting in Brussels.

A stakeholder survey was set up during the event to ask participants in the Townhall Event whether they were interested in engaging in polar research projects (what their motivation would be, to what extent they would like to be involved, how they would like to become engaged, etc.). The survey results were anonymous, but whoever was interested to get engaged, could write down his/her contact details, which then were kept separate from the questions for the evaluation. The outcome of this survey has been integrated into [D4.15 White paper on status of stakeholder engagement in polar research](#).

In total, 108 people participated, of whom 33 were policy makers (see Fig. 2). More than 150 people have watched (at least parts) of the morning session online and more than 90 the afternoon session, which is available as video on demand on the EU-PolarNet YouTube channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqEzHkh6Q-ucxOFtd7UWHDA>.



**Fig. 2:** Affiliation of the participants of the a) Townhall Meeting and b) Second EU-PolarNet policy briefing in the European Parliament. The first Policy Briefing was attended by 30 persons (15 scientists and 15 policy makers)

A second EU-PolarNet Townhall event called “*Stronger together: European cooperation for Polar science and society*” was planned for 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020 in the Norway House in Brussels. It had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A three hours webinar introducing the content of the European Polar Research Programme (D2.10) has partially substituted the Townhall event. About 300 interested persons from the Polar research and stakeholder community attended the online event.

EU-PolarNet has hosted **two policy briefings in Brussels**. The first briefing was co-organised with the European Polar Board (EPB). It took place on 22nd June 2017 in the Brussels office of the Helmholtz Association and ran under the theme “*Breaking records: How high temperatures in the Arctic affect European society*”. The lunchtime event was set out to give European and national policy makers an overview of the state-of-the-art research on abnormal temperatures in the Arctic and their consequences for Europe. For this, sea ice expert Dirk Notz from the Max Planck Institute in Hamburg, Germany, gave a keynote address on how Europe is affected by a warming Arctic. A subsequent panel discussion built on the current scientific knowledge to reflect upon mitigation and adaptation options, which can reduce the vulnerability of both the European society and economy. The panellists were: Volker Rachold (Head of the German Arctic Office), Kirsi Latola (University of the Arctic Thematic Networks Director), Frej Sorento Dichmann (Senior Advisor Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation) and Eva Krümmel (Co-founder of ScienTissiME, Research and Policy Consulting; Consultant on Environment and Health for the Inuit Circumpolar Council – Canada). The meeting was attended by 30 participants, 15 scientists and 15 policy makers.

EU-PolarNet hosted its second policy briefing on 26th September 2018 in the European Parliament in Brussels (Fig. 3). Themed “*At the frontline of climate change: Key changes in the Polar Regions that call for European action*” the event brought pressing polar issues to the European Parliament. During the two-hour long policy briefing EU-PolarNet presented its five polar white papers and fostered discussions on how European polar research and climate policies can contribute to the protection and sustainable development of the Polar Regions. The aim was to increase policy makers’ awareness on the far-reaching effects of climate-induced changes in the Polar Regions and to enhance the dialogue between polar stakeholders from various backgrounds. The event was co-organised by the EP Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and



Sustainable Development” and hosted by Christel Schaldemose, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the Intergroup’s “Polar Regions” working group. Divided into a presentation session and an open panel discussion, Prof Antje Boetius, director of the AWI und EU-PolarNet coordinator, gave the opening keynote, addressing major changes in the Arctic and Antarctic. Subsequently Prof Antonio Quesada, executive secretary of the Spanish Polar Committee, introduced the five EU-PolarNet white papers and outline the transdisciplinary approach the documents follow. Building on the background information given in the presentations, six polar experts gave brief statements addressing polar issues related to their respective fields of expertise and engaged in a roundtable discussion moderated by Antje Boetius. 57 persons attended the meeting, their affiliation is shown in Fig. 2.

[D1.10](#) and [D.13](#) Policy briefing in Brussels provide a summary of the presentations and discussion of both meetings.



**Fig. 3:** Second EU-PolarNet policy briefing in the European Parliament.

#### Additional outreach to policy makers:

EU-PolarNet compiled a summary for policy makers of the five white papers for the policy briefing in the European Parliament. The summary of policy makers, which is available [here](#), was distributed at the EU-PolarNet policy briefing and all following events in which EU-PolarNet participated to inform about important research needs in the Polar Regions and their societal relevance.

EU-PolarNet hosted side events and workshops with stakeholders at numerous conferences and meetings during the last five years. Especially targeted to policy makers were the side events at the COP22 in November 2016 in Marrakech (Morocco) and the COP23 in November 2017 in Bonn (Germany). In Bonn EU-PolarNet co-organised three polar side events: “Arctic States and Small Island States: Two regions inextricably linked through climate change” and “Adaptation Now! But how? How climate research in the polar regions is influencing adaptation strategies for Small Island States” together with ICE-ARC, the Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Alfred Wegener Institute and the British Antarctic Survey; as well as “Polar insights for climate action: Arctic science contributions to implementing the Paris Agreement”, co-organised by the EU Arctic Cluster.

## Challenges and Recommendations:

Within the last five years of active interaction and engagement with decision makers, the following challenges in providing evidence-based advice have been observed and the following recommendations can be provided from this experience:

### Challenge 1:

Policy advice on request takes place on **varying time scales**. Some requests have been transferred to EU-PolarNet with a noticeably short deadline of a couple of days, while others had deadlines in the order of weeks which warrant structured work and brief reports that needed to be well organised.

### Recommendation 1:

It is important to develop a robust and inclusive mechanism that provides the ability to respond effectively to these requests, mainly when they have truly short deadlines. To build the capability for an adequate response to such requests will require improved accessibility and representativeness of experts, mechanisms to mobilise balanced expert groups at short notice, and clearly defined mandates and scope requests.

### Challenge 2:

Decision makers are often extremely interested to quickly learn more about current events with public interest, as e.g. a ship stuck in the ice or the calving of a giant iceberg. The interest in in-person policy briefings can therefore significantly increase if the briefing addresses **very up-to-date scientific developments** even if this poses challenges on the organisers. EU-PolarNet has good experience with short “lunch time” events in Brussels with a targeted audience of less than 50 attendees. These events are good tools to discuss a specific topic of interest in detail. The much longer and larger “Townhall event” has proven to be a good tool to reach a large stakeholder group (including decision makers) and it is recommended as a major outreach event to showcase on a broader scale what Polar research can achieve.

### Recommendation 2

In-person policy briefings should be planned with great flexibility to be able to react on short-term developments of high public interests. The type of event should be chosen according to the message which is intended to be transferred. Brussels, and especially the European Parliament is the key location to reach a large audience of different decision makers.

### Challenge 3:

The current EU-Polar Cluster comprises 14 projects, most of which have policy briefings on polar themes in their work plan. Many policy briefings in a relatively short time frame could cause a kind of “**policy briefing fatigue**”. On the other side, requests for policy advice by written contributions have been submitted to several projects at the same time and the response is not coordinated which results in duplication of efforts and a sub-optimal response.

### Recommendation 3

Policy briefings should be coordinated much better between the EU Polar Cluster projects and joint policy briefings should be considered. The EU Polar Cluster should consider implementing a “policy advice task group” consisting of different experts nominated by the cluster projects.