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Report of the Webinar

“Stronger together: European Cooperation for Polar
Science and Society”

The Integrated European Polar Research Programme

Submission of Deliverable

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Introduction

The webinar “*Stronger together: European Cooperation for Polar Science and Society*” was the conclusion of a five-year process, which started at the beginning of the EU-PolarNet project in 2015. This process informed the development of the integrated European Polar Research Programme (EPRP), which is currently being finalised and will be published by the end of July 2020 as EU-PolarNet Deliverable D.2.10. The document identifies the future research priorities for Europe based on a review of current needs and expectations of the polar stake- and right-holders. The ambition of the EPRP is, as stated in the document, “*to formulate research questions in support of Europe strategic agenda on innovation and to achieve and demonstrate the EU’s contribution to the generation of knowledge with relevance for society, economy, environment, and policymaking*”.

Building on the information gathered from many interactions with a large number of polar stake- and right-holders, the EPRP ultimately identifies six overarching Research Needs, which constitute the framework of the polar research programme:

- **Research Need 1:** A better understanding of climate change in the Polar Regions and its links to lower latitudes,
- **Research Need 2:** Informed weather and climate action,
- **Research Need 3:** Resilient socio-ecological systems,
- **Research Need 4:** Prospering Communities in the Arctic,
- **Research Need 5:** Challenges and opportunities for polar operations, and
- **Research Need 6:** Inclusive creation, access and usage of knowledge

The document itself was drafted by scientific experts who were tasked to identify the most important knowledge gaps that research should address to answer these Research Needs, and to formulate specific key questions in association with these needs.

After the EPRP writing phase has been finalised, it appeared important to introduce the outcomes to the stake- and right-holder groups who had contributed to the EPRP process from its origin, representatives of the European Commission and national polar programmes, the science community who will be in charge of performing the research, and the wider audience of people potentially interested in the Polar Regions..

Goals and organisation of the webinar

The goals of the webinar were to:

- Communicate the research priorities outlined in the EPRP to a wide variety of right- and stakeholders,
- Inform on the key steps that led to the EPRP drafting process shedding light on its actual significance and implications, and
- Gather a large public audience to engage in a dialogue and collect their opinions and questions about the content and future implementation of the programme.

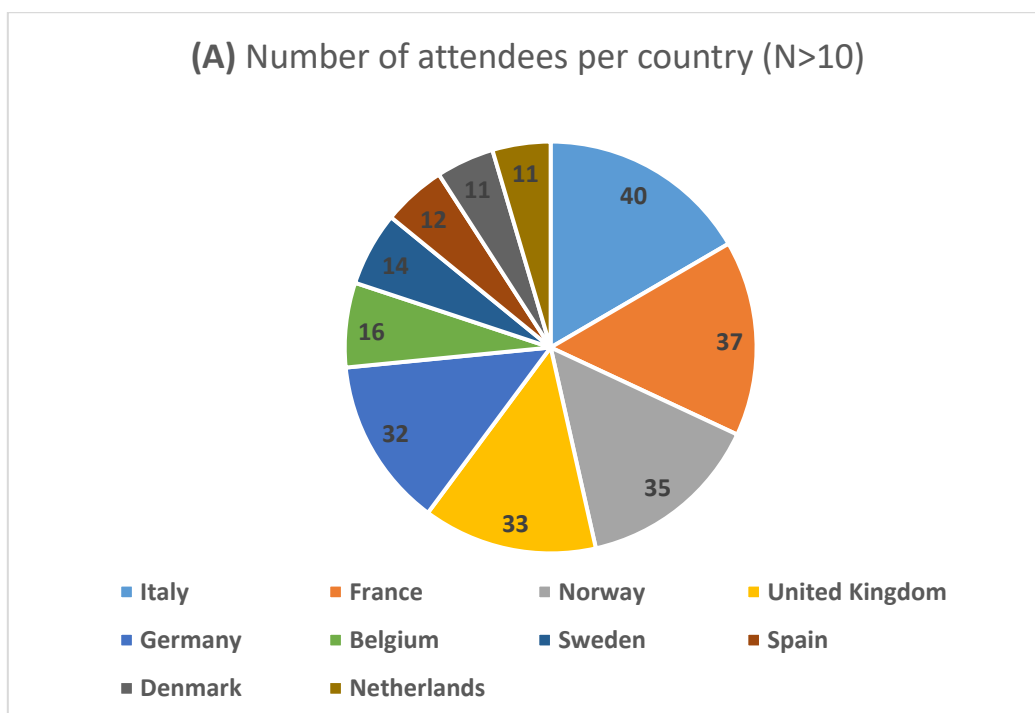
Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the meeting, which had been originally planned as a public Townhall meeting in Brussels, had to be adapted to a virtual meeting. The webinar was held on June 11, 2020 from 10:00 to 13:00 h CEST, as a webinar session by Zoom™. The technical organisation of the webinar was kindly ensured by the Secretariat of the European Polar Board together with the EU-PolarNet management team at AWI.

The advertising of the event was done through several channels. A list of invitees was compiled based on suggestions by the EPRP Working Group and 877 persons were invited by personalised emails. In addition, the announcement of the webinar was largely circulated through the different social media channels of EU-PolarNet, the EPB, the EU Polar Cluster and national mailing lists.

Webinar attendance

More than 600 people registered to the webinar and up to 318 people attended in total. Other attendees joined the webinar via the live broadcast in the EPB YouTube channel. The number of attendees reached 252 at the time of maximum audience.

Attendees from 39 different countries joined the webinar, partially or for its entire duration (Figure 1). Of those, the majority originated from countries within the European Union, Norway, the UK and Switzerland. In addition, representatives from the EU or the European Commission and from national funding agencies participated.



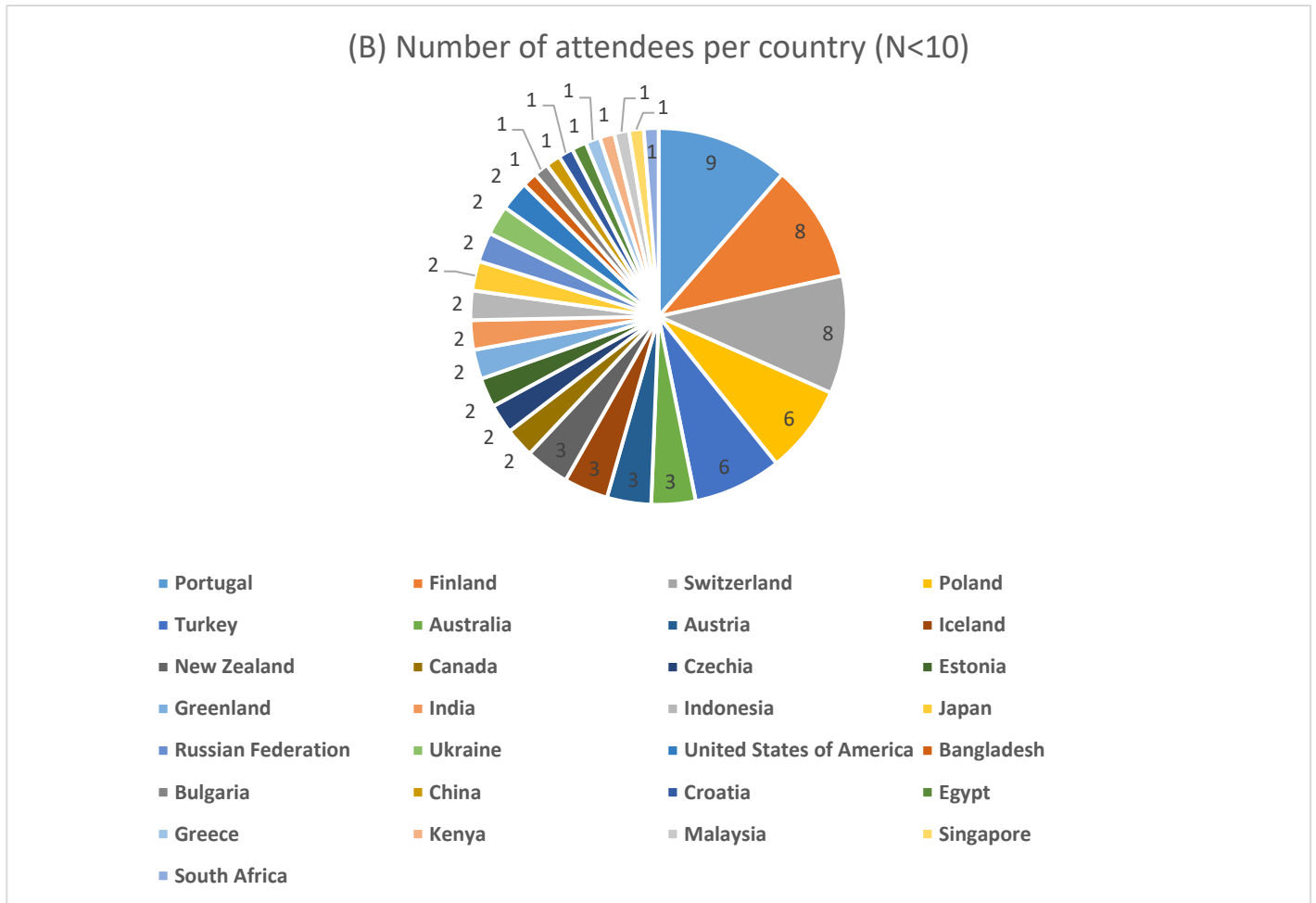


Figure 1: Distribution of the number of webinar attendees per country of origin. For the sake of clarity, the separate diagrams showcase two groups of countries: (A) Countries with more than 10 attendees and (B) countries with less than 10 attendees.

Webinar development

The webinar was organised in four successive sessions (see the agenda below in Figure 2):

- *Session 1: Introduction.* This session started with a summary of the overarching goals of the EU-PolarNet project (Nicole BIEBOW, AWI, project manager), followed by an outline of the future European Research strategy in the upcoming Horizon Europe framework programme and the challenges that Europe is expected to face concerning the Polar Regions (Jyrki SUOMINEN, European Commission, DG-RTD). Finally, a presentation of the different steps, which led to the development of the EPRP and the overall societal relevance of the research outlined in the Programme (Marie-Noëlle HOUSSAIS, CNRS).

- *Session 2: EPRP scientific and resource challenges.* This session was dedicated to the presentation of the six Research Needs that constitute the different chapters of the document. Each Research Need was presented by one or two panellists who were lead or co-lead authors of the chapter.

- *Session 3: Discussion.* During thirty minutes, this session opened the floor to a discussion with the participants. The participants could ask their questions at any time via a Q&A interface. These questions were all compiled and organised by the webinar management team. Then, the chairperson passed the questions to the relevant panellist.

- *Session 4: Conclusion.* The meeting was concluded by a presentation by the Chair of the European Polar Board (Kirsi LATOLA, UOULU) who gave an overview of the missions and current activities of the EPB and highlighted the possible role that EPB could play in the implementation of the future European Polar Research Programme.

EU-PolarNet Webinar: “Stronger together”: European cooperation for Polar science and society The Integrated European Polar Research Programme <i>Chair: Nicole Biebow, EU-PolarNet</i>	
Date & Time	11th June 2020, 10:00 – 13:00
Connection	https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ehpY3IFETTeq1kJuYdMpCA
10:00 – 10:05	Welcome by the chair and technical details
10:05 – 10:15	Welcome by <i>Jyrki Suominen, European Commission</i>
10:15 – 10:30	Introduction of the European Polar Research Programme by <i>Marie-Noëlle Houssais, CNRS</i>
10:30 – 11:15	All the lead authors of the EPRP will present their Research Need in 10 min talks: RN1: Better understanding of climate change (and weather extremes) in the Polar Regions and its links to lower latitudes by <i>Signe Bech Andersen, GEUS, and Jean-Daniel Paris, LSCE/IPSL</i> RN2: Informed weather and climate action by <i>Johnny Johannessen, NERSC, and Torben Røjle Christensen, Aarhus University</i> RN3: Resilient socio-ecological systems by <i>Doris Abele, AWI</i>
11:15 – 11:30	Virtual Coffee break
11:30 – 12:15	RN4; Prospering communities in the Arctic by <i>Peter Schweitzer, UNIVIE. and Hålvor Dannevig, WRNI</i> RN5: Challenges and opportunities for Polar operations by <i>Birgit Njåstad, NPI, and Christine Valentin, WOC</i> RN6: Inclusive creation, access and usage of knowledge by <i>Tina Schoolmeester, GRID-Arendal, and Giovanni Macelloni, CNR</i>
12:15 – 12:45	Discussion with the audience
12:45 – 13:00	Summary and future steps by <i>Kirsi Latola, European Polar Board</i>

Figure 2: Agenda of the EU-PolarNet webinar: “Stronger together: European Cooperation for Polar Science and Society” dedicated to the Integrated European Polar Research Programme.

Questions and answers during the discussion session

During the discussion session, 68 questions were formulated to the panellists. Those were particularly interesting as they highlighted some illustrative examples of the EPRP perception by the different communities and their expectations about the future research areas.

Some questions were specific to a given Research Need, others were more general. Not all questions could be answered by the panellists due to the lack of time. Overall, it is possible to classify the questions in seven different categories relating to:

Observations and Data in the Polar Regions

- Q: Is the Polar Observation Decade dedicated to climate and meteorology only? This decade would be a nice follow up of YOPP but one should be careful of coordinating it with other initiatives to avoid resource splitting, and gathering engagement from all communities, including the oceanographic observing community already engaged in the UN Ocean Decade.
A: The general idea here is to understand processes in more detail and, to reach this objective, we need a long period of observations so that a number of processes can be sampled. The overarching idea is climate understanding, but the concept is open and can be extended to other topics including ecosystems, glaciology, biogeochemical cycles. There are, of course, limitations to this approach since it cannot address processes with long time scales, like e.g. multidecadal ocean variability. The decade should be complementary to previous or concomitant initiatives like YOPP or the upcoming UN Ocean Decade and enlarge the scope to all these initiatives in the Polar Regions

Other questions/comments related to observations and data included:

- Automated instrumentation can foster the engagement of industry and citizen in collecting observations
- How to address the different data regulations, e.g., with countries outside EU?
- A lot of data exists, e.g. through observational programmes. How to make these more closely linked, readily accessible or even processed to the standards and quality control?

Engagement with industry

- Q: How to foster academia-industry collaboration?
A: Getting industry on board of the EC projects (like EU already strongly encourages) and recognizing that industry is part of the dialog is important. Beyond, we need to continue the dialog to understand the complementarities in the collaboration between academia and industry. Industry can also add a lot of value when addressing the need for more data in the Polar Regions. Social license also needs to be considered in a collaborative approach between academia and industry.

Other questions and comments related to engagement with industry included:

- How to make industry part of the process for social engagement?
- How to access green capital to finance sustainability projects in Polar Regions, taking benefit from novel international frameworks regulating the green finance sector?

Engagement with local and Indigenous communities

- Q: We know that we can learn a lot from the past. How can this temporal perspective be extended to the spatial dimension to consider what happens outside the Polar Regions, e.g. in regions where Indigenous communities live and economic activities take place?

A: It is clear than we can learn a lot from the past, even though the definition of the past is already complex, and from other people experience, including outside the Polar Regions. Often communities focus on their vicinity, but we observe obvious trends that Indigenous communities in the Arctic are in active dialog with other communities elsewhere on the globe, learning from this dialog.

- Q: How can EU help maintain partnership with local communities beyond the duration of a project, i.e. when shaping new projects?

A: Co-design of research from the start of the projects has been adequately promoted in the last Arctic Horizon 2020 calls. However, it is important to involve the local and Indigenous communities from the very beginning of the process, which is at the level of EC project planning. This approach will ensure that the problems of the communities are duly taken into account when designing the calls. In addition, research would like to construct longer term projects, which are needed to develop social relationships and build up dialog and trust with the communities.

More specific scientific issues

- Q: Are paleoclimate questions addressed in the EPRP?

A: Paleoclimate issues are an important part of the EPRP. There is a lot to learn from better understanding of the long timescales

Other questions/comments related to specific scientific issues included:

- How to address the challenges of Big Data, Artificial Intelligence for large complex models?
- How will the CMIP model shortcomings in the Arctic region and the next assessment exercise be addressed? In this respect, regional models (as opposed to CMIP models) are helpful to understand Polar Regions.
- Which time scales are key to the environmental impacts?
- Traditional and modern lifestyles should be considered when it comes to traditional food sources.
- Is there some research on vessel traffic in Arctic Northwest Passage?
- We should make sure to connect all the different provinces of the Arctic Ocean and not only consider the Eurasian Arctic. This is important when addressing the sub decadal variability of the Arctic Ocean.
- What can science do to answer challenges deriving from geopolitical and economic pressure on the Arctic?
- How can non-commercial values, as opposed to economic exploitation, be taken into account?

Knowledge transfer and education

- What are the best tools for knowledge transfer from research to stakeholders? Is there any added value of using international standards?
- What should be the target groups for educational activities?

Societal relevance

- Q: What are your recommendations for the upcoming EU Arctic Policy?

A: The EPRP has demonstrated the added value of considering research perspectives in a close dialogue with the polar stake- and right-holders. This outcome does not exclude that Europe should also continue to support fundamental research, which does not necessarily link to immediate societal benefits but should prepare the long-term perspective of knowledge in support of the EU policy in the Polar Regions.

Research diplomacy should be encouraged as it is a useful tool to ensure a more peaceful future of the Polar Regions.

The EU policy should also put more emphasis on Arctic education and bringing scientific views and results into educational systems. This includes involving youngsters, in particular school children, in science.

We should also explore ways to improve the current geopolitical situation in the Arctic, which leads to limitations in carrying research across all Arctic areas. We should recognize the challenges of cooperation that we are facing with the aim to develop new levels of agreements between the different communities. The Arctic Council may be the place where to prepare platforms for improving coordination of research activities across the Arctic.

Other questions and comments related to the EPRP societal relevance included:

- Make sure that the fundamental problems of biodiversity loss, total anthropogenic footprint, maintenance of basic ecosystem services related to the polar areas, and areal management, both on land and at sea (recent UN Nature Panel Report) are properly addressed in the EPRP.
- Since a large part of the socio-economical activities and challenges are occurring in the areas outside the member partners of the programme, are there any mechanisms in place to maintain links and communication with the non-partner states or regions? This also concerns logistical support for research, e.g., in Siberia and Canada.
- Interdisciplinarity: The role of the EU Polar Cluster can be instrumental in avoiding duplication and in creating the optimal synergies to answer interdisciplinary open questions identified in the EPRP.

Conclusions

The webinar was a unique opportunity to gather the scientific community, various stake- and right-holders and decision makers in the same forum, and to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the EPRP through an open dialogue. The numerous questions that were addressed demonstrate the intrinsic relevance of the EPRP for the communities involved in one way or another in the Polar Regions. The discussion also demonstrated the expectations with regard to closing some important knowledge gaps in order to advance understanding and sustainable management of these regions.