



**EUROPEAN
POLAR BOARD**
1995 - 2020

**Implementation of Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation
Second meeting, 19th of April 2021, 12:00-14:00 UTC**

**Stakeholder presentation on barriers and opportunities
- Ways to support implementation**

European Polar Board

“Towards harmonisation of polar infrastructure access”, EPB-led workshop, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, August 2019

<https://www.europeanpolarboard.org/action-groups/action-group-on-infrastructure/>

Identified issues

Overarching:

- Cost of accessing, operating and maintaining polar infrastructure
- Capacity (available space)
- Capability of infrastructure (equipment, ice class etc.)
- Difference in Medical screening requirements, Visa requirements between countries
- Differences in permitting requirements for sample collection and transport between countries
- Differences in scheduling of science funding & logistics, and length of projects between countries
- Financial transactions between countries are difficult. Alternatives to support transnational access are needed (points-based bartering systems etc.)

Vessels:

- Vessel capability (including under-used capability, i.e. icebreakers working in ice-free waters)
- Time/geography (transit days, particularly between poles)
- Cruise scheduling set far in advance, difficult to be flexible for scientific needs
- Industry vessels in polar waters are open to supporting science, but do not have suitable facilities.
- Larger international coordination and transnational access programmes are needed, such as ARICE, and EUROFLEETS.

Stations/terrestrial:

- Permitting and visas (particularly Antarctic)
- Many stations, particularly in the Arctic, with heterogeneous management and access requirements.
- Managing communication with all stations is a challenge

Aircraft:

- Time/geography (transit days, time for exchanging and refitting instruments etc.)
- Limited transnational access offerings - EUFAR gave an average of 10 hours flight time to TA projects (roughly two observation flights).
- Lack of funding for transit flights to get research aircraft to study areas
- Flight scheduling set far in advance, difficult to be flexible for scientific needs

Recommendations:

- Knowledge and understanding of the timetables and timescales used: by the research communities (national, EU funding timetables, timescales of projects) and infrastructure and logistics information and timescales of planning for polar operations.

- Importance of advanced planning and information availability for infrastructure managers - While spare capacity may be available at short notice, to host additional researchers on an exchange scheme requires longer term planning
- Explore possibilities for further development of existing and successful small, pilot systems for infrastructure and logistics access.
- Improving communication and information sharing between operators - clear definition of information needed by infrastructure managers, for example through a standardised format for information exchange for infrastructure access would be useful.
- Develop schemes for virtual and or remote access to polar infrastructure, both to maximise access to those environments and minimise environmental impact.
- Develop a two pronged approach: On a longer term, Integration and harmonisation of infrastructure access and logistics requires better harmonisation and coordination of research and science priorities between countries. On a shorter term, improvements with ensuring a maximum empty seats are filled and ensuring infrastructure capacity is not wasted can come with better coordination of logistics efforts.
- Development of an online tool to organise infrastructure access and highlight spare capacity that others could use, by developing additional functionality to existing databases of such information. The need to ensure ease of access and use, high visibility and a clearly demonstrated benefit to both logistics and research communities was underlined.