

EVALUATION OF THE OUTCOMES AND ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST POLARIN TRANSNATIONAL ACCESS CALL FOR RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE IN POLAR REGIONS

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The POLARIN project aims to facilitate interdisciplinary research by providing access to a diverse and strategically distributed network of polar research infrastructures (RIs). These include Arctic and Antarctic research stations, research vessels, icebreakers, observatories, data infrastructures, and core repositories. As part of its mission to promote international collaboration and advance scientific understanding of critical polar processes, POLARIN launched its first Transnational Access (TA) Call.

The 1st POLARIN Transnational Access Call, which closed on 28th November 2024, received nearly 100 proposals from the global research community. This significant response underscores the increasing demand for access to high-quality polar research infrastructures and highlights the scientific community's recognition of the strategic value of transnational research collaborations in polar regions. Researchers were invited to apply for access to 49 RIs distributed across both the Arctic and Antarctic, covering a broad spectrum of disciplines and research objectives.

A rigorous review and evaluation process was initiated in December 2024 and will continue through February 2025. The selection criteria emphasize scientific excellence, feasibility, and alignment with POLARIN's strategic objectives.

The POLARIN Transnational Access Platform (TAP) is a dedicated Current Research Information System (CRIS) specifically designed to manage the submission, evaluation, and selection of research proposals with a high degree of transparency and efficiency. TAP adheres to the highest standards of openness and integrity, ensuring an equitable and well-structured evaluation process for all applicants.

A key feature of TAP is its alignment with the FAIR principles. By leveraging CRIS technology, TAP enhances transparency in the selection process, providing real-time tracking of submission status, facilitating structured peer review, and ensuring that selection decisions are based on objective and reproducible criteria. These features significantly strengthen trust in the evaluation process and contribute to the responsible allocation of research infrastructure access. Moreover, TAP supports the long-term usability of submitted data and application records, promoting interoperability with other research assessment systems and funding mechanisms.

Despite the overall success of the 1st POLARIN TA Call, an analysis of submission patterns has identified specific gaps in applications for certain research infrastructures. Notably, in the Arctic, no proposals were submitted for access to the Adam Mickiewicz University Polar Station and the Sudurnes Science and Learning Center. Similarly, in Antarctica, no applications were received for access to the Troll Station, the FRAM Observatory, or the research vessel *Noosfera*. Additionally, within the category of core repositories, no proposals were submitted for access to two designated facilities: the UK Polar Sediment Core Facility and the Core Repository and Geological Laboratories.

This uneven distribution of applications suggests potential barriers to access, which may stem from several factors, including a lack of awareness regarding the specific capabilities of these infrastructures, logistical constraints, or mismatches between the research community's current priorities and the services offered by these RIs. Understanding these gaps is critical for refining future calls, adjusting outreach strategies, and ensuring a more balanced utilization of available research infrastructure.

The outcomes of the 1st POLARIN TA Call provide valuable insights into the evolving landscape of polar research infrastructure access. The high number of proposals received reflects strong scientific demand, while the observed gaps in submissions highlight areas for further strategic development. To address these disparities, future calls should incorporate targeted outreach efforts, enhanced informational resources on underutilized infrastructures, and potential incentives for research projects that align with currently underrepresented RIs. Additionally, continued enhancements to the TAP system, particularly in terms of user engagement and data integration with global research assessment frameworks, will further strengthen POLARIN's mission to support cutting-edge polar research through transparent and efficient transnational access mechanisms.