

STRATEGIC THINKING

The successful integration of the polar research community in Poland – through collaboration between the PAS Committee on Polar Research, the Polish Polar Consortium and the Polar Studies Centre – has led to the development of a Polish Polar Research Strategy, setting forth a set of directions for the future.

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This Strategy, edited by Dr. J. M. Węśławski (PAS Institute of Oceanology) and Dr. W. Ziąja (Jagiellonian University), identifies a set of top priorities for the further development of polar research in Poland, taking into account their cognitive, educational, social and economic significance. Its overall aim is to strengthen Poland's international position as a country with great scientific potential in protecting the natural resources of our planet. The document proposes four main directions of research to be undertaken in the polar regions, considering their complementarity and interdisciplinary nature. They include:

- studying the abiotic components of the polar region environment, including their functional properties,
- advanced investigation into the state and modifications of the biotic components of the polar environment, and the properties that govern them,
- better understanding of the conditions, course, and consequences of the processes related to human activity in polar conditions,
- researching the social aspect of polar regions, and including it in the further development of Polish social sciences and the humanities.

The Strategy also underlines the need to initiate more extensive research into the application of advanced technologies in extreme polar conditions (including as space-analogue environments). It notes that the development of Polish polar research should focus on the following important aspects: strengthening the active and significant presence of Polish researchers in

polar areas, providing expert consultations on behalf of industry and political bodies, building synergy between polar research and innovation, educating new generations of polar researchers, active participation in initiatives aimed at protecting polar regions, bolstering social involvement (educational campaigns, dissemination), and, equally importantly, improving logistics.

Whilst recognizing that funding for science must always be awarded on a competitive basis with merit-based criteria, the authors of the Strategy are calling for special resources to be allocated for its implementation, so as to bring about four major outcomes: modernization of Polish infrastructure in the polar regions, greater global recognition for Polish researchers through major publications, creating an open database of polar research, and strengthening and developing Polish polar research personnel. The authors stressed that the attainment of these goals is possible by utilizing and strengthening the various scientific centers already collaborating under the framework of the Polish Polar Consortium and the Polar Studies Centre, while remaining open to broad collaboration with other national and international teams, as well as with state administration bodies, commercial companies, and education authorities.

Polar research has been a part of our Polish national culture for more than eight decades, helping to reinforce Poland's brand and prestige in the world and enabling us to honor the kind of international treaties and commitments that are taken on by countries responsible for studying the state of the Earth's natural environment. We have much indeed to be proud of: great traditions and academic achievements, extensive experience, excellent staff and our own research platforms in the Arctic and Antarctica. ■



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