

European Polar Board Input to the European Commission's Consultation on the European Research Area (ERA) Act

The European Polar Board (EPB) contributes evidence to the EC's work to strengthen the ERA. As an independent organisation bringing together 31 members from 22 countries, including research institutions, ministries, funders, and operators, we see the ERA Act as an opportunity to help research and innovation meet Europe's greatest challenges.

Polar research may seem distant to some Member States and Associated countries, especially those without national polar research programmes. Yet the polar regions are ground zero for the climate–biodiversity nexus: what happens in the Arctic and Antarctic reverberates worldwide. Polar ice sheets regulate sea levels, polar oceans drive global circulation and climate, and polar biodiversity holds insights for resilience. Investing in polar research safeguards Europe's environment, security, economy, and societies, from the high latitudes to the Mediterranean.

General Position: The EPB supports transnational collaboration, inclusiveness, and openness in research. Addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and security requires collaboration across regions, knowledge systems, and sectors. Polar research shows this clearly: no country can address these questions alone at the scale needed. Progress depends on shared infrastructures, long-term observations, pooling of resources, and international cooperation.

Key Messages from the Polar Research Community: Polar systems are closely linked to Europe's climate, food security, biodiversity, and energy systems. Communities across the mid-latitudes feel these connections directly through agriculture, fisheries, water availability, coastal protection, maritime and security. Investing in polar science therefore delivers knowledge and resilience that benefit all EU Member States and Associated countries, not only those with direct polar capacity.

Long-term observation and technological innovation are the backbone of understanding Earth's changes, and this applies especially to polar systems. **The ERA Act should encourage coordinated investment in infrastructures that serve Europe as a whole, including observation networks, research infrastructures, and open data systems.**

Polar research also provides a model of collaboration. The two EU PolarNet Horizon projects, and their legacy outcome, the establishment of the European Polar Coordination Office (EPCO), have shown how inclusive structures can build international cooperation and bring together many Member States and Associated countries. **The continuation of coordination mechanisms such as EPCO should be recognised and supported within the ERA as tangible examples of European international cooperation and science diplomacy.**

We commend the EC for recognising the importance of scientific freedom and independence including responsible data stewardship. This is particularly vital in polar regions, where research often intersects with sensitive political contexts. We also support further progress in open science. **In practice, successful open science can only be secured when its data follow FAIR and CARE principles.** These are essential in polar research, which is inherently interdisciplinary and global in scope.

Finally, the ERA Act can play a role in making research careers more inclusive and promising for the next generation. Polar research benefits greatly from diverse perspectives and skills, and the **ERA has an opportunity to strengthen equity and diversity, while also providing greater stability and opportunities for early- and mid-career researchers.**

Supporting independent research that can provide benefits across regions and generations underlines the value of science as a public good. By strengthening collaboration, sustaining infrastructures, and fostering diverse research communities, the ERA can better equip Europe to address shared challenges in climate, biodiversity, and sustainability. This is the clearest proof of benefit that investment in research ought to grow to 3% of GDP and beyond.

EPB Secretariat, September 4, 2025
https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14608-European-Research-Area-Act/F3627453_en

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