

## **Societal relevance of polar research - Arctic path to knowledge (ARPAK)**

**The rationale:** Representatives of natural sciences, in the era of rapidly growing number of projects and plans for the polar research, are encouraged more than ever before to reflect upon the significance and relevance of the scientific research in polar regions for the wider society.

This is linked with questions:

- 1) *How the polar research is perceived and understood by the community, by decision makers, by media and opinion trendsetters ?*

The hypothesis to be tested is that polar exploration is seen as an interesting – sport like event, connected with adventure, attractive view and feelings of national pride. Higher the knowledge of the polar research, higher the concern about planet wellbeing, and understanding of science. The null hypothesis is that interest in polar regions is not different compared to other exotic areas, and knowledge about the Planet is equally well absorbed with all types of narrative.

- 2) *What are the efficient ways to communicate the knowledge about polar areas ?*

The hypothesis to be tested is that communication window is open in early school days (6-10 years) and curiosity is weakening with age. Later the concern about distant regions need to be created with individual experience and emotions, e.g. through art, visual media and activities. The null hypothesis is that our concern for planet wellbeing and polar regions is an individual choice, not correlated with age or forms of experience.

**The methodology:** We plan to use the direct contact with the citizens (both simple questionnaires and in depth interviews) the public and social media analyses and official documents (decisions, recommendations) issued by authorities. We plan to compare the social understanding of polar areas in three types of countries: First those who are having a territory on polar regions (Norway, Denmark and Iceland) than non Arctic countries with tradition in polar research (Poland, Germany, Netherlands, Czech Republic) and countries with no tradition or limited activity in polar research (Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania). How the polar research is presented in education, popular culture and politics in these countries. How the lay man benefits from the information about polar research. Does it help to understand the laws of Nature ? Does this shape the attitude to the global warming ? Is the communication of Polar Science an effective way of passing the science to the society ?

**Element of novelty:** There was no such study before on the international level, conducted with unified methodology. Especially important for this project is the cooperation between the natural scientists and social- humanities fields of knowledge.