

# GATEWAY TO POLAR RESEARCH: Insights into POLARIN Transnational Access Calls

*From first-call lessons to future opportunities: how POLARIN's second Transnational Access call is opening doors in polar research access.*

Maria Grigoratou, 5-8 minutes read

***With an ambitious mission to deliver free, seamless, and inclusive transnational access to 64 Arctic and Antarctic research infrastructures, POLARIN is an EU-funded project that brings together 54 partners from 24 countries to advance polar research knowledge.***

The [second POLARIN Transnational Access call will open on September 1, 2025](#). To learn more about the project's vision, lessons from the first call, and what's next for experts applying, we spoke with three key leaders behind the initiative: **Verónica Willmott Puig**, POLARIN Project Manager; **Dr. Hannele Savela**, POLARIN Transnational Access Coordinator; and **Michele Rebesco** from the POLARIN Evaluation Secretariat.



*Top: Verónica Willmott Puig, bottom-left: Dr. Hannele Savela, bottom-right: Michele Rebesco*

**Q: POLARIN brings together a large and diverse consortium. What are the main goals of this initiative and how is it managed efficiently?**

**Verónica Willmott Puig (V.W.P.):**

POLARIN is designed to be more than the sum of its parts. With 54 partners from 24 countries, our aim is to build a transnational system that provides access to the polar research infrastructures in both Arctic and Antarctic, marine and terrestrial realms. This is a five-year EU-funded project (01.03.2024- 28.02.2029) and the scale of the consortium requires a highly efficient organizational model. We have implemented streamlined routines for coordination, financial oversight, and strategic planning. The Steering Board and close communication with partners play a key role in ensuring swift and transparent decision-making across the project.

**Q: Why is Transnational Access (TA) central to POLARIN's mission?**

**Hannele Savela (H.S.):** The polar regions are critical frontiers in understanding climate change and global environmental transformations. Access to research infrastructures is essential for studying these complex ecosystems and their impacts at local, regional, and global scales.

POLARIN's Transnational Access (TA) programme offers selected research groups integrated free-of-charge access to these infrastructures, either through hands-on in-person visits or by remote participation. Thus, TA represents a strategic investment in the future of global polar science.

The POLARIN TA programme facilitates access by enabling researchers, especially early-career scientists and those from countries with limited polar research infrastructure, to engage quickly and effectively with facilities they need. This open and inclusive approach is key to fostering innovation and building a diverse, collaborative research community.

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***POLARIN's Transnational Access programme opens the doors of 64 Arctic and Antarctic infrastructures to researchers worldwide – free of charge.***

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**Q: What did you learn from the first call?**

**V.W.P.:** We received a fantastic response with close to 100 proposals. The diversity in topics and applicants confirmed that the scientific community is ready to embrace this opportunity.

**Michele Rebesco (M.R.):** The unexpectedly high number of submissions placed high demands on both the project team and our volunteer evaluators. Despite the challenge, the strong interest was highly encouraging and has fuelled our excitement as we prepare for the second call.

**H.S.:** One key lesson from the first call was that finding available evaluators at the start of the Christmas holidays can be challenging and it requires time to distill the various comments of the evaluators and provide precise feedback to the applicants. In response, we have advanced the call by a month and



extended the timing of the second TA call to make both the application and evaluation process smoother for both applicants and the evaluators in the upcoming call.

**Q: As coordinator of the evaluation committee what impressed you about the proposals in the first call?**

**M.R.:** The range of proposals was truly impressive, spanning topics from microbial biodiversity and penguin ecology to permafrost dynamics and paleoenvironmental changes. Research also covered glaciers, sea ice, carbon cycling and paleoclimate in both marine and terrestrial ecosystems, as well as human-environment interactions in polar regions. I was particularly motivated by the strong participation of early and mid-career researchers.

**Q: What makes a strong proposal stand out?**

**H.S.:** Clarity, innovativeness, feasibility, and relevance. The high scored proposals had a clear research question, realistic plans, and strong justification for the infrastructure use. Also, strong proposals were able to clearly demonstrate how the proposed research addresses one or more of the seven key research challenges/priorities of POLARIN, defined in the call topic.

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*Nearly 100 proposals were submitted in POLARIN's first call, showcasing global interest and the growing influence of early career researchers in shaping polar science.*

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**From Ideas to Discovery: Making the Most of POLARIN's second TA Call**

**Q: How can polar research experts become evaluators for the POLARIN second TA call?**

**M.R.:** Experts interested in supporting POLARIN's mission can join the Expert Pool by registering through the [POLARIN website](https://polarin.org). Those with relevant expertise will then be invited to evaluate proposals using the POLARIN platform. The evaluation process is voluntary and typically requires about a couple of hours per proposal. Participating as an evaluator offers a valuable opportunity to contribute to the advancement of polar science while receiving formal recognition for your work. We especially encourage early-career researchers to apply.





***Q: What kind of follow-up support is available to successful applicants?***

**H.S.:** We support applicants all the way from the application process to the access implementation and beyond by providing guidance and advice on e.g. specific requirements related to Transnational Access, and serving as the liaison between the TA Users and the RI operators. We also work closely with infrastructure providers and research station operators to support a seamless experience. From administrative aspects, to logistics and safety considerations, our aim is to let researchers concentrate on their science while we help to take care of the rest. Whether you are a TA applicant, TA User or a RI Operator, we are here to help!

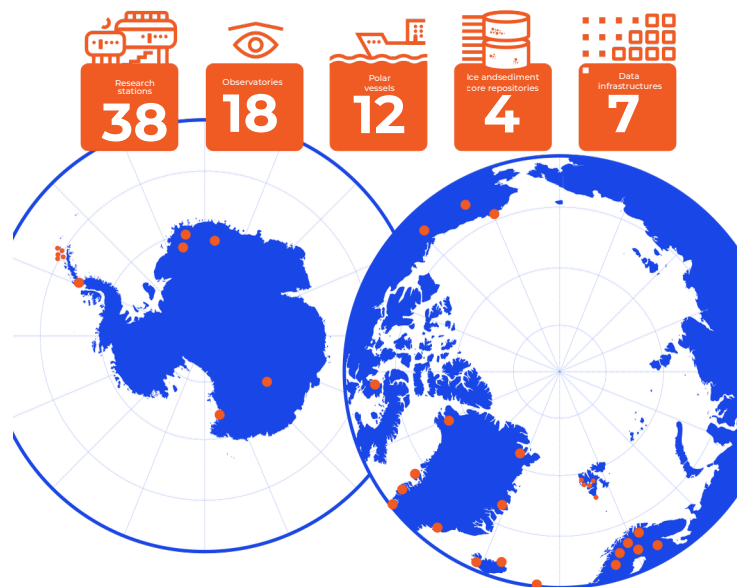
***Q: Any advice for second-call applicants?***

**H.S.:** If you have a strong research idea that requires access to research infrastructure in the Arctic or Antarctic, now is your chance. The [2nd POLARIN TA call](#) will be open to proposals from

various disciplines and backgrounds. We are especially excited to welcome new voices and early career scientists into the polar science community, as well as proposals utilizing Remote Access and multi-RI approaches.

**M.R.:** Be specific about what you need and how you will use it. Reviewers want to see not only exciting science but also practical arrangements and (given the often unpredictable meteorological conditions) contingency plans. And stick to the guidelines, we really do check the compliance of the proposals with them!

**V.W.P.:** Success in POLARIN calls means more than gaining access to transnational research infrastructures. It is about becoming part of an international effort to advance polar research through collaboration, innovation, and shared knowledge. We are building a community. Join us.



## 2nd POLARIN Transnational access call: important days and upcoming events

**September 1, 2025:** The call opens

**October 30, 2025 at 16:00 CET:** The call closes

**Mid-March 2026:** Access decisions will be communicated with the applicants

**April 2026:** Negotiations with the successful projects

Transnational access can be either in-person (hands-on), provided to selected users that visit the installation to make use of it, or remote, through the provision of remote scientific services (e.g. provision of reference materials or samples, remote access to a high-performance computing facility).

### Upcoming POLARIN Events related to the 2nd Transnational Call

To support the polar research community in preparing for the next Transnational Access opportunities, POLARIN will host two key online events in September.

#### September 2, 15:00–17:00 CEST

An online brokerage event will provide an overview of POLARIN and the Transnational Access Calls, showcase highlights from participating research infrastructures and introduce the new POLARIN Geographic Information System (GIS). The agenda and registration details can be found here: <https://eu-polarin.eu/2025/08/17/polarin-brokerage-event-for-2nd-call-agenda-registration-open/>.

#### September 18, 10:30–13:00 CEST

An informational webinar on the 2nd Transnational Call will cover the application and evaluation process, as well as the principles of Transnational Access. A dedicated Q&A session will give participants the opportunity to address specific queries. The webinar can be accessed via this link: <https://oulu.zoom.us/j/69306892467#success>.

POLARIN is also inviting experts to join its Expert Pool, contributing to the review of proposals submitted under the Transnational Access calls. Interested individuals are encouraged to register and indicate their field of expertise here: <https://eu-polarin.eu/2025/07/17/join-polarin-expert-pool-2/>.