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Summary of reports of the Inter- sessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach (2016-2026)

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Information Paper submitted by Bulgaria* and co-sponsors

This document is being presented with the co-sponsorship of ASOC, Australia, Belarus, Belgium*, Brazil*, Canada, Chile*, Colombia, Czechia, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, IAATO, India, Italy, Japan, Korea (ROK), Malaysia, Poland, Portugal*, Romania, SCAR, Spain*, Türkiye, UK*, Venezuela and WMO

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Summary

Education and Outreach has evolved to be a strategic pillar of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings. This paper aims to provide a summary of the reports by the Intersessional Contact Group between 2016 and 2026. Overall, a total of 9 reports were delivered, authored by 29 Parties, observers and experts, with 294 posts from 38 Parties, Observers and Experts comprising > 6100 views within the forum.

Background

The ICG on Education and Outreach was established during ATCM XXXVIII (2015) in Sofia, Bulgaria, following the first ATCM workshop on Education and Outreach in which ninety-seven participants from thirty-seven Parties, Observers and Experts took part (ATCM XXXVIII/WP52, ATCM XXXVIII/BP26). During ATCM XXXIX (2016) in Santiago, Chile, Bulgaria introduced WP 24 *First Report on the Intersessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach*, jointly prepared with Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. The ATCM recognised the contribution of Parties and the usefulness of the ICG's work. Parties were advised to continue to use and promote the forum on Education and Outreach to share information on education and outreach activities and events with each other. Since then, information about education and outreach activities from an Antarctic Treaty perspective remains within the Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan of the ATCM.

Method of Operation

The ICG operated using the online ATCM Discussion Forum, under the topic 'ICG on Education and Outreach'. The discussion was open to all Parties, Observers and Experts, in which 36 Parties, Observers and Experts have participated in the forum. The ICG began work in 2015 with its first report at ATCM Chile in 2016.

The ICG on Education and Outreach was established during ATCM XXXVIII (2015) in Sofia, Bulgaria (ATCM XXXVIII/WP52, ATCM XXXVIII/BP26). The ATCM recognised their contribution of Parties and the usefulness of the ICG's work through all these years. Parties were advised to continue to use and promote the forum on Education and Outreach to share information on education and outreach activities and events with each other. Detailed information on the topics and contributions by Parties, Observers and Experts are provided in the individual reports of the ATCM ICG E & O, available online at the Antarctic Treaty website: <https://www.ats.aq/devAS/Meetings/DocDatabase?lang=e>

In the last Intersessional period, the closure of the ICG has been proposed as an ICG is not a proper tool for a long term exchange on Education and Outreach (i.e., an ICG is an ATCM tool to discuss about a particular issue during a certain period of time (normally 1 year)) and other ways to exchange information on this topic should be discussed (ATCM XLVII/WP25). This paper aims to provide the major outputs of the ICG in support of the continuation of a platform within the ATCM on Education and Outreach.

Summary of the ICG reports 2016-2026

A total of nine ICG reports were authored by 29 Parties, Observers and Experts, with 294 posts with 6182 views (up to 17th of March 2026) with a general trend of increasing amount of authors and contributions by Parties, Observers and Experts since COVID pandemic (2020-2021) (Figure 1).

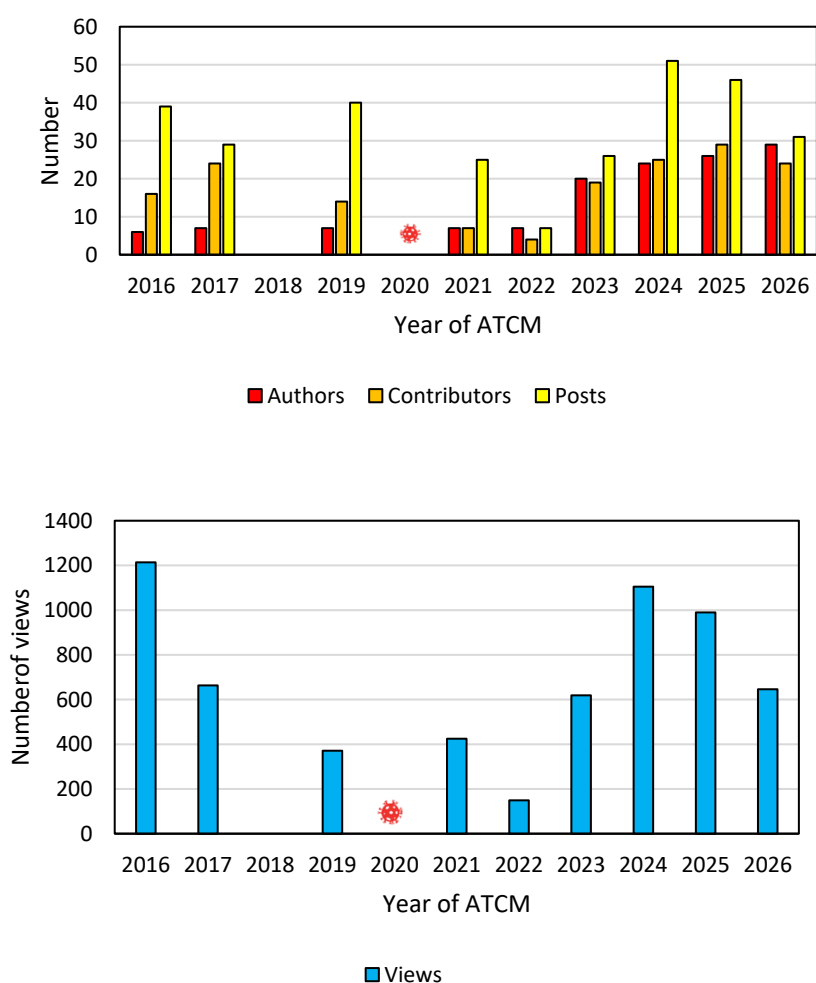


Figure 1. Parties, Observers and Experts that contributed to ATCM report papers of the ICG E & O, as authors (“authors”), as contributors to the reports (“contributors”) and the number of posts (top figure). Number of views by Parties, Observers and Experts of the ATCM ICG Forum on E & O (bottom figure). Note that in 2018 no report was submitted due to limited time available in ATCM 2018, and no report in 2020 due to COVID-19 (“”).

From these data, it is possible to make some observations: 1- The number of authors in the ATCM reports remained relatively constant until ATCM Finland (in 2023), when the authors

increased due to inviting all participating Parties Observers and Experts in the ATCM ICG Forum to be authors in the reports. Such measure increased the engagement and contributions to the forum; 2 – The lowest values of engagement was between 2018 and 2022, years when change of host Party changed (in 2018) and affected (indirectly) by COVID-19 and online ATCM meeting (2021), which may have slowed down the contributions to the forum. 3 – The volume of work on education issues during this intersessional period is higher than in previous years as the ATCM Japan will host the II Workshop on Education and Parties Observers and Experts have been asked to prepare to contribute (with more exchange of emails to the points of contact higher than usual); this may have slowed down slightly the contributions to the ATCM ICG E&O forum (as the number of 2026 demonstrates; Figure 1).

Overall, it is clear that a high number of Parties, Observers and Experts in the ATCM ICG forum and reports, particularly in the last four ATCMs (as “authors” in the ATCM papers and also as “contributors” that before (i.e. 2016-2022 period). This paper, due to the high engagement by Parties, Observers and Experts, also supports the continuation of a platform within the ATCM to continue and improve the exchange of information on Education and Outreach.