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Ninth report of the Intersessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach

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Working 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, COMNAP, Czechia, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, IAATO, India, Italy, Korea (ROK), Malaysia, Poland, Portugal*, Romania, SCAR, Spain*, Türkiye, UK*, Venezuela and WMO

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Summary

At ATCM 47 (2025) in Milan, Parties decided to continue the work of the Intersessional Contact Group (ICG) on Education and Outreach (E&O), following a number of goals related to education and outreach. This paper aims to provide a summary on the discussions within the ICG and recommends considerations by the ATCM of the outcomes of the intersessional work. The topics discussed (education and outreach activities, a workshop of education at ATCM 2026, review ICG work and future plans), with 31 posts (from October 2025 up to 17th March 2026) from 24 Parties, Observers and Experts comprising 646 views within the forum.

Background

The ICG on E & O was established during ATCM 38 (2015) in Sofia, Bulgaria, following a very successful workshop in which ninety-seven participants from thirty-seven Parties, Observers and Experts took part. During ATCM 39 (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. Information about education and outreach activities from an Antarctic Treaty perspective remains within the Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan of the ATCM.

As stated in the Final Report of ATCM 47 (2025) in Milan, Italy, paragraphs 255–259, the Meeting agreed its support for continued use of the ATCM forum on education and outreach issues and approved continuing the ICG on Education and Outreach for another intersessional period, with the following aims:

- Fostering collaboration at both the national and international level on Education and Outreach;
- Sharing results of education and outreach initiatives that demonstrate the work of Antarctic Treaty Parties in managing the Antarctic Treaty area;

- Promoting related education and outreach activities by Experts and Observers, and encouraging cooperation with these groups;
- Encouraging Parties to provide the Secretariat with link(s) to their webpage(s) with educational and outreach resources (the Secretariat would include these links in its “Educational Resources” section of the Secretariat webpage);
- Inviting Parties, Observers and Experts to review, during the intersessional period on the ATCM Education and Outreach Forum, the work carried out by the ICG and discuss the option for creating a forum, after the end of the ICG, on the Secretariat website, where Parties, Observers and Experts could exchange information on Education and Outreach related activities and other relevant information and initiatives on these matters; and
- Discuss the plan and organisational details of the second Workshop on Education and Outreach in ATCM 2026 in Japan.

Method of Operation

The ICG operates using the online ATCM Discussion Forum, under the topic ‘ICG on Education and Outreach’. The discussion is open to all Parties, Observers and Experts, of which, 24 Parties, Observers and Experts (up to 17th of March 2026) have participated in the forum. The ICG began work in October 2025.

Discussions

There were 31 posts with 646 views (up to 17th of March 2026). There were 3 topics within the forum: 1- Opening Announcement ICG E & O 2025-2026, 2- Education and outreach activities carried out by Parties, Observers and Experts, and 3 – Workshop ATCM on Education and Outreach 2026. It can be noted that posts included relevant links to obtain further information on their activities and detailed information of each post is available in the ATCM forum.

Topic 1: Opening Announcement ICG E&O 2025-2026

A total of four Parties (Bulgaria, Australia, Portugal and UK) participated in this topic, with parties thanking the ICG convenors for facilitating this discussion and supporting this ICG.

Topic 2: Education and outreach activities carried out by Parties, Observers and Experts

A total of 19 Parties (Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, India, Italy, Korea (ROK), Malaysia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Türkiye), one Observer (SCAR), and two Experts (ASOC, IAATO) reported their activities on education and outreach. Reports noted numerous activities raising awareness on Antarctic Treaty issues (including during the ATCM in Milano) in schools/universities/museums/other public areas (e.g. symposiums, auditorium and online lectures, debates, lessons, workshops, conferences, webinars/seminars, exhibitions, science podcasts, science camps, videoconferences) and from the field (e.g. live reporting from research ships/research stations while in the Antarctic, Antarctic virtual reality tours). Pre-Antarctic training programmes for researchers was also registered. For the first time, webtoon series have been mentioned in the ICG as a suitable and creative medium to communicate about Antarctica.

Other activities were reported including science/music festivals, school (book) fairs, science/artistic events (engaging artists and writers), (school) competitions, (e-)newsletters, outreach museum events, national science and international meetings/conferences and (digital) books. Parties also mentioned educational materials (e.g. manuals, videos, wildlife postcards, science summaries and infographics, teaching materials on climate change and geography) in

various languages, with some applied into national curricula, Antarctic expedition apps and films. Links to the mass media were also reported: TV/radio/newspaper interviews/documentaries linked to media; social media (e.g. websites, fora, blogs, TikTok, YouTube channels, Facebook pages, LinkedIn, Instagram).

National and international initiatives were also noted, including Polar WEEKS (in cooperation with the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) and Polar Educators International (PEI)); national Open Days; Blue School Programme; Antarctica Day celebrations; signing the Environmental Protocol celebration ‘Antarctica - a Natural Reserve, Devoted to Peace and Science’; “Celebrating 50 years of Women in Antarctica”; equity, diversity and inclusion statements; national Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives; first Antarctic expeditions celebrations; Antarctic Ambassador Expedition Program; Day/Year of Women and Girls in Science; Earth Day; World Environment Day; World Penguin Day; and World Krill Day. It was also noted the availability of fellowships to encourage involvement of early and mid-career scientists in Antarctic research (e.g., SCAR capacity building programmes; SCAR, COMNAP and IAATO Fellowships; and the CCAMLR Scholarship program)).

Finally, information from the SCAR Antarctic Environments Portal (AEP), whose scientific information is prepared by subject experts and goes through a rigorous editorial process before publication, provided new information summaries (<https://environments.aq/publications/>) and infographics (<https://environments.aq/graphics/>) on “What members of the public know and think about the Antarctic”, “Acidification in the Southern Ocean – current state and future challenges”, “Antarctic sea ice #4: Record lows between 2022 and 2025”, “Emerging evidence of abrupt changes in the Antarctic environment” and “The Spread of High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza H5N1 in Antarctica”, which can be very valuable for educational purposes.

Topic 3: Workshop ATCM on Education and Outreach 2026

A total of four Parties (Colombia, Portugal, Romania, Spain) commented on the objectives of the second ATCM workshop on education. Details were provided on the workshop, with objectives of the Workshop focusing on: 1) Update on ongoing Education and Outreach projects already being undertaken by Parties, Observers and Experts; 2) Consider the future of the ICG into a new tool for sharing information; and 3) Exchange ideas on education and outreach in preparation to the International Polar Year 2032-33. Parties thanked the organizers for coordinating the workshop and supported discussions on the future of the ICG, in moving towards an alternative platform (e.g. permanent ATCM forum) where these activities can be shared in a more efficient and accessible manner. There was also support for discussions on education and outreach initiatives to serve as drivers for the preparation and implementation phases of the 5th International Polar Year 2032-33 (IPY-5), in accordance with the principles to “produce education and outreach opportunities to engage the wider community with open and accessible communication strategies, platforms, and co-developed content.” In this context, it has been suggested to consider developing joint regional initiatives, endorsed by IPY-5.

Recommendations

The ICG recommends that the ATCM:

- Recognise the usefulness of the Education and Outreach activities from an Antarctic Treaty perspective
- Acknowledge the work of the ICG during this final intersessional period;
- Consider the different options discussed during the workshop for Parties, Observers, and Experts to continue exchanging information on E&O activities.