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European Polar Research Area**

**Deliverable No. 1.2**

**Definition of the vision and mission of the EU  
Polar Cluster incl. terms of reference**

## Submission of Deliverable

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## PUBLISHABLE SUMMARY

The EU Polar Cluster Vision, Mission and Terms of Reference has been developed with input from all existing Cluster Members during two full rounds of feedback on drafts.

The document sets out the Cluster's vision of **'a strong, well-connected ecosystem of European Polar projects and organisations operating together to substantially increase their combined impact and legacy'**, with a mission to better **connect and mutually support Cluster members**, while promoting their work and providing a single contact point to the whole Cluster.

The terms of reference detail the processes and procedures for the Cluster and its management, including details of membership for projects and organisations, management of Task Groups and a Coordination Team. It also details decision-making processes, requirements for meetings, dissemination and communication, and engagement with external parties.

## 1 Introduction

The EU Polar Cluster (previously the EU Arctic Cluster) was established in 2017 to improve cooperation, coordination and collaboration between large-scale EU funded projects and partner organisations. Initially coordinated by EU-PolarNet (1), the Cluster has subsequently grown with many new Arctic, Antarctic and Polar projects joining. Until now, the Cluster has not had any formally defined vision, mission or terms of reference to guide its activities and management. The document in Annex 1 formally defines the EU Polar Cluster’s Vision, Mission and Terms of Reference which have been developed and approved by all existing Cluster Members.

As lead beneficiary for this deliverable, the EPB initially drafted the Vision, Mission and Terms of Reference document in December 2020, with input from the Project Coordinator and Management Support Team. The document has subsequently been through two full rounds of feedback from Cluster Members, with revised drafts developed by the EPB after each round, again with input from the Project Coordinator and Management Support Team. The final draft was approved by EU Polar Cluster Members in April 2021.

## 2 Main Objectives

The aim of EU-PolarNet 2 Task 1.1 is to coordinate the EU Polar Cluster to ensure common support or dissemination, exploitation and valorisation of research and innovation results of the Cluster projects as a joint initiative. The formal definition, for the first time, of the Cluster's Vision, Mission and Terms of Reference will support and better facilitate its coordination, giving structure to its activities and setting out clearly the necessary rules and procedures for managing its Members and Task Groups.

### 2.1 Objective No. 1

Definition of EU Polar Cluster Vision

### 2.2 Objective No. 2

Definition of the EU Polar Cluster Mission

### 2.3 Objective No. 3

Definition of the EU Polar Cluster Terms of Reference, including requisites for membership

### 3 Outlook

**The EU Polar Cluster Terms of Reference will come into force on 1st October 2021, and will guide the Cluster’s activities from there on.** Changes to the Cluster Vision, Mission and Terms of Reference are only possible following the decision-making processes detailed in the document.

## 4 Annex 1: EU Polar Cluster Vision, Mission and Terms of Reference



# EU Polar Cluster

## Vision, Mission and Terms of Reference

May 2021

## Vision of the EU Polar Cluster

A strong, well-connected ecosystem of European Polar projects and organisations operating together to substantially increase their combined impact and legacy.

## Mission of the EU Polar Cluster

- To **connect** EU Polar Cluster Members, further developing the European polar research, observation, infrastructure and modelling community network.
- To **organise** joint activities by Cluster Members for greater impact than possible individually, while minimising duplication, sharing workload, and avoiding stakeholder fatigue.
- To **support** the sustainability and accessibility of large-scale EU-funded Polar projects' selected legacy outputs after their official end.
- To **share** advice and best practices among EU Polar Cluster Members.
- To **promote** the European polar research community, especially the strength, excellence, integration and best practices of EU-funded polar research.
- To **provide a single contact point** to all EU Polar Cluster Members for external partners and stakeholders, including Indigenous and local communities.

## Terms of Reference of the EU Polar Cluster

### 1. Entry into force

- a. These terms of reference will enter into force on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

### 2. Definitions

- a. The EU Polar Cluster, also referred to as the Cluster, is a network of European projects and organisations with a focus on polar research, observations, infrastructure and/or modelling activities.
- b. Members are the projects and organisations that together form the Cluster.
- c. Primary Representatives are the individuals designated by each Member as their main contact point with the Cluster, as detailed in 6.
- d. The Coordinator is the individual responsible for coordinating the Cluster, as detailed in 8.
- e. Task Groups are entities within the Cluster focused on specific objectives of areas of activity, as detailed in 10.
- f. Task Group Leads are individuals designated as the leads of each Task Group.
- g. The Coordination Team is an entity within the Cluster supporting its day-to-day management.
- h. A General Meeting is a meeting of the whole Cluster, including its Members and Task Groups, called at least annually, as detailed in 11.
- i. An Extraordinary Meeting is a meeting of the whole Cluster, including its Members and Task Groups, called as necessary, as detailed in 12.

- j. In-kind contributions are contributions to the Cluster, i.e. personnel, equipment, other goods, works and services, etc. which are free-of-charge if necessary for the implementation of the Cluster activities.
- k. The EU-PolarNet 2 Management Support Team (MST) is the project management team of the EU-PolarNet 2 project, consisting of the EU-PolarNet 2 Project Coordinator and supporting project management staff.

### 3. Function and activities

- a. The EU Polar Cluster concentrates on activities in line with its Vision and Mission.

### 4. Structure

- a. The EU Polar Cluster consists of Member projects and organisations, whose coordination in the Cluster is led by a Coordinator.
- b. Each Member has a designated Primary Representative, responsible as the main point of contact for the Cluster to the Member, and for voting on behalf of the Member. Other representatives of Cluster Members may also participate in Cluster activities and Task Groups in addition to the Primary Representative.
- c. Within the Cluster are Task Groups focused on specific activities and themes. Task Groups are composed of representatives of Members. Each Task Group has a designated Task Group Lead, supported by co-leads.
- d. The Coordinator of the Cluster is responsible for integration and organising activities with the Task Group Leads.
- e. A Coordination Team, composed of the Coordinator, the Task Group Leads, and (until 30th September 2024, the planned end date of the EU-PolarNet 2 project) the EU-PolarNet 2 MST, is responsible for the daily management of the EU Polar Cluster.
- f. The Coordination Team is the liaison of the EU Polar Cluster to the European Commission.

### 5. Membership

EU Polar Cluster membership consists of projects and organisations.

- a. Projects
  - i. Eligible to apply for membership of the EU Polar Cluster are Projects with a focus on polar research, observations, infrastructure and/or modelling activities funded by the European Commission under the societal challenges of the Horizon 2020 programme and under Pillar 2 of the Horizon Europe Programme (or EU funding mechanisms of similar scale), or EU-funded projects for which Cluster membership is obligatory according to their grant agreement.
  - ii. Projects may apply for membership of the Cluster by submitting information on the project's aims and objectives, lifetime, funding source, public deliverables of interest to the Cluster, and primary representative contact to the EU Polar Cluster Coordinator.

- iii. Projects for which Cluster membership is obligatory, according to their confirmed grant agreement, should provide details of this obligation to the Coordinator along with the information detailed in 5.a.ii, and will automatically become Members of the Cluster.
- iv. Where a project's participation in the Cluster is not obligatory according to their grant agreement, the Coordination Team will assess the Cluster membership application based on the information provided by the project, as detailed in 5.a.ii. The Coordination Team will then make a recommendation on the membership decision to existing Members. The final decision on membership will be made by a simple majority of votes received on the decision from existing Cluster Members. Voting on membership decisions may be conducted by in-person or electronic means.
- v. Projects will cease to be Members of the EU Polar Cluster a maximum of 2 years after their official end date. Past Member projects will continue to be acknowledged on the Cluster website.
- vi. Member projects deemed by the Coordination Team to be consistently inactive and unresponsive to Cluster requests will be subject to a vote to revoke their membership at the subsequent General Meeting, with the decision communicated by the Cluster Coordinator to the Member's Primary Representative in writing. In instances regarding a project whose participation in the Cluster is obligatory, the Coordination Team will seek advice from the European Commission before a decision is made on continued membership.
- vii. Projects may withdraw their membership of the EU Polar Cluster at any time by written notice to the Coordinator.

#### b. Organisations

- i. Membership of the EU Polar Cluster is open to European organisations with a focus on polar research, observations, infrastructure and/or modelling activities.
- ii. Organisations may apply for membership of the Cluster by submitting information on their aims and objectives, activities and Primary Representative contact to the Coordinator.
- iii. The Coordination Team will assess the Cluster membership application based on the information provided by the organisation, as detailed in 5.b.ii. The Coordination Team will then make a recommendation on the membership decision to existing Members. The final decision on membership will be made by a simple majority of votes received on the decision from existing Cluster Members. Voting on membership decisions may be conducted by in-person or electronic means.
- iv. Member organisations deemed by the Coordination Team to be consistently inactive and unresponsive to Cluster requests will be subject to a vote to revoke their membership at the subsequent General Meeting with the decision communicated by the Cluster Coordinator to the Member's Primary Representative in writing.
- v. Organisations may withdraw their membership of the EU Polar Cluster at any time by written notice to the Cluster Coordinator.

## 6. Primary Representatives

- a. Each Member designates an individual as their Primary Representative who acts as the main contact point to the Cluster.

## 7. Contribution of Members

- a. Cluster Members commit to participate actively in Cluster Task Groups and activities, including identifying potential shared activities with other Members.
- b. Cluster Members are expected to commit in-kind contributions to advance its work towards its Mission and Vision.

## 8. Coordinator

- a. The EU Polar Cluster has a Coordinator.
- b. The EU Polar Cluster Coordinator must be an individual nominated by a Cluster Member to the role.
- c. An individual is appointed as Coordinator for a two-year term, after which they are eligible for reappointment for one further term (being appointed for a maximum of two terms in total).
- d. Individuals are eligible to serve as Coordinator for a maximum of two consecutive two-year terms.
- e. Candidates for the position of Coordinator shall be nominated by Cluster Members. Until 30th September 2024 (the planned end date of the EU-PolarNet 2 project), candidates for the position of Coordinator shall only be nominated by the EU-PolarNet 2 project (as required by the European Commission in the call LC-CLA-21-2020: Coordination of European Polar research). From 1st October 2024 onwards, all Cluster Members can nominate candidates for the position of Coordinator.
- f. The Coordinator is appointed from eligible nominees at a General Meeting by the decision of Cluster Members (according to Decision Making processes detailed in 13).
- g. The Coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day management and coordination of its Members and activities with the support of the Coordination Team.
- h. The Coordinator maintains an up-to-date registry of all Cluster Members, including their Primary Representatives, contact information, official end dates (for Project Members), and Task Group members.
- i. The Coordinator leads planning and organisation of General Meetings, with support from Task Group Leads and all Cluster Members.

## 9. Coordination Team

- a. The Coordination Team will meet on a regular basis (at least quarterly), and additionally as necessary.
- b. The Coordination Team will meet quarterly with European Commission representatives, and additionally as necessary.

## 10. Task Groups

- a. Within the Cluster, Task Groups can be formed to focus on specific activities and themes.
- b. Any Cluster Member may propose a new Task Group, by providing a defined purpose, tasks, lifetime, and potential membership in writing to the Coordinator.
- c. Proposed Task Groups may only be established by a decision of Members at a General Meeting.
- d. Task Groups are composed of representatives of active Cluster Members.
- e. Members of Task Groups may be the Primary Representatives of Cluster Members or other representatives of Members (as noted in 4.b).
- f. No more than one representative of the same Cluster Member may join the same Task Group, unless agreed to by the Task Group Lead.
- g. Each Task Group has a Task Group Lead, appointed from within their membership, with the appointment confirmed to the Coordination Team.
- h. Only representatives of current EU Polar Cluster Members are eligible for appointment as a Task Group Lead.
- i. Task Group Leads are appointed for a two-year term, after which they are eligible for reappointment for one further term (being appointed for a maximum of two terms in total), providing they still meet the eligibility requirements detailed in 10.f.
- j. Task Group Leads may be supported by co-leads, from within their Task Group.
- k. Task Group Leads are responsible for coordinating Task Group activities and organising Task Group meetings.
- l. Task Group meetings are to be held at least quarterly.
- m. Activities may be organised and implemented by a subset of Cluster Members from within the Task Group or in collaboration with other Task Groups, as is suitable for the scope of the activity.
- n. Task Group Leads are responsible for oral reporting on Task Group activities to the whole EU Polar Cluster at General Meetings.
- o. Task Groups may be closed if they have achieved their aim or are deemed inactive, unresponsive or no longer necessary.
  - i. Proposals to close a Task Group should be made in writing by the Task Group Lead to the Coordinator. The Coordinator will add the matter to the agenda of the next General Meeting for discussion.
  - ii. If a Task Group is deemed inactive or unresponsive due to the inactivity or unresponsiveness of its Lead, calls for a change of lead will be made by the Coordination Team. If a Task Group's inactivity or unresponsiveness persists, or it is deemed no longer necessary by the Coordination Team, the Coordinator will add the matter to the agenda of the next General Meeting for discussion.
  - iii. A final decision whether to continue or close a Task Group in question will be made by Members at a General Meeting (according to Decision Making processes detailed in 13).

## 11. General Meetings

- a. General Meetings of the EU Polar Cluster are held at least annually, either in person or online.
- b. Dates for General Meetings are to be set by the Coordinator in consultation with all Members, with the confirmed dates and location of meetings to be communicated to Members at least eight weeks in advance.
- c. All Primary Representatives of Members and all Task Group members are invited to attend General Meetings by the Coordinator.
- d. Relevant external parties may be invited to attend General Meetings by the Coordinator as observers, at the suggestion of Members or Task Groups.
- e. Draft agendas for General Meetings are to be circulated by the Coordinator among Members and Task Groups for comment and input at least 4 weeks before the meeting is due to be held.
- f. Standing agenda items for General Meetings include introductions to new Members and activity reports from Task Groups.
- g. A quorum of at least 50% of Members is required for a General Meeting.

## 12. Extraordinary Meetings

- a. Extraordinary Meetings of the EU Polar Cluster may be called by the Coordinator as necessary, or at the request of a Member.
- b. Extraordinary Meetings may be held either in person or online.
- c. Dates, location and draft agendas for Extraordinary Meetings are to be set by the Coordinator in consultation with all Members, communicated to Members as early as possible before the meeting date.
- d. All Primary Representatives of Members and all Task Group members are invited to attend Extraordinary Meetings by the Coordinator.
- e. Relevant external partners may be invited to attend Extraordinary Meetings by the Coordinator as observers, at the suggestion of Members or Task Groups.
- f. A quorum of at least 50% of Members is required for an Extraordinary Meeting.

## 13. Decision making

- a. Day-to-day decisions on the Cluster's general coordination and activities are to be made by the Coordinator with support from the Coordination Team.
- b. Specific decisions relating to their designated area of activity are to be made by Task Groups, with support from the Coordination Team as needed.
- c. EU Polar Cluster decisions considered by the Coordinator or Coordination Team to have significant impact on Members, the Cluster as a whole or its accepted Terms of Reference are to be made collectively by Members at General Meetings, Extraordinary Meetings, or between meetings via electronic means.
  - i. Where decisions are to be made at General Meetings, proposals for required decisions as described in 13.c will be submitted to the Coordinator at least

- two weeks before the General Meeting by Members or Task Groups. The Coordinator will include the required decisions in the meeting agenda.
- ii. Where decisions are to be made at Extraordinary Meetings, proposals for required decisions as described in 13.c will be submitted to the Coordinator as soon as possible Members or Task Groups. The Coordinator will include the required decisions in the meeting agenda.
  - iii. Where decisions are to be made between meetings by electronic means, proposals of required decisions as described in 13.c will be submitted to the Coordinator. The Coordinator will circulate information on the required decisions, including details of the voting mechanism as necessary, and a deadline for response to all Members.
- d. If needed, decisions described in 13.c can be subject to a vote and upheld with a two-thirds majority of votes cast, on the basis of one vote per Member.
  - e. Any Cluster decisions requiring a vote may be conducted either by in-person or electronic means.

#### 14. External parties

- a. The EU Polar Cluster may connect with relevant external parties, including organisations, other clusters, and the European Commission.
- b. As the central contact point, external parties wishing to engage with the EU Polar Cluster should do so via the Coordinator. The Coordinator is responsible for sharing information with Cluster Members or specific Task Groups as appropriate.
- c. The EU Polar Cluster may participate in activities with external parties that are in line with its Vision and Mission.

#### 15. Dissemination and Communication of EU Polar Cluster information

- a. External
  - i. Details of all EU Polar Cluster Members will be included on the Cluster website ([www.polarcluster.eu](http://www.polarcluster.eu)).
  - ii. Members will include a link to the EU Polar Cluster website ([www.polarcluster.eu](http://www.polarcluster.eu)) on their own websites where possible.
  - iii. The EU Polar Cluster logo and branding are to be used on dissemination materials (presentations, brochures, etc.) for joint Cluster activities.
  - iv. Members will include EU Polar Cluster social media links where possible, and for all joint activities, using the hashtag #EUPolarCluster.
- b. Internal
  - i. Reports on all EU Polar Cluster General Meetings, Extraordinary Meetings, Coordination Team Meetings, meetings with the European Commission, Task Group Meetings, and other meetings as necessary will be made available to all Members via electronic means, including attendees, agenda items discussed, all decisions made and actions recommended.