Education and outreach by the Antarctic Treaty Parties under ATCM framework:   
a review

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Information Paper submitted by Portugal, Belgium, Bulgaria and United Kingdom

*Summary*

This paper describes the actions and responses of Treaty Parties to the growing public interest in Antarctica. Analysis of the level of reporting of education and outreach activities by Parties since 1961, when the Antarctic Treaty entered into force, reveals a significant increase in activity following the signing in 1991 of the Protocol on Environmental Protection. Through the work of the ATCM Intersessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach, established in 2014, we can demonstrate that most delegations are actively involved in education and outreach, and consider these activities to be a priority. We invite Parties, Observers and Experts to continue to be actively engaged in and to report achievements in this field through the ATCM Intersessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach and in the ATCM Forum.

*Background*

The original articles of the Antarctic Treaty make no mention of any responsibility to inform the public about the activities on the continent. Indeed, the papers presented at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM) were confidential during the first 20 years. This changed in the 1980s, when papers became publicly available after each meeting and Observers and Experts were admitted to the ATCMs. Analysis of papers shows that prior to the 1990s, there was little discussion on education and outreach. However, there was a step-change following signing of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty in 1991. Education and outreach initiatives were introduced to Treaty Parties through a number of reports from international workshops, including the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1993. From the 1990´s various expert groups were created, including within the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP), SCAR Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) and Polar Educators International (Xavier et al. 2019). Such momentum resulted in the raising of education and outreach in ATCM´s.

The imperative for greater visibility of Parties’ public education and outreach activities was recognized at ATCM XXXVII WP009 in 2014, when a workshop proposal from Brazil, Bulgaria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Portugal, and the United Kingdom was endorsed. Thirty-seven Parties, Observers and Experts (ATCM XXXVIII BP26, report ATCM XXXVIII Paragraph 323,) attended the workshop in Bulgaria. A key outcome was the establishment of an Intersessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach and the coordination of an online ATCM discussion forum to capture the amount of information on education and outreach activities by Parties. There is evidence in papers submitted to ATCM (i.e. ATCM XXXIX WP24, ATCM XL WP24, ATCM XLII WP33) to demonstrate the increased interest in education and outreach activities within ATCM Parties, Observers and Experts.

*Evidence of growth of the number of papers on Education and Outreach*

A search for the words “education” and/or “outreach” at the documents’ page of the Antarctic Treaty System (<http://www.ats.aq)> between 1961 and 2017, yielded a total of 37 papers that were submitted to ATCMs between 1961 and 2014 (Figure 1). This number can be attributed to the fact that most delegations considered education and outreach a low priority in this period. In contrast, during the following 3 years (between 2015-2017), a further 37 papers were submitted to the ATCM on education and outreach, which clearly shows a considerable interest in this issue. The dramatic increase in paper numbers can be attributed to the education and outreach workshop at ATCM XXXVIII in Bulgaria and the establishment of the Intersessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach.

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***Figure 1.*** *Number of papers submitted to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings between 1961 and 2017 (grouped by 5-year clusters; e.g. 1960 = 1960–1964). Data obtained from a search on “education” and/or “outreach” at the documents page of the Antarctic Treaty System website (*[*http://www.ats.aq/)*](http://www.ats.aq/)) *(following Xavier et al. 2019).*

*Conclusions*

The importance of sharing information related to education and outreach is now recognized by most ATCM Parties. The number of papers submitted to the ATCM on education and outreach has greatly increased since the 1990s, and particularly in recent years, due to the increased priority given to these issues by Parties, following (i) Article 6.1a of the Protocol on Environmental Protection which to promoted the educational value of Antarctica and Antarctic research, (ii) by the workshop on education and outreach at ATCM XXXVIII and (iii) by the creation of the ATCM Intersessional Contact Group on education and Outreach (and ATCM forum). We continue to encourage Parties, Observers and Experts to organize, disseminate and collaborate nationally and internationally in education and outreach initiatives, following the Antarctic spirit of cooperation. Examples are the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of sighting of Antarctica and the 500th first circumnavigation of Ferdinand Magellan.

An acknowledgement is owed to Professor David Walton (1945-2019) for contributing to this legacy.

*Reference*

Xavier, J.C., Mateev, D., Capper, L., Wilmotte, A., and Walton, D.W.H. (2019). Education and Outreach by the Antarctic Treaty Parties, Observers and Experts under the framework of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative meetings. Polar Record55: 241-244. [**doi:https://doi.org/10.1017/S003224741800044X**](doi:https://doi.org/10.1017/S003224741800044X)