Project Calls and Evaluation Processes in Turkish Antarctic Expeditions

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Information Paper submitted by Turkey

Summary

This paper presents information on the polar research project call management system in Turkey which defines the expedition participation as well.

Introduction

Together with the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) Academic Research Funding Program Directorate (ARDEB) and TUBITAK Marmara Research Center (MAM), Polar Research Institute (PRI) opens annual project calls for the participation of researchers in Turkish Antarctic Expeditions (TAE). Project calls are open to all institutions and organizations in Turkey and project submissions are accepted within the framework of the priority research themes specified in the National Polar Science Program (2018-2022). In this scope, the project calls and the evaluation processes can be classified under the titles of “expedition participation”, “independent of the expedition” and “participation in research stations of other countries”.

Project Calls for 2017 – 2019

Between 2017 and 2019, the project calls and the evaluation of the submissions were coordinated by the Polar Research Center of Istanbul Technical University (ITU PolReC). The project call structure was based on the TUBITAK ARDEB’s system, which has been conducting and funding scientific projects as well as managing submission and evaluation processes for various scientific themes for many years. Project calls were opened between April and May and evaluated from August to September.

During the calls, researchers were asked to fill the project application form consisting of the following sub-titles, with a maximum of 20 pages:

* Project tag
* Abstract
* Purpose and Rationale of the Project
* Subject and Scope of the Project
* Literature Review
* Materials & Methods
* Budget
* Sampling Area
* Expedition Participants
* Institutional Research Capacity
* Success Criteria and Expected Outcomes
* Other Institutions Supporting the Project
* Other Activities of the Project Team on Antarctica

Submitted proposals were examined by a commission formed by the rectorates of five universities and then evaluated by external referees consisting of experts in the field of application. For 2017, 2018 and 2019 calls, 7, 15 and 19 projects were supported and funded, respectively.

Project Calls for 2018 – 2020

In 2018, polar science project calls were integrated into the institutional structure of TUBITAK ARDEB, which forms the basis of the project evaluation system, and the call process was transferred to the online platform. The application period is similar to the former structure which the calls are opened in April - May, evaluations are conducted in June - July, and the qualified projects are announced in August - September. The evaluations are carried out in a structure where five or more external referees share their reviews within a panel system. The number of projects supported during this period was 7, 7 and 6 for 2018, 2019 and 2020, respectively.

It should be noted that ITU PolReC and TUBITAK ARDEB opened project calls simultaneously in 2018 since it was the first trial of the new project system for polar sciences. The main difference between the 2017-2019 and the 2018-2020 period is the allocated budget for individual projects. The budget of the projects evaluated by ITU PolReC was quite limited and this budget was increased approximately four times during the TUBITAK ARDEB period. Although the number of projects has decreased in the new project application system, the marginal benefits of the scientific projects (namely original value, widespread impacts, outcomes) have increased, as aimed.