

Ms Ekaterina Zaharieva
Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200, 1049 Brussels, Belgium

Support for a European partnership for polar research and innovation, and for research as a pillar of the EU's renewed Arctic policy

Dear Commissioner Zaharieva,

The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) represents Sweden's universities and university colleges. We write to express our strong support for a long-term European partnership for research and innovation in the Polar regions.

The Arctic is changing faster than almost any other region on Earth. The consequences for climate, security, critical raw materials, connectivity and the lives of Arctic communities reach far beyond the region and concern the whole of Europe. Sound policy depends on knowledge, and Europe is well placed to lead: its universities and research institutes are among the world's best in polar research. What is missing is a long-term, coordinated European commitment.

We therefore ask the Commission to:

- **Make research and innovation a defining pillar of the EU's renewed Arctic policy**, with concrete commitments on long-term funding, access to research infrastructure such as icebreakers, research stations and space-based observation, trusted European data, education and talent, and research in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities.
- **Include a European Partnership for Arctic and Polar research and innovation in Horizon Europe 2028–2034**, designed for the long term, integrating national research programmes and open to associated countries such as Norway, Iceland and Canada.

This builds on the joint position of the five Nordic rectors' conferences (May 2026), which called for an Arctic partnership in FP10, and on SUHF's response to the public consultation on European Partnerships. Universities, which carry out much of this research and educate the next generation, should take part in setting the agenda and in the governance of such a partnership, under simple and predictable rules.

The timing is important. The EU is renewing its Arctic policy, and Sweden's new Arctic strategy (2026) identifies polar research as a strategic resource. Sweden will chair the Arctic Council in 2027–2029 and hosts the secretariat of the European Polar Board until 2034, and the International Polar Year 2032–2033 is approaching. Swedish universities and university colleges stand ready to contribute, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you and your services.

Yours sincerely,

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