

SCAR 2020 LS virtual meeting

Recommendations to the Delegates and EXCOM

Dear Delegates, Dear Excom Members:

The Covid situation has meant that we cannot meet face-to-face with you all. We also could not meet properly with the Life Sciences national representatives to discuss the various business that took place during 2019 and part of 2020 and those to come. We do not know what form the Delegates meeting will take this year, nor what decisions can or cannot be taken, but we felt it was important to show that Life Sciences continues to be an active community even in these troubled times. Below are the positions of the Life Sciences representatives on several items that we know are of interest.

The Life Sciences community has exchanged ideas and information using a Google doc in which items to discuss were listed and detailed. Links to AG and EG reports were given. At the end of each item that required an endorsement by the community, the heads of Life Sciences provided an initial statement and a link to a voting table. This voting table had all 37 countries in rows and items in columns. Each country could vote “agree”, “disagree”, “abstention” and comment in a box. Following a first round of voting, items were either closed when there were only “Agree” or “Abstention”. If one country disagreed, the Life Sciences heads made a synthesis of the discussion, online (zoom, skype...) meetings were also held with several countries. Then, a new statement was made with a second table of voting, similar to the first round. After these two rounds, a final Life Sciences synthesis document was produced, validated by the representatives, and this is the document you are about to read below.

We appreciate the many challenges you have been dealing with and hope you will appreciate the effort made to keep the dialog between the different levels of hierarchy in SCAR, and look forward to the next in-person meeting. We are also ready to discuss with you any of the items below should any be unclear and if you wish to.

Cordially,

Yan Ropert-Coudert (head), Marc Shepanek (co-head) and Ian McDonald (secretary).

● **VOTED ITEM 1: Action and Expert Groups reports**

Group	Acronym	Type	Start	End
Input Pathways of persistent organic pollutants to AntarCTica	IMPACT	AG	2018	2020
Plastic in Polar Environments	PLASTICS	AG	2018	2020
SCAR Krill Action Group	SKAG	AG	2018	2020
Biogeochemical Exchange Processes at Sea-Ice Interfaces	BEPSII	EG	2016	2026
Integrated Science for the Sub-Antarctic	ISSA	AG	2014	2020
Animal monitoring via remote sensing	Remote Sensing	AG	2012	2020
Antarctic Biodiversity Informatics	ABI	EG	2010	2020
Antarctic Near-shore & Terrestrial Observing System	ANTOS	EG	2014	2024
Southern Ocean Continuous Plankton Recorder	SO-CPR	EG	2016	2024
Birds and Marine Mammals	BAMM	EG	2008	2026
Joint Expert Group on Human Biology and Medicine	JEGHBM	EG	2011	Open

Table 1. Situation of groups as of 2020 (click the acronym to read the report). Six are ending their terms in 2020 and expect the following:

- IMPACT and Plastics AGs ask for a 2-year prolongation.
- SKAG asks to be promoted to an EG
- ISSA is developing a PPG to be presented to EXCOM in 2021 and the Delegates in 2022.
- Remote sensing asks to be transferred to the Physical Science “Earth Observation AG”
- ABI is asking to be renewed as an EG for 4 years

In addition, two new groups asked to be created in 2020 but no proposals were received: EG on the Ross Sea Marine Protected Area (N. Bertler and A. Isern), Interdisciplinary EG on Antarctic Subglacial Environment Exploration (ASEE) (J. Mikucki)

LS Final statements:

> Life Sciences propose to freeze the statuses of all groups until 2022! All groups add two years to the ending date (e.g. IMPACT is not ending up in 2020 anymore but in 2022. It asks for an extension of 2 years so it would bring its extension up to 2024).

Round 1: 16 votes, **16 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 0 Abstention

> Budgets that were planned to be spent in 2020 were mainly planned for travelling. This is not possible due to travel restrictions. Yet, and because we’re asking to freeze the status of groups until 2022, we are also asking for the groups to be able to spend the money planned for 2020 in the interval between NOW and OSC 2022. They can use them either for travelling when the borders reopen (which could be for travelling to India in 2022) or for other purposes if justified (e.g. to organize online meetings). For the latter, the groups should then contact Life Sciences to get approval bearing in mind that we will probably need to get approval from SCAR EXCOM.

Round 2: 14 votes, **14 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 0 Abstention

● **VOTED ITEM 2: SRPs ends and starts**

The Research programs AntECO and Ant-ERA are finishing this year. PPGs agreed upon by Delegates in Davos 2018 and by EXCOM in Plovdiv in 2019 are considered for SRPs as of 2020. As far as Life Sciences are concerned, these are **Integrated Science to Inform Antarctic and Southern Ocean Conservation (Ant-ICON)** and **INStabilities and Thresholds in ANTArctica (INSTANT)**.

One concern voiced during the meeting is that Life Sciences encompass a wide variety of disciplines and cover several fields and such diversity is extremely difficult to embody into one or two programs. In this context, the two SRPs-to-be could be accompanied by other research programs without creating any overlaps with the proposed activities.

LS Final statements for closing SRPs:

> Life Sciences wish to thank Huw Griffiths and Jan Strugnell (AntECO) and Julian Gutt (Ant-ERA) for all their hard work and community-binding effort over the past years, acknowledging all the progress that their programs have brought to the field of Life Sciences.

Round 1: 16 votes, **16 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 0 Abstention

> Life Sciences would also suggest to offer these programs a chance to continue being active until 2022 (albeit without additional budget) and to present their achievements at the occasion of the next OSC in India.

Round 1: 16 votes, **16 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 0 Abstention

LS Final statements for opening SRPs:

> Life Sciences welcome the new SRPs Ant-ICON and INSTANT to which many of us participate. We thank the leaders of these SRPs, Aleks Terauds and Mercedes Santos, and Tim Naish, for their effort in coming up with these nice and exciting programs.

Round 1: 16 votes, **16 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 0 Abstention

> Life Sciences welcome the intention to propose a PPG by the Action Group ISSA (contact point Justine Shaw shaw.justine@gmail.com) centered on subantarctic questions. The PPG will be developed in close concertation with the Life Sciences community through their national representatives.

Round 2: 14 votes, **11 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 3 Abstention

> Life Sciences welcome the intention to propose a PPG by the USA (contact point Byron Adams Byron_adams@byu.edu) with the aim to address disciplines not covered by the existing SRPs. The PPG will be developed in close concertation with the Life Sciences community through their national representatives.

Round 2: 14 votes, **12 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 2 Abstention

- **VOTED ITEM 3: Forthcoming meetings**

SCAR BIOLOGY SYMPOSIUM: In consultation with SCAR, the LS Chief Officer and the SCAR Biology Conference National Organising Committee (NOC) the difficult decision has been made to postpone SCAR Biology 2021 in New Zealand to 2023. All preparatory work will not be wasted as the organizers begin planning the event for 2023.

Note that Life Sciences had not yet received any offer to host the next SCAR Biology Symposium (14th). Interested parties please contact us: lifesciences@scar.org.

LS Final statement:

> Life Sciences acknowledge the postponing of the SCAR Biology Symposium to 2023. Countries interested for organizing the subsequent SCAR Biology Symposium in 2027 please contact us: lifesciences@scar.org.

Round 1: 16 votes, **16 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 0 Abstention

- **VOTED ITEM 4: Life Sciences executives**

EXCOM has asked if Scientific Groups heads were prepared to stay in position until 2022 and the next possibility for Delegates to meet in person. Life Sciences heads have agreed to stay in position until that time. In 2022, there will be a need for electing a new CO (reminder: Ian McDonald is willing to step in as the new CO), a new co-CO (reminder: Nathalie Pattyn is willing to step in as a new co-CO - the co-CO is traditionally chosen among the JEGHBM members), and a new secretary (Byron Adams is willing to step in as a new Secretary).

LS Final statement:

> Life Sciences approve the freezing of the situation, with Yan Ropert-Coudert (CO), Marc Shepanek (co-CO) and Ian McDonald (Sec) staying in positions until the OSC 2022 in India. The situation also remains frozen for the potential successors in 2022: Ian McDonald applying for CO position, Nathalie Pattyn applying for co-CO position, and Byron Adams applying for Secretary position.

Round 1: 14 votes, **14 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 0 Abstention

- **VOTED ITEM 5: ACCE**

Life Sciences members have been traditionally quite involved in producing the annual report of the [Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment](#) effort. In the frame of the restructuring members of Life Sciences are unsure of how this will be tackled in the future.

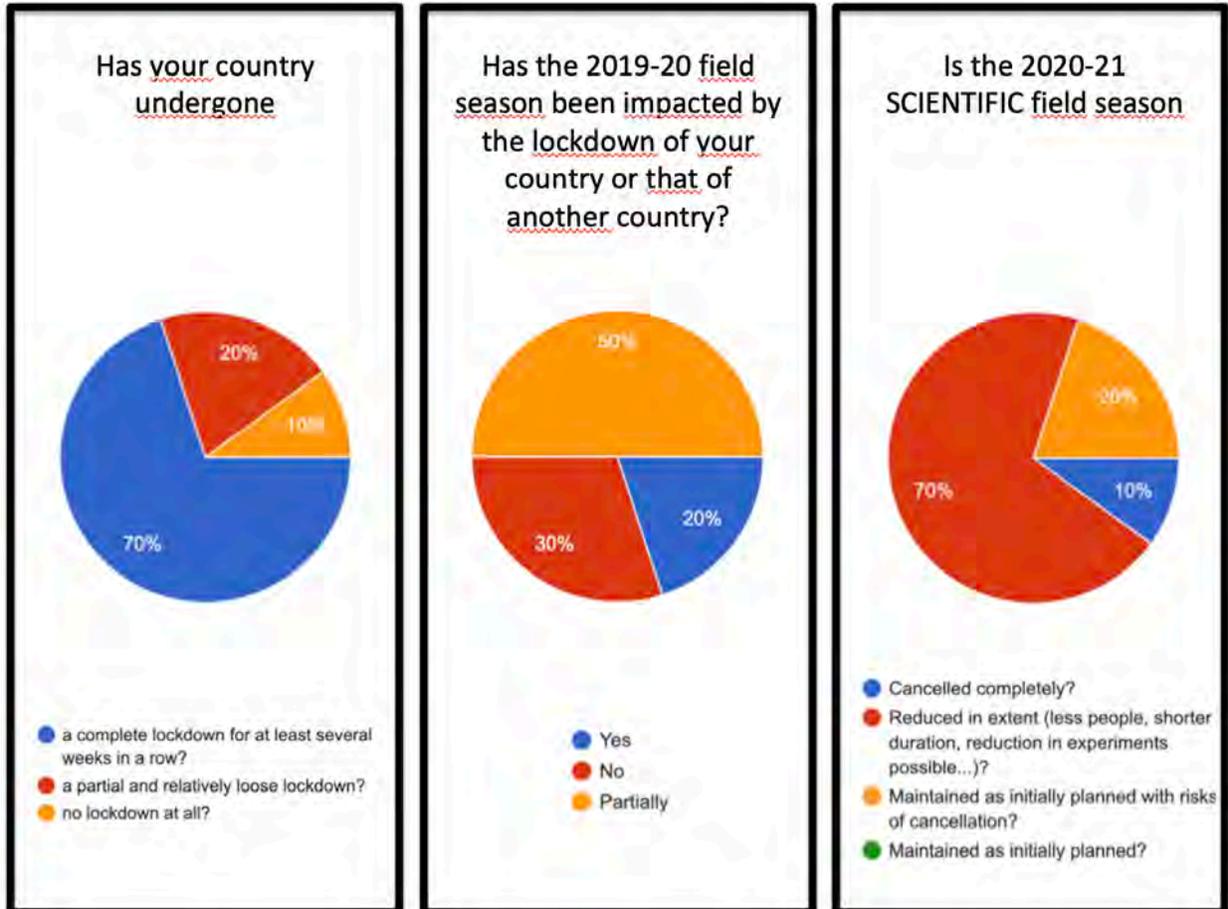
LS Final statement:

> Life Sciences would like to ask for a description of SCAR/Excom's future intention or approach to the regular work done by ACCE.

Round 1: 14 votes, **14 Agree**, 0 Disagree, 0 Abstention

- **INFORMATION ITEM:** Impact of Covid on Antarctic Life Sciences programs

Due to the lockdown and restrictions imposed by governments to try and stop the pandemic, many programs are facing restrictions in accessing Antarctica to conduct their scientific projects. Life Sciences asked through an online survey how much scientific activities were impacted in the respective countries of the representatives. Briefly, these are the responses received from 10 countries.



Free comments: For all, the first priority is to prevent the virus from spreading in the Antarctic! While some fear that all science could be cancelled, the majority are facing an extremely uncertain situation that evolves rapidly, but all report on a massive reduction of the scientific plans that can be conducted in 2020-21 (especially during the summer), priorities being given on observatories and automated measurements, and winter expeditioners. Other summer science fieldworks can be completely cancelled, although oceanographic campaigns might occasionally be maintained, albeit partially. Important to note besides fieldwork issues: in some cases Antarctic researchers have lost their jobs due to restrictions in budget due to the Covid pandemic, and grants or new appointments have been postponed. Finally, knock-off effects will certainly continue.