

2nd Arctic Ministerial, 25.–26. Oktober 2018

AT Country Statement

Due to the challenges of climate change, the seemingly large distance to the Northern polar ice masses has become significantly smaller over the past few decades, sometimes even threateningly close. Recent research clearly demonstrates that the changes in the Arctic caused by climate change have a direct impact also on entire Europe and thus Austria. Understanding this change and their underlying processes, as the basis for future actions, is therefore not only a matter of global responsibility but also basis for societal transformation towards sustainability in Austria. Therefore, Austria fully supports the goals of the Arctic Ministerial.

In recent years Austria has restructured polar research at the national level by founding the Austrian Polar Research Institute that brought together researchers from all major Austrian universities and other research institutions. This also allowed Austria to increase its contribution to international polar research efforts.

Austria's contribution to polar research focuses on four main areas:

- 1) First, Austria has a strong focus on the impact of climate change on snow and ice.
- 2) A second focus lies on the effects of global warming on Arctic permafrost and resulting greenhouse gas emission and possible repercussions on the global climate.
- 3) Third, Austria's research focuses on the biology of arctic organisms, from microorganisms living in snow and ice, the so-called cryobiota, to animals striving in the Arctic Ocean.
- 4) Finally, in Austria, arctic social science research has become a well-established field of research, especially in the discipline of social and cultural anthropology.

Significant findings and concepts of the Austrian polar research have their origin in Alpine research where parallels from high altitudes to high latitudes can be drawn. From a methodical point of view, Austrian researchers have also contributed significantly to the development of space-based observations in the Arctic, building on long-term collaborations with established institutions of Arctic research in Europe.

As the Austrian polar research community is comparatively small, international cooperation is key for Austrian scientists. However, Austria is able to provide excellent knowledge (methods, process understanding etc.) to international research efforts which is essential for better understanding the regional and global dynamics of changes in the Arctic. Based on these strengths, Austria will continue to be a reliable partner in European and international polar research and contribute to the international efforts to better understand the Polar Regions and their global importance.

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Wien, 24. Okt. 2018