Education & Outreach Activities of Turkey in 2020-2021

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Information Paper submitted by Turkey

Summary

This paper presents information on the polar regions and global climate related education and outreach activities carried out in Turkey in 2020-2021.

Background

Informing society about polar regions is considered to increase public interest in polar research. It is also taken into account that motivating children, who will become the scientists of the future is of great importance. Education activities and outreach at early ages will provide them with the opportunity to understand the importance of polar sciences and how to conduct research in these regions in the future. In this context, the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), Marmara Research Center (MAM), Polar Research Institute (PRI) spends continuous effort to hold events such as training and seminars, to issue publications books/journals, documentaries and animation films.

Turkey’s polar related education and outreach activities are currently coordinated by TUBITAK MAM PRI. Within this scope, APECS Turkey (as the APECS National Committee) and “Turkish Students’ Polar Research Team (PolSTeam)”, which is a body of İstanbul Technical University Polar Research Center (ITU PolReC, the former national operator) take an active role in these activities.

2020-2021 Activities

The First Polar Sciences Festival was organized by TUBITAK MAM PRI in October 2020. The festival was designated to present polar sciences to the younger generation in a fun environment in a venue full of entertaining activities. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the event was held on the online platform. The festival brought a total of 30 speakers together with 2000 students from 70 schools from 20 different cities of Turkey. Experienced researchers talked about the current trends in polar regions and explained their scientific studies to middle and high school students and teachers in a popular science language. The first session of the festival was broadcasted live on the TUBITAK YouTube channel.

The first “Polar Research Projects Contest for High School Students” was organized by the TUBITAK Directorate of Science Fellowships and Grant Programmes and PRI. The contest, in which the students will develop and present polar science projects attracted great attention with over 700 applications. During the call period, PRI gave seminars to 6000 people, including students and advisor teachers from 30 different cities. These seminars involved not only the details on the contest and submission but also contained general information on polar regions and polar research.

In addition to these activities, the documentary titled “The Black Box of the Planet: Antarctica” which was prepared within the scope of the fourth Turkish Antarctic Expedition (TAE-IV) was aired on national TV channels and as well as YouTube. The importance of the polar regions and, thus of polar science, for our planet was emphasized throughout the documentary.

During this period, PRI researchers contributed to both printed and digital publications on polar regions from an educational aspect. Along with the Science and Society Department of TUBITAK, PRI prepared written and visual material to support the content of the magazines targeting children over 3 years of age. Two TUBITAK magazines for different age groups with special issues for polar regions were published in December 2020. In addition, a digital book with drawings on the first Turkish Arctic Scientific Expedition (TASE-1) was published in 2020. Besides, a comic series on the adventures of a researcher in Antarctica continues in a TUBITAK magazine for kids with the contributions of PRI researchers.

Conclusion

TUBITAK MAM PRI keeps working in cooperation with PolSTeam and APECS Turkey to conduct education & outreach activities related to polar regions and global climate change. Although the Covid-19 pandemic considerably impacted polar activities, online platforms and publications have served well in terms of dissemination of information to the public and especially the younger generation.