

## Get to know... APECS BULGARIA



The APECS Bulgaria National Committee was established in 2012 as a group of three early-career scientists who work closely with the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute (BAI) on a long-term E&O program directed at Bulgarian schools, kindergartens and Universities around the country. It aims to inform the different public about the importance of Antarctic research and to improve the knowledge about Polar Regions. Bulgaria was part of APECS Executive Committee 2013/2014 and is currently an active member.

In 2014 APECS Bulgaria was officially registered according to the Bulgarian legislation and is now a non-profit organization with a Chair and Board, constituted of 3 members on a four-year term. There are 21 members, mainly PhD and Postdoctoral students, teachers and mountaineers.

The Bulgarian NC is mostly oriented to E&O activities and started its formal work as an organizer and partner in E&O activities to various educational institutions and organizations as British Council-Bulgaria, Spanish Institute Cervantes, National Museum of Natural History.

Since January 2015 the website [www.apecs-bulgaria.com](http://www.apecs-bulgaria.com) has already an English version - <http://apecsbulgariaeng.weebly.com/>. APECS Bulgaria's Facebook page has 406 followers at the moment.

Numerous E&O polar activities are undertaken by APECS Bulgaria in the last two years:

- Public and school talks - bringing early career polar scientists and members of Bulgarian Antarctic expeditions into classrooms through talks and multimedia presentations. More than 3000 students, 51 teachers, 32 schools, 21 scientists were involved in this project which is integrated with celebration of International Polar Weeks and Antarctica Day in Bulgaria. Bulgarian children from 16 schools drew designs of Antarctic flag. Their drawings reached the White Continent together with children's drawings from 31 countries and were exhibited in front of the Bulgarian Antarctic Base on Livingston Island, South Shetlands.
- Travelling educational exhibitions – within this year-round initiative several photographic exhibitions tour the schools in the country presenting the history of Bulgarian polar research, discoveries and daily life in Antarctica.
- Participation in Sofia Science Festival – each year since 2012 Bulgarian polar science is one of the main topics during the biggest educational science event in Bulgaria – the annual four-day Sofia Science Festival organized by British Council. APECS Bulgaria teamed up with British Council to promote polar science communication including interesting scientific experiments, talks about polar explorers, polar books and films, funny polar games and quizzes for kids and the general public.
- Celebrating the centenaries of Amundsen, Scott and Shackleton's epic expeditions. The initiative included educational public and school talks, audio visual performances for blind and visually impaired people, publishing of documentary books about the polar explorers.



- Polar fairs in collaboration with partner organizations in different occasions throughout the year: (e.g. on the occasion of 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of National Museum of Natural History a "Polar Day" has been organized in the museum's halls. The activities included charity photographic exhibition "Antarctica - the cold South" - the funds raised were used for creating new interactive educational programs for students in the museum APECS Bulgaria's team participated also with Antarctic talks program, Polar creative studio for kids and "Scientific Casino". Another example is the workshop "Polar Space Challenges" in the Fun Maths Centre in Sofia. The children constructed a paper model of the International Space Station and tagged its real time orbit revolution around the Earth. Their photos participated and won the monthly European Space Agency Competition).
- Recognizing the power of mass media for promoting Antarctic activities APECS Bulgaria is a part of Polar Science Communication Project of the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute. Mass media play a crucial role as a source of information, in encouraging knowledge and concern about environmental problems and also helps to explain to the tax-payers how their country's contribution to Antarctic research is serving science and society. APECS Bulgaria always looks for media coverage and makes its educational activities "media friendly". In a result APECS Bulgaria appeared in more than 40 mass media with 64 publications in the last year (e.g. there were 21 articles in newspapers, magazines and websites, 8 radio and TV interviews only for the Polar Day event)

APECS Bulgaria supports strongly the idea of networking and meeting young researchers from APECS National Committees around the world. Therefore Bulgaria is proud to be a host of the First APECS World Summit "The Future of Polar Research" which coincides with the Annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting which will be held in Sofia, 1-10 June 2015.

