

The Swiss Polar Institute and the Greenland Research Council sign a Memorandum of Understanding paving the road to new collaborations

PRESS RELEASE - The Swiss Polar Institute (SPI) will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Greenland Research Council (NIS) to support scientific collaboration. The signing will take place during the second leg of the science-policy exchange between Greenland and Switzerland held from 18 to 21 April 2023 in Greenland and focusing on avalanche risk management. This collaboration stems from a joint initiative aiming at mutual knowledge transfer and synergies between natural hazards management professionals from both countries.

A major development in the mutual aspiration to share knowledge and resources, this MoU between the SPI and the NIS reinforces the partnership established in 2022 between the two organisations with the [Konrad Steffen Grants](#). This joint initiative, in memory of Konrad Steffen, a world-renowned Swiss glaciologist who died in the field in August 2020, builds on his legacy of collaborative research between the two countries. This MoU also builds on a long tradition of scientific work and collaboration by Swiss researchers in Greenland and will facilitate future joint initiatives.

“Fieldwork in Greenland has been a long and fruitful tradition in Swiss polar science. We are pleased that this agreement paves the road to new collaborations not only in Greenland but especially with Greenlandic colleagues and experts.”

— Danièle Rod, Swiss Polar Institute

The exchange will focus on the “[Greenland-Switzerland Avalanche Collaboration](#)” project that originates from the workshop held in Nuuk in March 2022, where Swiss and Greenlandic scientists and professionals established areas of concerted interest, a bottom-up collaborative development of projects, and the inclusion of policy stakeholders from local to national levels. The project is jointly led by Jürg Schweizer (WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF), Marco Mercer (Technical University of Denmark) and Alexandra Messerli (Asiaq Greenland Survey). It aims to facilitate the development of a more efficient avalanche warning system and to provide the Greenlandic professionals with sufficient leverage to set up a sustainable permanent nationwide service.

Parallels can be drawn between ice-capped Greenland and the Swiss Alps. Substantial parts of Switzerland are covered with snow and ice, and as it is the case in Greenland. Climate change is triggering significant changes, particularly in the cryosphere – at the poles and the mountains. This will also involve changes to natural hazards such as snow avalanches threatening human life and infrastructures. In Switzerland, the experience and knowledge of managing avalanche risks has evolved for centuries. This project builds on this tradition of knowledge transfer to provide efficient mitigation strategies and better protection adapted to local challenges.”

– Jürg Schweizer, WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF

Earlier this month, the SPI initiated [a successful visit by a Greenlandic ministerial delegation to Switzerland](#) on integrated risk management of natural hazards. The exchange focused on the challenges of risk management regarding landslides, exploring avenues for solutions regarding civil protection and decision-making processes.



SWISS POLAR INSTITUTE

About the Swiss Polar Institute

A foundation at the service of the Swiss polar and high-altitude community

The Swiss Polar Institute is a foundation with the mission to support Swiss polar and high-altitude science. The Swiss Polar Institute is recognised as “Research institution of national importance” by the Swiss Confederation.

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About the Greenland Research Council

Greenland Research Council funds research activities associated with Greenland research institutions across all fields of science. It provides advisory services to the Ministry of Science, the Government and international stakeholders on matters related to research investment and policy development in Greenland.

More information:

<https://nis.gl/en/>

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