

PolARTS – arts meet polar science

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

A joint initiative by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia and the Swiss Polar Institute

Deadline for applications: **31 January 2026, 17:00 (CET)**

PolARTS is a joint initiative by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia and the Swiss Polar Institute (SPI) encouraging exchange and fostering collaboration between art and science. PolARTS opens a space for new collaborative and explorative practices and supports the processes of transdisciplinary cooperation.

This call for proposals is aimed at artists and scientists interested in collaborating. PolARTS supports up to three tandems composed of an artist from Switzerland and a polar scientist over a period of 12 to 18 months. The tandems will meet regularly at various locations (such as laboratories, studios, scientific and artistic events, gatherings) and exchange insights into their research, professional activities, career aspirations, work backgrounds. PolARTS places emphasis on exchange and exploratory processes rather than on producing tangible outputs.

Artists and scientists who are interested in forming a tandem are invited to propose a collaborative process lasting approximately 12 to 18 months, defining format, objectives, and motivation. Proposals must engage with topics and research linked to polar regions (the Arctic or Antarctic) or to remote high-altitude regions, such as the Andes or the Himalaya.

CRITERIA AND CONDITIONS

A tandem must comprise one scientist and one artist.

PolARTS is open to **scientists** who meet the following criteria:

- PhD candidates or more senior researchers
- Actively working on polar topics, including research from fields considered “non-typical” for polar sciences (e.g. engineering, material sciences, medicine, humanities, social sciences, etc.)
- Affiliated to a Swiss public research institution
- Have not previously received support through PolARTS

PolARTS is open to **artists** who meet the following criteria:

- Active in any of the disciplines supported by Pro Helvetia (design including game design, literature, music, performing arts, visual arts)
- Swiss citizens or permanent residents of Switzerland, with a consistent record of artistic engagement in relevant events in Switzerland
- Convincing track record of professional artistic practice and nationwide importance as defined by the general requirement of Pro Helvetia
- Have not previously received support through PolARTS

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Connection between arts and science**
How does this project connect scientific and artistic research and address the challenge of disciplinary boundaries while generating synergies?
- **Benefits for tandem partners**
What added value would this joint research bring to both tandem partners?
- **Relevance and originality of the proposal**
What makes the proposal relevant and original in an artistic and scientific context?

Please contact the [SPI](#) for questions related to the scientific profile and [Pro Helvetia](#) for questions related to the artistic profile.

If you are interested in a topic related to polar science, but have not yet found a scientific partner, you can visit the [SPI webpage](#) or use the [SNSF database](#).

OPTIONAL FIELD TRIP

In addition, the artist can request support for a field trip to polar regions or remote high-altitude areas.

Such a field trip should take place in the framework of the scientist tandem partner's fieldwork (i.e. the artist would accompany the scientist and/or their team on already planned fieldwork). Undertaking a field trip is optional. The timeframe for undertaking a field trip is from June 2026 until the end of the foreseen duration of the tandem (latest November 2027).

Artists who want to apply for support for a field trip must submit a separate proposal (application form B). This proposal can be handed in at the latest two months prior to the proposed field trip.

THE POLARTS RESEARCH GRANT

PolARTS provides each tandem the following support:

- **Living expenses (artist only): up to CHF 7,000**

Artists will receive compensation for every day dedicated to the tandem activities, based on a self-defined per diem basis (minimum commitment of 12 half days are required). This support is only available to artists who are self-employed while participating in the tandem.

In addition, artists with underage childcare responsibilities can apply for financial support of up to CHF 1,000 per month as a contribution to childcare or for the travel expenses of their children and, if necessary, a carer. Grant recipients are required to submit a detailed budget of all expenses to Pro Helvetia prior to the start of the project. This additional information will be requested only if the project is supported and is to be addressed at Pro Helvetia.

- **Operational costs of the tandem (both artist and scientist): up to CHF 5,500**

For example, this includes the tandem partner's transport costs, or the purchase of consumables needed for scientific or artistic work (such as scientific experiments, material for creative activities).

- **Field trip to the polar regions, upon separate application (artist only): up to CHF 10,000**

Support for the field trip will be evaluated based on a separate budget. The amount granted will be defined in proportion to the scale of the proposed field trip.

- **Field trip coordination fee: up to CHF 3,000**

This compensation is intended for the scientific unit responsible for organising the field trip in which the artist is participating.

EXPECTATIONS

The three selected tandems for the PolARTS programme will be expected to:

- Engage in research outlined in the submitted proposal
- Schedule and attend regular meetings and exchanges with each other
- Participate in three PolARTS workshops organised by Pro Helvetia and the SPI
- Submit a brief report at the end of the tandem collaboration

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

A full application consists of the following:

- [Online application form](#) (compulsory - contact and general information)
 - Application form A - joint tandem application (compulsory - use provided Word form and upload as PDF)
 - CV of the scientist and publications list (compulsory - any format, upload as PDF)
 - CV and portfolio of the artist (compulsory - any format, upload as PDF)
 - Application form B - Field trip (optional - use provided Word form and upload as PDF)

All application documents (see above) must be in English and must be uploaded using [the online application form](#). Applications sent by email will not be accepted. Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible.

No late applications will be accepted: the deadline for submission is **31 January 2026, 17:00 (CET)**.

Should you encounter problems during the submission process, please contact the [SPI](#). However, please note that last-minute support cannot be guaranteed.

EVALUATION

Eligible proposals submitted before the deadline will be evaluated by a jury panel jointly appointed by the SPI and Pro Helvetia.

The decisions taken by the jury panel will be announced approximately three months after the application deadline. Successful applicants must sign a grant agreement with the SPI and Pro Helvetia that specifies the conditions for the grant (reporting, payments, etc.).