

Foreword

From 24 February to 1 March last year, the Norwegian Polar Institute hosted the conference *Arctic–Alpine Ecosystems and People in a Changing Environment*, held at the Polar Environmental Centre in Tromsø. The conference concerned the interdisciplinary field of environmental change in northern European, Arctic and Alpine areas. In his introduction to the meeting’s book of abstracts, Jon Børre Ørbaek wrote:

“The European Arctic and Alpine regions are experiencing today large environmental changes. These areas are considered as ‘early warning sites’ for many human and naturally induced changes with the potential for comprehensive global environmental impacts. Increased average temperatures and precipitation, reduction in sea ice and glacier ice coverage, the increased level of UV-radiation and long-range transported contaminants are introducing new stress factors for both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. The large annual variation in most of the physical parameters ruling these extreme environments is also considered as a key factor in structuring the biodiversity and biotic productivity. Thus, the effect of stress factors on the biological processes can be critical for population structures and community interactions. The socio-economic effects of these changes may also be significant and are related to direct changes in the environmental living conditions and indirect changes in bio-production, which forms the basis for the complex marine and terrestrial food webs.”

There were 120 oral and 60 poster presentations at the conference. The first six articles in this issue of *Polar Research* are among papers presented at one session of the meeting: *The Effect of Climate Variability on the Arctic Seas Ecosystems*, chaired by Tore Haug. This session attracted 20 oral presentations and 15 posters. Its scientific programme focused particularly on the history of, current status of, and possible ways forward in Arctic marine research.

The event was sponsored by the European Network for Arctic–Alpine Multi-disciplinary Environmental Research, the Nordic Arctic Research Programme, the European Commission (through the Ny-Ålesund Large Scale Facility for Arctic Environmental Research, the EU project The Influence of UV-Radiation and Climate Conditions on Fish Stocks: A Case Study of the North-East Arctic Cod, and Euro Conference), the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, the University of Tromsø, the Norwegian Polar Institute, the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, the Norwegian Institute of Air Research and the Institute of Marine Research (Tromsø).

The next two numbers of the journal will be “ordinary” ones, edited by Janet Holmén, who will be filling in for me during my upcoming one-year leave of absence. I wish her a stimulating year at the helm of *Polar Research*.

Dr Helle V. Goldman, Editor

