SCIENTIFIC FIELD EXPEDITIONS BEGIN AS THE BELARE TEAM WELCOMES 2026



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A lot to do at the station

Over the last few days, as the weather has been quite calm and sunny, Renette Engberg, who's working on the SnowFlux project from the EPFL in Switzerland, has been busy climbing up the 26-metre tower next to the station to do maintenance on the sonic anemometers and temperature and humidity loggers installed there and work on installing a new system to repatriate the data via RF link. Of course the BELARE team takes all safety precautions to make sure she's safe as she scales the tower, properly secured. But of course one cannot be afraid of heights to climb up there.

Before leaving for the coast, ULB scientist Sarah Wouthy from the PASPARTOUT project joined Michael Van Roozendael from the ROMA project (both of which are financed by BELSPO) to do a small expedition

on top of the Utsteinen Nunatak next to the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica Station to collect data from the meteorological data loggers installed on the summit. These data loggers are also installed on the roof or PEA and at the L0 site (near the coast) to collect weather data on a yearly basis, which are essential for the understanding of the climate and local conditions.

Off to the coast!

As mentioned in our last news, on Wednesday, December 31st ULB Sarah Wouthy and field guide Sebastian Corret left for the L0 Ice Rise at the coast of Queen Maud Land, some 180 km away from PEA, the first of two locations Sarah and Sebastian will visit for the PASPARTOUT project. At each location they will dig a two metre-long trench in the snow to collect snow samples, and the contaminants contained within them at various depths to determine what all has been transported to this location through atmospheric circulation pathways.

In the coming days, BELARE Expedition Leader Alain and Tim Grosrenaud will leave for the coast to scout a safe route ahead of Sarah and Sebastian so they can safely arrive at the second location where Sarah will take more snow samples on the Hammarryggen Ice Rise. From there Alain and Tim will perform another reconnaissance to find a suitable mooring location for the container ship to offload the incoming supplies, which is scheduled to arrive around January 20th.

Simon Steffen is also accompanying them for part of their journey to troubleshoot the CNR4 net radiometer for the PEACE project and raise the GNSS antenna installed by Eric Rignot on the King Baudouin Ice Shelf for the NISAR project. So far, things have been going well.

A quieter new year's

After a festive Christmas, the members of the BELARE team who were still at the station for the new year had a nice dinner prepared by our cook Christine Mattel. At midnight everyone enjoyed a bit of champagne and joyfully finished the evening around a self-made board game.

It's always a unique experience celebrating the new year in Antarctica. For practical reasons, the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica is in the same time zone as Belgium, so the team was able to celebrate at the same time as their friends and family back home. The only difference is that at midnight the sun was still high in the sky! At this particular time of the "night" the crew could observe a beautiful meteorological event as the wind had picked up for the first time in weeks, lifting snow and ice crystals above the ground forming a beautiful spectacle of snow drift across the glaciers around the station.

More adventures to come as we enter the second half of the season!