

BELARE 2007-2008 TAKE OFF

On October 15th, the new BELARE (Belgian Antarctic Expedition) team gathered in Brussels for an informative meeting at the Belgian Military Hospital. BELARE 2007-2008 will build the new Belgian research station in Antarctica: Princess Elisabeth Antarctica.

Presentations included an overview of the project along with the time scales, a program review of on site events, a close look at the unloading in Breid Bay and crossing procedure from the coast to Utsteinen ridge, and an introduction to the Antarctic Treaty and the Environmental Protocol. For some, this was the time to raise such practical questions as "What is the weight limit of my baggage?" or "What sort of gear will I need?".

Team members will reach East Antarctica through **two different routes**:

- by plane, via the Norwegian Troll station or the German Novolazarevskaja station
- by ship (the Ivan Papanin), via South Africa, destination Breid Bay, east coast of Antarctica. The departure date is approaching quickly, with the first team members leaving by plane scheduled to take off on November 2nd

Teams will work in shifts, meaning that several team departures are planned throughout November to February, either to or from Antarctica. The Ivan Papanin should leave Antwerp on November 5th and reach Breid Bay some four weeks later.

BELARE 2007-2008 will be divided into **five separate shifts**:

- November: set-up camp, anchoring, building garage, first crossing to Breid Bay
- December: route preparation Breid Bay-Utsteinen (coast and route securing trip) and unloading
- January: construction begins, transport of equipment from Breid Bay to Utsteinen
- February: completion of construction, seal joints
- March: camp shut down and closing up of the station

Cooks will work in shifts of 2-3 months in teams of 3, while the nurses will work solo and swap over in mid-January. January will see the most people on site (roughly 40).