

Gaskeuniversiteete (Mid Sweden University) to Host 2024 Polar Law Symposium

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Abstract

In September 2024, Gaskeuniversiteete (Mid Sweden University) will host the Polar Law Symposium. It will be the first time a Swedish university hosts the symposium. This symposium, which began in 2008 during the fourth International Polar Year, serves as a venue for scholars and practitioners to address emerging issues in international law and policy pertaining to the polar regions. This year's event is scheduled for September 23–25 in Staare (Östersund), Sweden, located in the southern part of Saepmie. The symposium will focus on two primary themes: Implementation of International Minority and Indigenous Law at National Levels, and Governance, Resources, Security, and Jurisdictional Issues in the Circumpolar Area. Mid Sweden University's role as the host underscores its high-quality multidisciplinary research profile, and growing commitment to Saami studies and research, furthering its mission to enhance collaboration with the Saami community.

Keywords: *Polar Law Symposium, Gaskeuniversiteete (Mid Sweden University), Saepmie*

Polar Law Symposiums: Historical Context and Evolution

The Polar Law Symposium emerged as a response to the increasing complexity of polar law and policy during a period of heightened international focus on the polar regions. The symposium's primary goal is to bring together leading scholars in international law and policy to identify and analyze issues relevant to the Arctic

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and Antarctica.¹ Over the years,² the event has contributed to shaping the research agenda for polar law and policy, with annual proceedings published in the Yearbook of Polar Law,³ which covers a wide range of topics related to these regions.

The 2024 Symposium: Significance and Themes

For the first time, the Polar Law Symposium will be hosted in Sweden, marking a notable development in the symposium's history. The campus located in Staare, will serve as the venue from September 23–25, 2024. Selection of the university as host reflects its growing influence and commitment to polar research, particularly in the context of Saami issues. This year's symposium will address two central themes. The first theme is Implementation of International Minority and Indigenous Law at National Levels⁴. The keynote speakers for this theme are Professor James Anaya and Åsa Larsson Blind. The second theme is Governance, Resources, Security, and Jurisdictional Issues in the Circumpolar Area,⁵ and its keynote speaker is Professor Ronán Long.

Mid-Sweden University: A Platform for Saami and Polar Research

Mid Sweden University's involvement in hosting the symposium is significant, given its research profile⁶ and commitment to Saami studies.⁷ The university has been actively engaged in various research programs and educational initiatives focusing on the Saami community. The long-standing work by Docent Eivind Torp, has been of utmost importance for Saami rights issues in the region, and for the university's research environment, now manifested by Eivind chairing the conference organizing committee. Notable developments in early 2024 include: the creation of new academic positions; a three-year cooperation agreement with Foundation Gaaltije; and the introduction of the first course in the South Saami language at a Swedish

1 Polar Law Symposium 2008 – Akureyri https://www.polarlaw.is/en/moya/page/2008_polar_law_symposium (accessed 4 September 2024).

2 Polar Law Symposium <https://www.polarlaw.is/en/polar-law-symposium> (accessed 4 September 2024).

3 The Yearbook of Polar Law <https://brill.com/display/serial/POLA> (accessed 4 September 2024).

4 Symposium Themes <https://www.miun.se/en/Research/subject-research/law/polarlawsymposium2024/themes/> (accessed 4 September 2024).

5 Welcome to The 17th Polar Law Symposium 2024 in Östersund, Sweden <https://www.miun.se/en/Research/subject-research/law/polarlawsymposium2024/> (accessed 4 September 2024).

6 International programmes <https://www.miun.se/en/education/programmes/> (accessed 4 September 2024).

7 Mid Sweden University expands its investment in Sámi education and research <https://www.miun.se/en/contact/Press/News-archive/2024-2/mid-sweden-university-expands-its-investment-in-sami-education-and-research/> (accessed 4 September 2024).

university in the South Saami area. These measures underscore the university's dedication to advancing Saami knowledge, and fostering collaboration with Saami organizations. This and more will be communicated in conference panels, as well as in poster sessions hosted by the Båskoes network for research on and together with the South Saami community, and in a research relay with the heading, "We dream of a South Saami university" (*Áarjelsaemien universiteeten bijre niekedibie*).

Final remarks

The 2024 Polar Law Symposium at Mid Sweden University represents a milestone in the event's history, highlighting the university's role as a key stakeholder in polar research and Saami studies. By addressing critical issues related to international minority and Indigenous law, as well as governance and jurisdictional challenges in the circumpolar regions, the symposium will contribute to a deeper understanding of polar law and policy. The event also highlights the university's commitment to enhancing its research profile, and engaging meaningfully with the Saami community, advancing its mission of academic and social responsibility in the polar regions.