

Little Dome C

Beyond EPICA Oldest Ice Drilling Site (75.29917 °S, 122.44516 °E)

Situation Report #65, 20th January 2026

Personnel @LDC:

Gianluca Bianchi Fasani (ENEA, Camp Leader), Katrin Ederer (AWI), Matthias Hüther (AWI, Chief Driller), Gunther Lawer (AWI), Johannes Lemburg (AWI), Barbara Seth (UNIBE, PI in the field)

Personnel @DC:

Iben Koldtoft (UCPH), Marion Lahuec (IPEV), Philippe Possenti (CNRS), Henrique Traeger (UNIBE), Mohammad Vafadarmianvelayat (AWI), Sergio Zannini (ENEA)

Weather at LDC: sunny, little wind, cold

Meteo at DC 6:05 pm: T = -26.3 °C, Wind speed = 5.1 kt, Windchill T = -34 °C, Humidity = 70 %



Early this morning, Sergio headed to Concordia with the Pistenbully, the blue container, and the skidoo. Most of the aluminium boxes are dedicated for the next flight to Mario Zucchelli Station. The rest of the container content will stay in Concordia.

The rest of the team was busy all day closing down the workshop container which is now ready to move. It was a wise decision to wait with this exposed task for a calmer day with less wind. We enjoyed the team work in the sun!

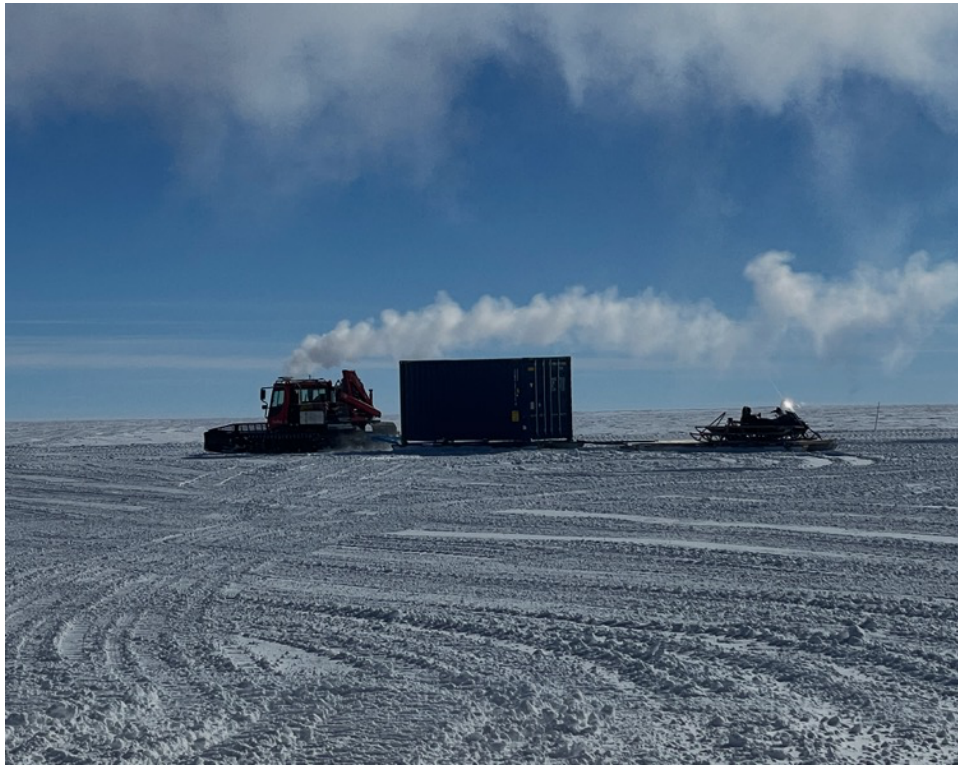
Now, the phase of waiting and re-shuffle of flight/travel plans begins. And with this, our work here in Little Dome C is basically done, and the only remaining task waiting for us is the packing of containers in Concordia. Hence, I will close the situation reports today.

The end of this field season also marks the end of the field work for the Beyond EPICA Project as a whole. The overall goal of the project was to drill down to bedrock and to recover the oldest stratigraphically layered ice of Antarctica. We achieved these goals last season! This season, we aimed for topping these achievements and had two main goals: firstly, drilling into the bedrock and, secondly, replicating the oldest ice in a deviated borehole. However, the rock drilling operation failed as we were fighting with a sediment-ice mixture and melting processes, that made it really hard to pump away the chips and to penetrate with our rock drilling equipment. The deviation of the bore hole was tricky at the dedicated depth because of a combination of too little inclination (and the general geometry of the hole) and the not yet well established drilling/deviation technique in such a deep bore hole. We have learned a lot about this fairly new technique, and we could improve the tools as far as possible here in the field. However, it requires further work. In the end, the perseverance of the team was rewarded with a successful start of a deviated hole, where we recovered around 30 m of ice at about 2000 m depth. What a relieve ! And a good starting point for possible follow-up projects...

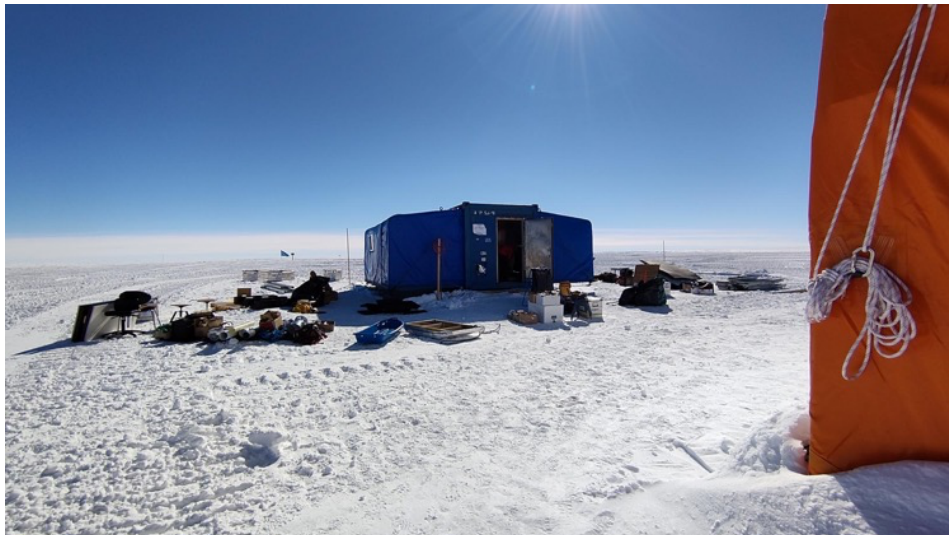
We again want to express our gratitude to the logistics teams of Concordia, Mario Zucchelli, Casey, and Dumont d'Urville in Antarctica, as well as the gateways in Hobart and Christchurch. They have contributed a great deal to making this project possible... at the end, this BEOI Project represents an excellent example on how collaboration among different National Antarctic Programs permits to reach such important and exceptional results.

Thanks to everybody for following these situation reports! So long...

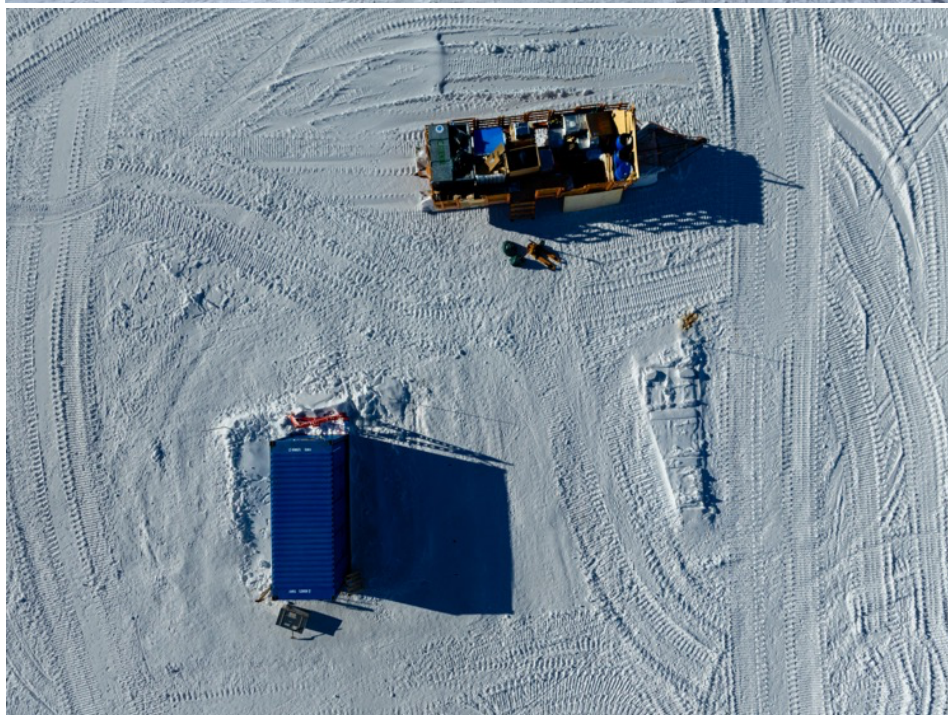




Sergio on his way to Concordia with the blue container and the skidoo. Photo by B. Seth







The shut-down of the workshop. Photos by K. Ederer, B. Seth and G. Lawer





Teamwork is fun. Photos by J. Lemburg





Photo by G. Lawer

Season end statistics:

Drillers' end depth: 2071.20 m;

Loggers' end depth: 28.23 m;

CB, GBF, BS & MH; LDC, 20.1.2026

