

# **Finnish-Swedish Winter Navigation Research Board**

## **Call for research projects for 2026**

### **1. Invitation**

Finnish-Swedish cooperation within the Winter Navigation Research Board started in 1972 and it is funded by the maritime administrations of the two countries. The Research Board administers a joint winter navigation research program based on a bilateral agreement between the Finnish Maritime Administration and the Swedish Maritime Administration. The joint program includes yearly research calls.

The present parties to the agreement – the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency, the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency and the Swedish Maritime Administration in association with the Swedish Transport Agency – hereby invite research institutions, government agencies, organizations, and companies to apply for funding of winter navigation research projects for the year 2026.

### **2. Purpose of the call**

Sustainable, safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly year-round navigation to and from Finnish and Swedish ports, as well as an efficient winter navigation system is important for our industry and the competitiveness of our countries.

The purpose of the winter navigation call is to develop and improve services and technologies that influence the winter navigation system in the Baltic and Gulf of Bothnia through research, development, innovation and demonstration projects.

Research, innovation, demonstration, and development should focus on the meteorological, oceanographic, technical, or nautical conditions and aspects of navigation in ice. The Research Board administers a yearly call for projects focusing either on parts, or all, of the aforementioned aspects. Based on operational experiences in our administrations the Research Board can define specific thematic priority areas in need extra of research attention or of particular interest for improving winter navigation and operations.

All the results of the projects funded through the call will be made publicly available to enable renewal and development of the winter navigation system. The results of the research projects can also be used by the Administrations to improve the Finnish-Swedish ice class rules.

### **3. Background and rationale**

The research program is based on the long-standing cooperation in winter navigation between Finland and Sweden. Our countries also share a common view on the importance of winter navigation and icebreaking activities. Because of the close cooperation, the icebreakers nowadays work almost as a single fleet.

Another important outcome of the cooperation is the introduction of the joint Finnish-Swedish ice class rules for merchant ships and its further development. Continuous emphasis on research and development is necessary if Finland and Sweden wish to have an impact on the actual development in the field of common winter navigation system.

Projects financed in the winter navigation research program are often relatively small. This gives the Winter Navigation Research Board and administrations an opportunity to monitor the projects in more detail. The winter navigation research program is unique, and it influences international classification societies in their development of ice class rules for merchant ships.

#### 4. General topics of the call

This call is aimed at projects that address one or more of the following areas:

- Meteorological research
  - research related to marine meteorology in winter conditions
  - research related to ice formation
  - climatologic research related to the aforementioned topics
  - development of forecasting and modelling
  - development of new tools for presentation of satellite images
- Oceanographic research
  - research related to ice conditions at sea or sea water temperature
  - sea currents, sea water level and sea waves in winter
  - climatologic research related to the aforementioned topics
  - development of forecasting and modelling
  - development of new tools for presentation of satellite images
- Technical research
  - structural design of hulls of ice-going ships
  - structural design of propulsion machinery of ice-going ships
  - development of minimum engine power regulations for merchant ships
  - winterization of merchant ships
- Winter navigation
  - research on the effectiveness and costs of icebreaker assistance
  - research on winter traffic flows in the Baltic Sea area, including efficiency, safety, environmental impact and economics of winter navigation.

##### 4.1 Specific thematic research topics for 2026

- Specific research topic 1: Development of ice class rules and model testing by taking into account experiences on effects of vessel draught:
  - Latest trend of simultaneously decreasing installed engine power and the change in vessel bow shapes has introduced more difficulties while operating on low draughts. Operational experience indicates assistance of vessels is often more difficult the lower their draught is, especially at the fore. In contrast, current rule formulas and model testing practices often indicate that on lower draughts less engine power is required. WNRB is interested to research adverse effects of low draughts compared to higher draughts. Research within this topic might include for example quantification of the effect, investigation of causes, investigation of the effects on the winter navigation system level, possibilities in regulation, etc.
- Specific research topic 2: Development of FSICR requirements for towing arrangements
  - Draft text for FSICR or the Guidelines concerning the requirements of towing arrangements for new-buildings based on previous WNRB Report No 116, other available research and possibly research performed within the project.

#### 5. Requirements for the project

The planned project shall be in line with at least one of the priority areas mentioned above. The project may start in early 2026 and shall be finished in 2026.

A short Work Plan describing the sequence of work and containing an updated research plan is required before invoicing the first part of the project budget. At project's end, a final project report in English shall be presented to and be approved by the Winter Navigation Research Board before final invoicing.

The final reports will be published in the Winter Navigation Research Reports series (ISSN 2342-4303) under CC BY (4.0) license. Content other than original research shall be referenced with proper sources. Figures, tables and formulae shall be labeled and referenced in the text. As well as the results, also methods and used data shall be described in the final report.

#### 6. Evaluation process and criteria

The proposals will be evaluated by the members of the Winter Navigation Research Board, and the Board will make the formal decision about financing.

The following criteria, weighted as indicated, will determine the decision of financing:

- Relevance (35%):
  - Is the project in line with the aim of the call?
  - To what extent does the project contribute to a sustainable winter navigation transport system?
  - What defined winter navigation problem should the project solve?
- Quality (15%):
  - How will the project contribute to the technical and scientific development?
  - Does the project contribute to moving the research front and knowledge forward?
  - Is the project considered to be of high scientific quality?
  - Does the project include a new idea or innovation?
- Viability (15%):
  - Are there risks involved in accomplishing the project?
  - Are the goals of the project concrete, well-defined and reasonably ambitious?
  - Is the draft work plan concrete and is the schedule realistic?
  - Do the actors have the right skills, competences, and proper resources to complete the project?
  - Is the budget reasonable in relation to the intended efforts and objectives?
- Impact (35%):
  - Is there an identified need for project results, such as a clear knowledge gap or market potential?
  - To what extent can the project be of use, for example through building knowledge, publications, new types of goods, services, or processes, or for commercialization?
  - What ambitions does the project have for spreading the results? Is there a plan for how the results should be utilized and disseminated?
  - Are the end-users of the project results represented in or participate in the project?

## 7. Budget

The budget for the research projects will be settled on a yearly basis. The annual budget was €250 000 in 2024. Co-financing both from research institutions, industry and other funding organizations is always welcomed.

The Winter Navigation Research Board applies the European Union levels, rules and conditions set up for public funding of research and innovation (2015:208) including support to SMEs and GBER exempt.

## 8. Time schedule

Call text available:	30 June 2025
Deadline for applications:	30 September 2025
Announcement of the financing decision:	31 October 2025 or latest when budget is fixed
Earliest project start:	1 January 2026 or latest when agreement is finalized

## 9. How to apply

Proposals should be sent by email to the contact persons of the secretariat given below.

The application form for research projects shall be used.

The Winter Navigation Research Board will not consider applications received after the deadline.

## 10. Content of the application

Please use the application form provided with this call for projects. General information shall contain the items mentioned below. A maximum of one page can be used.

- Project title
- Acronym

- Project summary – maximum 100 words
- Start and end dates
- Funding
- Project manager
- Project organization

The following parts shall be described in the project outline. A maximum of 5 pages can be used.

- **Relevance:** Description of problems the project will address and how it contributes to improvements in winter navigation.
- **Quality:** A short description of the research aims within this area, and the projects relation of the “state of the art” in research and technology.
- **Viability:** Strategy and methodology. Expertise in research group.
- **Impact:** A plan for how the result will be used and the impact results will have on winter navigation
- **Dissemination:** How will project results be disseminated and made available?
- **Brief project plan** with defined milestones and deliverables.
- **Relation to other projects:** How the project relates to other ongoing or planned projects
- **Budget and resources.**

## 11. Contact persons

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