

Press Release

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Modernisation of the IFM-GEOMAR research fleet – Marine scientists in Kiel receives 6 million Euros for their research ships –

September 3, 2009/Kiel. The Leibniz Institute of Marine Sciences (IFM-GEOMAR) in Kiel, Germany, receives six million Euros from Germany's second economic stimulus package (Konjunkturprogramm II) for the refurbishing and modernisation of the 33-year-old research ship POSEIDON and 33-year-old vessel ALKOR. In addition, the scientific equipment of the ships will be improved. "Our marine scientists need an up-to-date research fleet in order to answer questions about the future ocean in the years to come", IFM-GEOMAR said in an official statement.

State-of-the-art research vessels (RVs) are an essential platform for successful research in the world ocean. Many investigations are only possible with such special ships. "The lifetime of research vessels is about 40 years", explains Prof. Dr. Peter Herzig, director of IFM-GEOMAR. "RV POSEIDON has been in service for more than 30 years. Now, it has to be refurbished and modernised in order to be capable to serve as a research vessel until a new vessel will be available", Herzig continues. Even the youngest ship of the IFM-GEOMAR research fleet, the RV ALKOR, has been in service for about 19 years. Thus, this ship, too, needs an extensive modernisation in order to get the official ship classification issued by the Germanische Lloyd, Germany's ship classification organization. The task list is long. It comprises refurbishing of the main engines as well as the installation of state-of-the-art communication facilities.

"Marine sciences belong to the most important and most successful research areas in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein", stated Peter Harry Carstensen, Prime Minister of Schleswig-Holstein. Following the premise "strengthen the strengths" the state government of Schleswig-Holstein has steadily supported marine research over the past years. One example is the financial support of the purchase of the ROV KIEL 6000, one of the most advanced remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) worldwide. "Although the ROV cannot be operated from mid-sized vessels such as ALKOR and POSEIDON, these ships are our workhorses in the Northern and Baltic Sea as well as in the North Atlantic and in the Mediterranean", Prof. Herzig continues. Missions employing the submersible JAGO, the autonomous deep-sea robot ABYSS or the new mesocosm technology show the multiple capabilities of ALKOR and POSEIDON. The demand for ship-time is high: Over the past year the four IFM-GEOMAR vessels have been nearly 1000 days in service. In addition, IFM-GEOMAR used a total of one year ship time on German large-scale research vessels in 2008.

"We need state-of-the-art research vessels and large-scale equipment to be a key player in the champion's league of marine sciences. Therefore, a consequent programme for the modernisation of the German research fleet is required in the next decade", Prof. Herzig resumes. "Part of the work will be carried out by shipyards in Schleswig-Holstein. Thus, we are even able to safeguard employment in this region", Prime Minister Carstensen states. Here, the economy's immediate benefit of investment in research becomes obvious. In addition, IFM-GEOMAR has provided nearly 250 new, high-qualified jobs over the past five years."

Herzig and Carstensen agreed that this result is very promising.

Background Information:

The Leibniz Institute of Marine Sciences is member of the

The German marine research fleet comprises the large vessels POLARSTERN, METEOR, MARIA S. MERIAN and SONNE, the mid-size vessels POSEIDON, ALKOR und HEINCKE and a number of smaller ships.

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