GEOMAR
Helmholtz-Zentrum für Ozeanforschung Kiel

GEOMAR's sustainability strategy

Our stance

Vision
Through our research and our commitment to the transfer of knowledge and technology, we make a significant contribution to preserving the function and protecting the ocean for future generations.

Purpose
We support the goals of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement, and national sustainability strategies by providing knowledge that enables political decisions, economic action, and social engagement for greater sustainability.

Goal
Our goal is to live sustainability in all areas of GEOMAR, to set scientific standards as a leading marine research institute, and to make a tangible contribution to society and its own sustainable actions.

Our sustainability work

Climate research and climate protection
We are actively committed to protecting the climate. Our research contributes to understanding climate change and developing solutions for a sustainable future. In particular, with a certified energy management system, structured recording of our greenhouse gas balance, and concrete measures, we are constantly working to reduce our own emissions and the resulting footprint.

Targeted sustainability management
Our sustainability management ensures that environmental, social, and economic aspects are actively incorporated into our decisions. It also gives our sustainability work a clear structure and continuously strengthens our contribution to sustainable development. We publish a sustainability report on a regular basis to create transparency and make our progress measurable.

Social responsibility
We promote a culture of appreciation, fairness, and participation—within our center as well as in our partnerships and society. Equal opportunities at GEOMAR are actively strengthened every day through the commitment of various established bodies. Our employees are also involved in a sustainability committee, which contributes its own perspectives and provides impetus for sustainable everyday working practices.

Our ideals

Scientific excellence and integrity
We adhere to the principles of good scientific practice and reflect on the social impact of our work. Transparency, traceability, and responsible handling of research data characterize our research activities.

Sustainable development and responsibility
We operate in line with a holistic approach to sustainability that combines ecological, social, and economic aspects. The focus is on the responsible use of energy and resources, working in the most environmentally friendly way possible, and the motivation to make decisions that ensure a high quality of life for future generations.

Appreciation, fairness, and diversity
Teamwork at GEOMAR is characterized by appreciation, fairness, and respect. We see diversity and equal opportunities as strengths and promote them in all areas of our scientific work.

Cooperation and dialogue – a GEOMAR team
We work in an interdisciplinary, international, and cross-departmental manner. We see GEOMAR as a team in which science, administration, and central facilities share responsibility and contribute jointly to new scientific findings. Open and clear dialogue with internal and external partners is an integral part of our self-image.

Willingness to innovate and culture of learning
We seize opportunities for innovation – for example, through digitalization, new methodological approaches, and sustainable research practices. We see change as part of a learning organization and continuously develop our work.

Care and good working conditions
We are committed to promoting healthy, safe, and family-friendly working conditions. Managers and employees in the GEOMAR team share responsibility for a value-oriented work culture that promotes creativity, responsibility, and long-term development.

Framework for Action

1. Climate Goal of the State of Schleswig-Holstein

GEOMAR supports the climate goal of the state of Schleswig-Holstein to achieve climate neutrality by 2040. We are actively working to gradually reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to this goal.

2. Strategic goals of the Helmholtz Sustainability Guideline [1]

Implementing integrated organizational management

The Centers

- develop an internal, center-specific sustainability strategy and, based on this, a sustainability management system.
- ensure that mutual understanding is strengthened by promoting exchange between science and administration and practicing transparent governance that involves all employees.
- ensure a common understanding of leadership by defining and applying leadership guidelines and tools.
- promote exchange and cooperation within the Helmholtz Association in their sustainability activities in order to create synergies.
- jointly strengthen their internal and external communication on sustainability issues, identify their stakeholders, and incorporates their interests into the dialogue.
- establish their specific sustainability reporting in accordance with recognized standards. The center progress reports for the funding bodies also briefly report on the respective sustainability activities in the five LeNa functional areas.
- work together to improve the legal and financial framework conditions for the implementation of sustainability goals, thereby enabling sustainable action for themselves and the Helmholtz Association.

Reflect on research topics and processes and apply the results in a socially competent manner to achieve impact

The Centers

- take measures to ensure compliance with good scientific practice. To this end, they appoint ombudspersons in the centers.
- enable doctoral students and postdocs to participate in training courses on the topic of “responsible research.”
- continuously increase their open access publications and sets targets for this.
- adopt internal guidelines based on the Helmholtz guidelines for research data management, in which the FAIR principles4 are essential design principles. Develop the necessary infrastructure to implement the guidelines.
- implement the “Researching with Social Responsibility” reflection framework from the Sustainability Guidelines (LeNa)5 for the evaluation of their research activities.

[1] HGF_LeitlinienNH_Final.pdf

- strengthen research topics related to sustainability within the framework of program-oriented funding. Innovative technologies developed within the programmatic framework are tested as demonstrators in pilot projects where appropriate.
- utilize existing digitization potential to make processes more efficient and, where possible, more climate-friendly. The framework for this is laid down in the digitization strategies of the association and the centers.

Offering attractive working environments and introducing sustainable human resources management

The Centers

- develop concepts to strengthen diversity and inclusion. In research and administration, we strive to achieve a balance between diversity and equal opportunities.
- develop specific and flexible forms of work in order to reduce energy and material consumption as well as CO_2 emissions.
- support the qualification of managers as role models and multipliers in establishing a sustainable and value-oriented work culture.
- protect and promotes the safety and health of employees. They offer workplace integration and health management, respond to changes in the working environment brought about by digital transformation, and strive to ensure employee performance and satisfaction by adapting working conditions to individual needs.

Organizing the construction and operation of research infrastructures in a resource-efficient manner

The Centers

- develop an ambitious plan that sets out the time frame for achieving a greenhouse gas-neutral research facility. To this end, they define targets and measures in location-specific climate protection concepts.
- develop climate-friendly energy concepts that help to reduce the energy consumption of buildings and facilities or enable independent, greenhouse gas-free energy production without jeopardizing research activities. Energy management systems in accordance with ISO 50001 or corresponding audit systems can provide support in this regard.
- develop and modernizes buildings and infrastructure in a sustainable manner, taking environmental aspects and the changing world of work into account.
- create a carbon footprint, while also improving the quality of environmental performance indicators.
- pay attention to resource efficiency and life cycle as well as integration into holistic infrastructure development when procuring, further developing, and modernizing information technologies.
- also use the potential of digitalization to record and control media consumption more efficiently.

Designing supporting processes responsibly

The Centers

- reduce domestic flights wherever possible and analyzes the necessity of international business trips. Develop an appropriate framework for this. Establish travel planning for necessary business trips, taking sustainability aspects into account. The resulting greenhouse gas emissions should be offset.
- identify and leverages digitization potential in infrastructure and administration.
- establishe a sustainable purchasing process that takes economic, ecological, and social aspects into account. It is also important to consider the life cycle of goods and equipment. Changing legal conditions are implemented proactively in tendering, selection, and awarding contracts, as well as in the selection of companies and products.
- promote opportunities for sustainable mobility to the workplace.
- develop sustainable event management and make greater use of digital and hybrid event formats.