

IOW press release, July 16, 2020

Evaluation: Leibniz Association praises the IOW's performance and recommends expansion of research with additional funds

The Leibniz Association senate concluded the regular evaluation of the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde (IOW) with a very positive assessment and recommends that the federal and state governments continue their joint funding of the institute. It states that the IOW has successfully advanced its scientific profile, focusing both on the unique ecosystem of the Baltic Sea and on more global issues such as climate change impacts, marine litter and biodiversity. The senate strongly supports the plan to expand the institute's technical and methodological spectrum through an additional 2 million euros per year in order to conduct more research on shallow coastal waters.

IOW director Ulrich Bathmann was very pleased with the evaluation result published on the previous day: "In addition to the convincing research concept of the IOW, it is mainly thanks to our employees that the evaluation produced such an excellent result. This applies both to their expertise and commitment, which they demonstrate over and over in their daily work, and to the IOW community's contagious enthusiasm, which made a strong impression on the reviewer panel."

In October 2019, a 10-member international panel of experts had visited the IOW for two days on behalf of the Leibniz Association to thoroughly examine the institute's research performance in many individual and group interviews and with the help of extensive documentation. "We were able to prove that over the past seven years, the IOW has successfully implemented its research programme, which was conceived in 2013, and has thus brought many new insights and impulses to coastal marine research. The Leibniz senate's recent recommendation, which secures federal and state funding for another seven years, is the ideal basis for making the IOW fit for the future. It thus can maintain its leading role in Baltic Sea and coastal research – in Germany and also in Europe," Bathmann continued.

The most important results of the experts' final evaluation report, which the Leibniz senate endorsed in its recommendation, include the following points:

Since the last evaluation, the institute has advanced its scientific profile very convincingly. The research work of the IOW is well balanced between the unique ecosystem of the Baltic Sea and cross-system and model-oriented global issues. With its work, for example, on climate change and its impacts, on increasing waste and decreasing biodiversity in the oceans, the IOW lives up to its claim to achieve results that are relevant beyond specific findings on the Baltic Sea.

Of central importance is the institute's programme for monitoring the environmental state of the Baltic Sea, which the IOW carries out, amongst others, on behalf of the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency. The collected data are made available to the scientific community in a database containing over 70 million oceanographic measuring values and metadata from the past 150 years. Other consulting and transfer services of the IOW, which are in great demand, relate for example to the preservation of marine ecosystem performance and to the mapping of the seafloor and its benthos communities.

The IOW has a very well-functioning, efficient organisational structure as well as appropriate and modern equipment. The institute clearly demonstrated that the operation of its own research vessel ELISABETH MANN BORGESE is scientifically worthwhile and that



it is adequately used to capacity. It is therefore appreciated that the Federal Government and the States have increased their institutional funding so that the on-going operation of the vessel can be financed on a long-term basis.

Up to now, the IOW has mainly focused on the open sea and the coastal mainland. After very convincing initial work, the institute is now planning to expand its technical and methodological spectrum in order to include shallow coastal waters in its research. For the implementation, the IOW plans to provide additional funding of 2.0 million euros annually from 2022 onwards (plus own contribution of 0.5 million euros). The senate strongly advocates for the IOW to submit an application for a corresponding “Extraordinary Item of Expenditure” within the procedural framework provided by the federal and state governments.

As recommended in the last evaluation, the IOW has intensified its international cooperation, especially in the Baltic Sea region. The participation in a large number of collaborative projects contributed to a better networking. The IOW also cooperates closely with the universities in Rostock and Greifswald. All scientists in leading positions are appointed jointly with one of the two universities. Of particular importance for the future development of the IOW will be the appointment of a new scientific director in 2021, which is due to retirement of the current director. It is very much appreciated that this process was initiated very early on.

All in all, it can be stated that the IOW fulfils all the requirements that have to be met by an institution of supra-regional importance and national science policy interest.

The complete statement of the Leibniz senate on the IOW in its original German wording can be found at <https://bit.ly/3iZjNoa>.

Evaluation of research institutions of the Leibniz Association

Every seven years at the latest, the Leibniz Association senate reviews the performance of each Leibniz institute in an extensive evaluation procedure. To this end, it appoints a panel of independent, internationally recognised experts who, on the basis of extensive documentation and an intensive on-site visit, obtain information on how the institution under evaluation has developed in recent years in terms of content and structure and to what extent the plans for the future are sound. The expert panel finally submits its assessment to the senate in the form of a comprehensive evaluation report. This report forms the basis for the senate's recommendation on whether or not an institution should continue to receive federal and state funding.

Further information on the evaluation procedure of the Leibniz Association can be found at <https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/en/about-us/evaluation.html>

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The IOW is a member of the Leibniz Association that connects 96 independent research institutions that range in focus from natural, engineering and environmental sciences to economics, spatial and social sciences and the humanities. The institutes are jointly financed at the state and national levels. The Leibniz Institutes employ a total of 20,000 people, of whom 10,000 are scientists. The total budget of the institutes is 1.9 billion Euros.

www.leibniz-association.eu