

The Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research (ZMT) is an independent research institute within the Leibniz Association, based in Bremen and closely connected to the University of Bremen. The ZMT mission is to provide the scientific basis for the protection and sustainable use of tropical coastal ecosystems through research, capacity development and policy advice. Through its inter- and transdisciplinary approach to studying tropical coastal ecosystems and societies, ZMT seeks to fulfil its mission by building bridges between the natural and social sciences and pursuing both scientific excellence and societal impact. ZMT thus plays an important role in research collaboration between Germany and more than 45 partner countries in the field of coastal research. The diverse ZMT community comprises around 150 scientists, international guest researchers and research support staff; its annual budget amounts to around €10 million.

In the coming years, ZMT aims to further strengthen its position as a tropical research institute in Germany and in the international scientific community through inter- and transdisciplinary partnerships to investigate coastal transformation processes in a multipolar world and help shape them in an advisory capacity.

The institute is headed by a Scientific and an Administrative Director. The Scientific Director holds the chair. The current Scientific Director is due to retire in 2028. We are therefore seeking a

Scientific Director (f, m, d)

In connection with this position, ZMT plans to establish a joint W-3 level professorship with the University of Bremen. The disciplinary affiliation with the relevant faculty will be determined as part of the appointment process, based on the profile of the successful candidate.

Your responsibilities

As Scientific Director, you provide overall leadership for the institute and, in close cooperation with the Administrative Director, shape its strategic development within a dynamic, international and interdisciplinary environment. In particular, you will be responsible for the scientific development of the institute, research planning and performance monitoring, as well as its positioning within the national and international research community, the Leibniz Association and the marine sciences in the state of Bremen and beyond.

- You will define an academic and institutional vision for ZMT as an internationally visible centre of expertise that plays a key role in shaping tropical coastal and marine research.
- You will develop and implement an interdisciplinary research programme in consultation with ZMT's governing bodies, fostering collaboration within a diverse, international team.
- You will represent the institute as a trusted voice at the nexus of research, policy, business, and civil society.
- You will develop international partnerships, with a particular focus on collaboration with institutions in the tropics and subtropics, and integrate the perspectives of these partners into ZMT's strategic priorities.
- You will strengthen ZMT's visibility by actively contributing to national and international research networks, committees, and policy discussions, especially in the areas of the ocean-climate nexus, sustainability, and societal impact.

Your profile

We are seeking an internationally recognised researcher and science manager with outstanding academic qualifications, experience in senior positions in research management, and the ability to bring together scientific excellence, interdisciplinary collaboration, the translation of research into societal applications, and institutional strategy. With an academic background in a discipline relevant to ZMT's research, you have an outstanding academic record and meet the requirements for a joint appointment to a W3 professorship.

Your professional career demonstrates extensive experience in the following areas:

- academic leadership and the strategic development of research institutions
- successfully securing and managing third-party funded research projects, including European and international funding schemes
- inter- and transdisciplinary research and collaboration across institutional and disciplinary boundaries

A good understanding of the German research system is important for this position. We further value diverse international perspectives and welcome candidates with experience of working across different cultural and institutional contexts. Experience in collaborating with partners in tropical and subtropical regions, in development cooperation or in knowledge transfer is particularly welcome.

You are an inclusive leader with strong intercultural communication skills and the ability to lead diverse teams in a respectful and goal-oriented manner. You combine strategic foresight with the ability to shape and drive developments, build trust between different stakeholder groups, and bring others on board through persuasion and assertiveness. You bring curiosity, a willingness to learn, and the resilience required to thrive in the role.

Excellent English language skills are required. A good command of German and a willingness to further develop your German language skills are expected.

What we offer

The Supervisory Board appoints the Scientific Director for a term of five years. Reappointments are possible.

At ZMT, we are dedicated to creating fair, supportive, and inclusive working conditions and to promoting equal opportunities, strengthening diversity, and addressing structural barriers within academia. We actively support combining this leadership position with family commitments, international career paths, and continued research or advisory work. We strongly encourage applications from women and qualified candidates from tropical and subtropical countries.

Your application

The institute is supported in this search by Dr Norbert Sack (Leadership Advisors for Academia GmbH). For further information about the position and the application process, please contact Dr Sack at Norbert.Sack@leadershipadvisors.de. Please submit your application documents as a single PDF file by 30 October 2026 to ZMT@leadershipadvisors.de. Your application documents should include a cover

letter, a statement outlining your research plans and leadership qualities, your CV, references, and a list of your publications.