



Status Conference Research Vessels 2026

Breakoutsession: Scientists and Crew (05.03.2026)

Chair:

Prof. Dr. Frajka-Williams (University of Hamburg, LDF)

Speaker:

Klaus Küper (Briese Shipping Company)

Dr. Johannes Rogenhagen (Laeisz Shipping Company)

Cpt. Marco Petrikowski (Briese Shipping Company)

Dr. Jörg Geldmacher (GEOMAR)

Prof. Dr. Saskia Brix (Senckenberg am Meer)

Notes:

Dr. Christian Stolle (PtJ)

Introduction:

- Communication between science and crew is important not only during the cruise itself but also before (preparation and planning) as well as after the cruise. Hereby, the key interaction includes the captain and chief scientist. Both sides work closely together to achieve a successful cruise.

Panel discussion:

- A dedicated set of meetings prior the cruise ensures sufficient flow of information in diverse aspects - from safety issues, dietary constraints to gear planning. These meetings are well established to receive the whole set of information needed.
- For the chief scientist, the official preparatory meeting (“Vorbereitungssitzung”) is crucial to discuss with the ship side. Nevertheless, additional detailed aspects need to be addressed on bilateral level.

- Well perceived is a welcome of the captain on board at beginning of cruise (after safety instructions), in which especially the aspect on how to act if things don't work out are addressed.
- Typical situations where negotiations are needed are bad weather or failure of instruments. Also, scientific findings may cause an unexpected re-planning of work. Ship officers, LDF, scientist, etc. do everything possible to get things running (again). Also here communication is key, including early communication if systems might fail.
- One of the most important tasks of the chief scientist is to be everywhere at the same time; communication needs to flow to everyone (science and crew).
- A challenge is considered to be the different "mindset" between science and crew: while scientists work in a once-in-a-lifetime feeling, for the crew it remains often daily work, including regulations such as of extra hours.
- To communicate personal incidents immediately to the relevant people, the installation of a dedicated trust person was proven to be a valuable tool. Experience shows that often smaller things can be solved rather easily by having this trust person. Trust persons also have a different standing to address this within the crew/science party (compared to chief scientist or captain). However, cases or topics brought to trust persons are very diverse and often sensitive. Training of personal in this regard is needed but demands further thoughts on how to be installed properly.
- Post-cruise questionnaires (such as on POLARSTERN) have pros/cons. A very valuable tool is considered to be a daily meeting with captain and chief scientist to address any sort of issue before it piles up.
- Usage of social media is regulated but increasing internet availability onboard and its usage might cause increasing flow of information outside the vessel. This remains to be an important challenge to be tackled by the chief scientist.

Conclusion:

- Communication - early and often - is essential. One very important challenge is to manage expectations.
- Open questions remain on how to improve skills or train the person of trust.