

Polar Supply And Research Vessel



STX Finland Oy and the South African Department of Environmental Affairs have signed a contract for construction of a Polar Supply and Research Vessel. The ship with a value of approximately EUR116 million will bring some 600 man-years of work. The ship will be built in the Rauma shipyard and it will be delivered in spring 2012. It will bring South Africa deep-sea oceanography capacity.

The ship will function as a multi-purpose vessel, serving, among other things, as a supply vessel, research vessel, icebreaker, expedition vessel, as well as a passenger ship. The ice-strengthened vessel will be approximately 134 metres long and it will have accommodation for a crew of 45 and some 100 researchers or passengers.

The Polar Supply and Research Vessel will be used to carry scientists and research equipment for the South African National Antarctic Programme in the sea area between South Africa, the Antarctic islands and the Antarctica. The ship can spend several months out at sea and it also acts as a mobile laboratory. Scientists can also conduct various marine research onboard the ship. The ship is classified for carrying passengers. Furthermore, the vessel keeps continuous record of weather data for meteorological institutions around the world. The vessel has a shelter and landing area for two Puma class helicopters and it will feature laboratories, a gym, a library, and a small hospital.

Mr. Henry Valentine, Director: Antarctica and Islands, said that allocating this level of funding for the new vessel despite the current pressure on the national fiscus reflects the SA Government's commitment to the South African National Antarctic Programme. "The new ship, apart from its supply function, will be a catalyst to rebuild the deep-sea oceanography capacity in South Africa. This would also attract participation of international scientists and researchers, thus significantly contributing to research projects addressing new challenges and changing interests, for instance, climate change research."

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