

## A Haven for Science

■ **Lighthouses** guide seafarers safely into harbor and are outstanding structures by their very nature. The new Max Planck Institutes established in Germany's eastern Federal states are also lighthouses, scientific lighthouses that guide researchers through unexplored terrain and aren't necessarily near the ocean. The Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock is very close to the shore: the Institute premises offer an unobstructed view of the river Warnow, the mouth of the Baltic Sea.

In March, I officially opened this new building. At the beginning of each week, James Vaupel, Founding Director of the Institute, commutes by ship from Odense in Denmark. He isn't quite able to dock at the door of the Institute because the ferry port lies somewhat further down river, but his trip to work has to be the most unusual yet chosen by a Max Planck

Director. Unusual too are the methods adopted by the team in Rostock for their research in the field of gerontology – where they have in fact begun to explore new territory. With the completion of the Institutes in Rostock and Leipzig (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology), the Max Planck Society has successfully wrapped up some ten years or more of hard work in former East Germany: a time in which 18 institutes, one sub-institute and a research center have been established. Fifty-seven directors have been newly appointed, half of them from abroad. With national and regional government support, the Society has invested over 1.3 billion euros in developing a research infrastructure and equipping its laboratories. A staff of over 4,000 are currently employed in long-term, fixed positions, and project posi-



Peter Gruss, President of the Max Planck Society

tions. The process is summarized in a German language brochure entitled *Gelungener Aufbau – Max-Planck-Institute in den neuen Bundesländern*.

■ **Innovation** is a magic word just like “open Sesame”: Internationally, innovation has come to stand for the urgent hope of economic recovery. The Hannover Exhibition in April provided an insight into the technical innovations on offer from German industry: for example, a renowned automobile manufacturer presented a prototype fuel cell-powered vehicle which, it is hoped, may well enter full-scale production within the foreseeable future.

It is basic research that creates the foundation for these kinds of developments, a fact that many people are sadly unaware of. I am therefore all the more pleased with the first TECHMAX edition, which accompanies the German

language issue of MAXPLANCKRESEARCH (MAXPLANCKFORSCHUNG) and shows how new materials being developed by experts at the Max Planck Institutes are helping to advance fuel cell technology.

■ **Planning security**, on the other hand, is not a magic word. Instead, it is a fundamental element of successful research. The announcement by Germany's Federal Chancellor in his Government Statement on March 14 that as of 2004 the budget for German research organizations would rise by three percent each year is therefore something that I welcome wholeheartedly. It is however essential that the Government and the individual federal states accept their share of responsibility for such increases – so as to ensure that the signal fires lit by our institutes continue to burn brightly.