

IOW press release, February 3, 2025

IOW Director Oliver Zielinski becomes a member of the German Science and Humanities Council (WR)

Oliver Zielinski, Director of the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde (IOW) and Professor of Earth System Research at the University of Rostock, was appointed to the German Science and Humanities Council (WR) on February 1, 2025, by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on the joint recommendation of the German Research Association, the Max Planck Society, the German Rectors' Conference, the Helmholtz Association, the Fraunhofer Society, and the Leibniz Association. The WR is the highest advisory council for Germany's federal Government and the governments of its federal states in scientific matters; the appointment is for an initial period of three years.

For more than 25 years, Prof Dr Oliver Zielinski's research interests have centred on the environmental physics of marine ecosystems using intelligent technologies, particularly in the field of autonomous sensor systems and marine observatories. In this context, the development of innovative methods, especially those that combine environmental research and environmental protection with artificial intelligence, are of particular interest to him. Zielinski has also worked in traditional marine field research for many years, not least through his participation in more than 20 ship expeditions, including seven as chief scientist. His focus as IOW Director is on coastal and marginal seas, which are under enormous pressure from human use and climate change. With scientific findings, innovative methods and dialogue-oriented transfer, the IOW helps to understand and protect these vital marine ecosystems – particularly focusing on the Baltic Sea – and to identify prospects for sustainable use.

“At a time of profound ecological and social transformations, it is very important to me to strengthen interdisciplinary research and promote the dialogue-oriented transfer of scientific findings to society. This is particularly true in the area of technologies that are oriented towards the common good,” emphasises IOW Director Oliver Zielinski on the occasion of his appointment to the German Council of Science and Humanities (WR). “We need a strong, independent scientific community that opens up perspectives and identifies possible courses of action with well-founded analyses and innovative solutions in the face of global environmental change, thereby also contributing to the resilience of our society in the face of future challenges. It is therefore a particular joy and obligation for me to be part of the WR and thereby to be involved in setting the strategic course for science and research in Germany,” says marine physicist Zielinski.

Oliver Zielinski (born 1970) has headed the IOW as its scientific director since March 2023; at the same time, he took up a professorship of Earth System Science at the University of Rostock. His scientific career began with a doctorate in physics at the University of Oldenburg on the role of the light climate in marine upwelling regions (1999). He then worked in the management of an international supplier of maritime sensor systems before being appointed professor at Bremerhaven University of Applied Sciences in 2005, where he became head of the Institute for Marine Resources (IMARE) in 2007. In 2011, he was appointed Professor of Marine Sensor Systems at the University of Oldenburg. At the Institute for Chemistry and Biology of the Marine Environment (ICBM), which he also headed for a time, he founded the Centre for Marine Sensor Technology. Until his transfer to the IOW, he also headed the research area “Marine Perception” (from 2019) and in 2020 founded the competence centre “Artificial Intelligence for Environment and Sustainability” at the German Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI). Zielinski is a member of numerous research committees and advisory boards, including the German Marine Research Consortium (member of the board), the Wuppertal Institute (Chairman of the international scientific advisory board) and acatech – National Academy of Science and Engineering (full member).

The German Science and Humanities Council (WR) is the oldest science policy advisory council in Europe and was founded in 1957 in the Federal Republic of Germany by the federal and state

governments. It advises the federal government and the governments of the federal states on all issues relating to the contents and structural development of science, research and the higher education sector. Its aim is to facilitate and support an efficient, functionally and institutionally diversified science system that is widely interlinked and has a manifold impact on society. Further information: <https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/EN>

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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 21,300 people, of whom 12,200 are scientists. The total budget of the institutes is 2.2 billion Euros. www.leibniz-association.eu

