

## IOW-Press Release of February 28, 2023

### Oliver Zielinski becomes new IOW director

*On March 1, 2023, Oliver Zielinski becomes the new director of the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde (IOW). The expert in environmental physics of aquatic ecosystems and intelligent technologies previously was Professor of Marine Sensor Systems at Oldenburg University, where he founded the Centre for Marine Sensor Systems at the Institute for Chemistry and Biology of the Marine Environment (ICBM) as well as the Competence Center “Artificial Intelligence for Environment and Sustainability” at the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI). Along with his appointment at the IOW, Zielinski will become professor for Earth System Research at Rostock University.*

“I am very much looking forward to working at the IOW and, together with the staff, to generating new scientific findings and innovative methods that will strengthen the protection as well as the sustainable use of the Baltic Sea,” says Prof. Oliver Zielinski on the occasion of his start in office. He adds, that with its interdisciplinary, transfer-oriented approach and manifold cooperations, the IOW is very well established beyond Germany in Baltic Sea and coastal sea research. Therefore, to further develop the IOW’s research programme will be all the more exciting, Zielinski continues. One focus will be on the shallow coastal zones. “This transitional area between land and sea, on which we are currently establishing a new research focus at the IOW, has a far-reaching influence on the entire marine ecosystem. At the same time, this highly dynamic area is difficult to access for research and requires the use of new technological approaches – a field in which the IOW already has proven expertise and fits perfectly into Mecklenburg-Vorpommern’s innovation landscape,” states the new IOW director.

“With Oliver Zielinski, the IOW successfully managed to recruit an outstanding scientific personality, who also represents an enormous asset for teaching at Rostock University,” comments Bettina Martin, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern’s Minister of Science, on the new IOW director taking office. “I congratulate him on this outstanding task. A beacon in the research landscape of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the IOW is internationally highly recognised in the field of marine research. The concept of joint appointments by the university and Leibniz Institute has proven its worth for many years. Right from the start, it strengthens the cooperation between the institutions for mutual benefit. For students, this approach offers additional opportunities for training in the latest technologies and research approaches. I am pleased that with the appointment of Oliver Zielinski as Professor of Earth System Research, this successful procedure will be continued,” says the minister, who presents Zielinski with the certificate of appointment as professor today, on February 28.

**Prof. Dr Oliver Zielinski** (born 1970) studied physics, but turned to marine research early on. “My goal has long been to understand coastal seas as a whole,” says the Oldenburg native. Among other things, he sees an important key to this in the development of innovative methods, especially in the field of autonomous systems and marine observatories. This is also reflected in his career: After his dissertation in physics at Oldenburg University (1999), which already dealt with optical marine sensor technology, he worked as CEO of an international maritime sensor systems supplier before being appointed professor at Bremerhaven University of Applied Sciences in 2005, where he became head of the Institute of Marine Resources (IMARE) in 2007. In 2011, he followed a call from Oldenburg University to

become Professor of Marine Sensor Systems. There, at the Oldenburg Institute for Chemistry and Biology of the Marine Environment (ICBM), which he also headed for some time, he founded the Center for Marine Sensors. From Oldenburg he now moves to the IOW.

A particular focus of Zielinski's work is on combining environmental research with artificial intelligence (AI). At the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI), for example, which is one of the most important international "centres of excellence" in AI research with high social relevance, he headed the "Marine Perception" department (since 2019) as well as the competence centre "Artificial Intelligence for Environment and Sustainability" he founded in 2020. "AI is a powerful cross-cutting technology, a tool, created to generate information from large amounts of data, to predict complex processes and to be prepared for target oriented action in changing environments. Thinking about the two megatrends – digitalisation and sustainability – synergistically combined, is therefore quite obvious," says Zielinski.

However, the new IOW director is also at home in classical marine research approaches, not least through his participation in 20 expeditions on research vessels, seven of which he headed as chief scientist and which led to the North Atlantic, the Arctic and the entire North-West European Shelf Sea.

As director of the IOW, Zielinski succeeds Ulrich Bathmann, who led the institute from 10/2011 – 3/2022, and Helge Arz, interim director until 2/2023. Zielinski is grateful to his predecessors: "Thanks to their successful leadership, in cooperation with the dedicated researchers and science-supporting staff, the IOW is very well positioned: It was successfully evaluated twice by the Leibniz Association during this period and is very well established in German and international marine research. Anyone, who needs Baltic Sea expertise, in Germany primarily looks for it at the IOW – be it the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH) or the international Helsinki Commission for the Protection of the Baltic Sea." In addition to countless research collaborations, the IOW is also a valued partner in research networks that work nationally and internationally to strategically shape marine research in an overarching way – for example in EuroMarine, Baltic Earth, the German Marine Research Consortium (KDM) or the German Marine Research Alliance (DAM), he adds. "I am very grateful to be able to continue this excellent work and develop it further together with the IOW staff," Zielinski concludes.

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*The IOW is a member of the Leibniz Association that connects 97 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 20,500 people, of whom 11,500 are scientists. The total budget of the institutes is 2 billion Euros. [www.leibniz-association.eu](http://www.leibniz-association.eu)*