



ALFRED-WEGENER-INSTITUT
HELMHOLTZ-ZENTRUM FÜR POLAR-
UND MEERESFORSCHUNG

New Director

Change of Leadership at the Alfred Wegener Institute

Director Karin Lochte passes the baton to Antje Boetius

[01. November 2017] **On 1 November 2017 Prof Antje Boetius will assume leadership of the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research (AWI). She will succeed Prof Karin Lochte, who has led the Institute for the past ten years.**



Prof Antje Boetius is no stranger to the Alfred Wegener Institute: in the context of her doctoral work, the deep-sea researcher (born in 1967) worked at the AWI in Bremerhaven from 1993 to 1996. Following a stay at the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research in Warnemünde, she returned to Bremen in 1999, holding positions at the Max Planck Institute for Marine Microbiology, Jacobs University and the University of Bremen, where she is currently Vice-Director of the MARUM Centre for Marine Environmental Sciences. Since December 2008, Boetius has also led the Helmholtz / Max Planck Joint Research Group for Deep-Sea Ecology and Technology, which brings together researchers and engineers from the AWI and the MPI Bremen. Her primary research interests are life below the ice, and investigating material flows and biodiversity in the Earth's oceans. In the course of her work, she has joined in 40 expeditions at sea, many of which she led.

As a Leibniz Award winner, Boetius gained extensive science management experience in commissions and on the Senate of the German Research Foundation (DFG), as well as the *Wissenschaftsrat* (Council of



Prof Dr Antje Boetius (Photo: Alfred-Wegener-Institut / Kerstin Rolfes)

Science and Humanities), the highest advisory body to Germany's federal and state governments. Thanks to these and other advisory duties, Boetius has established many links to the political world. As part of the Helmholtz Association, the Alfred Wegener Institute receives 90 percent of its funding

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from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. At the official ceremony, Prof Johanna Wanka, Federal Minister of Education and Research, states: "I'm very happy to say that, with Prof Antje Boetius, the Alfred Wegener Institute will have a new Director who has a consistent track record of combining focused strategic work with a genuine commitment to marine research."

In turn, Bremen's Senator for Education and Science, Prof Eva Quante-Brandt, is full of praise for the outgoing Director: "I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Karin Lochte, who, as a highly respected, nationally and internationally networked marine researcher, has done an excellent job of making the AWI shine. With Antje Boetius, once again a female researcher will take over the helm of the Alfred Wegener Institute. I'm especially happy to see that we have such outstanding role models for women and girls. As a Professor with the University of Bremen, Ms Boetius is a symbol of providing excellent education for tomorrow's oceanographers."



Karin Lochte and Antje Boetius (Photo: Alfred-Wegener-Institut / Kerstin Rolfes)

Otmar D. Wiestler, President of the Helmholtz Association, says: "I would like to thank Karin Lochte for the impressive dedication she has demonstrated over the past ten years, which helped her lead the AWI to international prominence. The close strategic collaboration within

our 'Earth and Environment' Research Field is also largely due to her efforts." He adds: "I'm confident that we've found a worthy successor in Antje Boetius. She'll bring with her the same level of enthusiasm, while her transdisciplinary perspective will promote both collaboration within the Helmholtz Association and an active dialogue with society. I very much look forward to working with her."

Improving the interaction between the scientific community and society at large is one of the new AWI Director's proclaimed goals. In this regard, Antje Boetius can draw on her previous experience as Chair of the Steering Committee of *Wissenschaft im Dialog* (Science in Dialogue), an initiative for communicating research. She looks forward to helping the AWI's experts break new ground in cryospheric, oceanographic and coastal research. In addition, she plans to promote the use of new technologies and e.g. expand the use of robotic systems and automated sensor nets, which are already being used for environmental monitoring in coastal regions or under the ice of the Arctic.

According to Karin Lochte, intensifying its Arctic research is a representative example of how the AWI has expanded the scope of its activities over the past several years. Thanks to the rapid and dramatic changes at work in the region, the North Pole has



AWI main building (Photo: Alfred-Wegener-Institut / Lars Grübner)

Wegener Institute pursues research in the polar regions and the oceans of mid and high latitudes. As one of the 19 centres of the Helmholtz Association it coordinates polar research in Germany and provides ships like the research icebreaker Polarstern and stations for the international scientific community.

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increasingly become a
"hotspot" in climate

research, attracting more and more public interest. Whereas ten years ago, the AWI was largely maintaining its traditional focus on the Antarctic, she claims, the Institute is now actively pursuing research at both of the Earth's poles - a change in orientation that Lochte considers one of the greatest challenges during her term of office.

Karin Lochte (born in 1952) will remain active in the research community as a member of several international committees. Once her contract with the AWI runs out in 2018, the freshly baked retiree will also increasingly focus on her foundation for children from disadvantaged families.

To mark the change in leadership, on 3 November there will be a celebratory symposium at the Alfred Wegener Institute in Bremerhaven, with ca. 200 invited guests from the research and political communities expected to attend.

