

PRESS INFORMATION

## Swimming for clean Oceans

Sport meets science: Germany's biggest swim relay sets an example for water conservation

**Berlin, 10.07.2017** 250 swimmers have teamed up for the "Elbschwimmstaffel" – the "Elbe Swim Relay", the biggest swim relay in Germany to date for clean waters and the environment. The key message: "The ocean begins here! Protecting the seas and oceans starts inland."

Divided into 19 stages with kick-off in Bad Schandau, amateur swimmers and Olympic medalists will reach Geesthacht on July 12. This relay is also a large-scale science project: The research vessel "MS Elbegrund" is accompanying the relay. Scientists from the Technical University Berlin and the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) conduct experiments and inform citizens of their projects regarding microplastic, cyanobacteria, sediment contamination and flood control. "This is the first time we can examine 575 Kilometers in one go. It enables us to generate a new, holistic description of the ecological water status", says Prof. Dr. Stefan Norra (KIT).

Before 1990 the river Elbe was considered one of the most polluted rivers in Europe. Since then, massive efforts have transformed the river and its surrounding areas completely: The Elbe has reached bathing water quality.

The marine ecosystem is heavily afflicted by plastic waste – more than 95 percent of the pollution of coastlines and ocean floors is caused by plastic. Every year, at least 8 million tons find their way into the sea, also through rivers.

About the Science Years

The Elbe Swim Relay is an event within the Science Year 2016\*17 – Seas and Oceans. The Science Years are an initiative of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research to inform a broad public of science and research innovations, findings and approaches in different fields.

Further information: [www.wissenschaftsjahr.de](http://www.wissenschaftsjahr.de) For photos please contact us via email.

**Press Contact:**

Nina Petersen

presse@wissenschaftsjahr.de

+49 30 818777-164

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