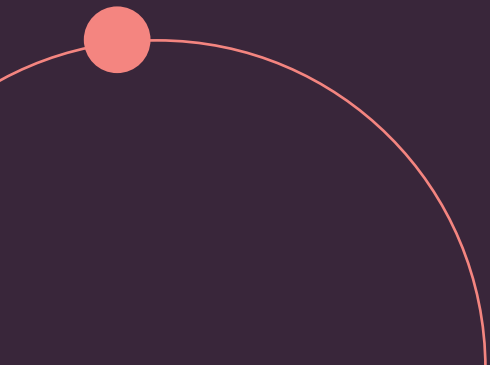




Pandemic Centre UiB Annual Report 2025



PANDEMIC CENTRE
University of Bergen (UiB)



Contents

Five Years with the Pandemic Centre	3
Meet the People	5
Director and strategic workgroup	5
Steering Committee	6
Administration	6
Researchers	7
Pandemic Breakfast	8
Conference Five years after the Pandemic	10
Annual Pandemic Conference	11
Climate Health Initiative CHI	13
Education	14
Research Catalyst	14
Bergen Summer Research School	14
Blended Intensive Programme	15
Publications	16

Photo Credits:

Front page: Coulor Box

Page 3: Ingrid Cardoso - UiB, page 5-9: UiB, page 8: Bjorg Mollelokken, page 10: Paul Andre Sommerfelt, UiB, Page 11,13,14,16: Pandemic Centre UiB, page 12: FHI, page 14: Thor Brødreskift/UiB

Five Years with the Pandemic Centre

We are approaching the sixth year after the pandemic, and 2026 has been declared the year of total preparedness. This highlights the need to be ready for a wide range of crises -and to do so collectively. As head of the Pandemic Centre, I am proud that our work in 2025 continued to move in this direction. What began with a focus on a single health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, has evolved into a broader understanding of preparedness.

Preparedness means anticipating, acting, and learning from crises, and knowledge preparedness is central to all three. Our bibliometric analysis¹, presented at the five-year mark in March 2025, showed that the University of Bergen and other Norwegian institutions excel at producing relevant research quickly during crises. At the same time, we must strengthen long-term research capacity to learn from past crises for future ones and build more complex, interdisciplinary collaborations that support true systems thinking. The Pandemic Catalyst, the Pandemic Breakfasts, and our growing portfolio of courses in preparedness, climate, and health all contribute to this effort.



¹ A bibliometric analysis of pandemic-related publications from the University of Bergen - Nasjonalt vitenarkiv

Human health crises cannot be separated from environmental, climatic, and sociodemographic challenges. Complex crises must be understood together, through a One-Health and Planetary Health lens. This is why we continue to expand the Climate Health initiative and welcome new master's and PhD students working on topics such as antibiotic resistance and economic models for low-emission healthcare systems.

Preparedness depends on everyone's contribution. Academia cannot stand apart from society and has a special responsibility to amplify voices that are not always heard. Our collaboration with Bergen Municipality and the Immigrant Council, along with the continued involvement of our student representative in the strategic working group, helps ensure that our work stays grounded.

These efforts gradually bridge institutions, disciplines, people, and values. My greatest pride remains the collective commitment of the Pandemic Centre team to building a collaborative, interdisciplinary, and enduring centre that stays attuned to society and its needs. This report captures only part of our activity -we also presented our work in six countries in 2025! -and more can be found on our website.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our activities, to the Deans the strategic working group, the administration, the researchers and to all who helped us grow stronger this year.

Professor Esperanza Diaz

Director Pandemic Centre UiB

“ Human health crises cannot be separated from environmental, climatic, and sociodemographic challenges.

Meet the People

Director and strategic workgroup



Professor **Esperanza Diaz**
Director Pandemic Centre
Faculty of Medicine



Professor **Kristin Gr-I Mohn**
Faculty of Medicine



Professor **Svein A. Skålevåg**
Faculty of Humanities



Professor **Eirik Holmøyvik**
Faculty of Law



Professor **Bjørn Sætrevik**
Faculty of Psychology



Professor **Lise Rakner**
Faculty of Social Sciences



Professor **Guttorm Alendal**
Faculty of Science and Techn.



Professor **Ashley Booth**
Faculty of Fine Arts, Music&Design

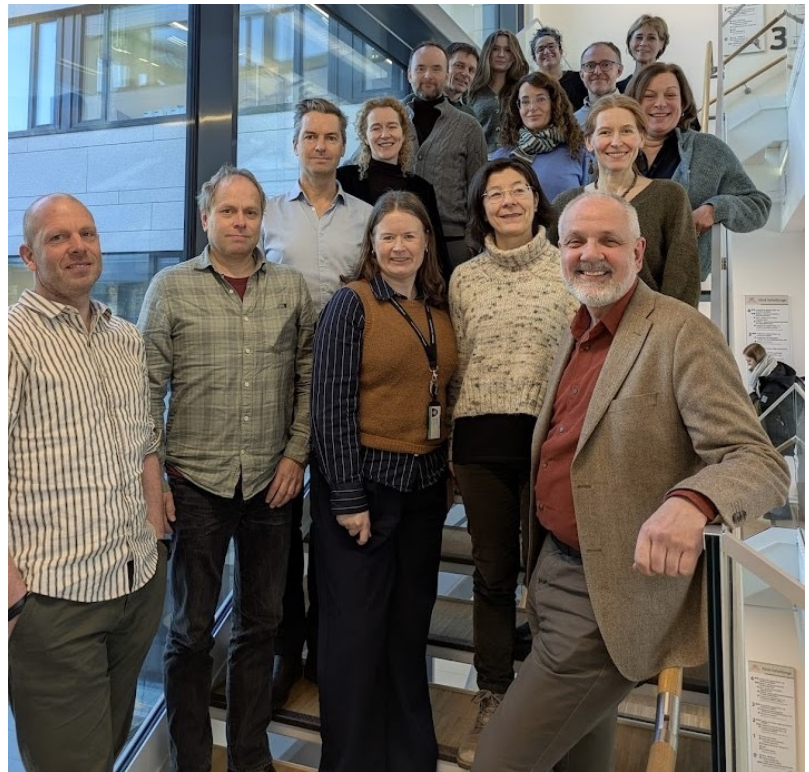


Professor **Simon Øverland**
Center for International Health

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is composed of all UiB's Deans, providing strategic guidance and institutional alignment. They also appoint their representative to the Strategic Working Group.

The Steering Committee's commitment has been a vital factor for the Pandemic Centre's development and success since 2020.



Administration



Gøril Vikøren Nøkleby
Head of Administration

Researchers



Preben Aavitsland

Professor II 20%



Oddvar Kaarbøe

Professor 10%



Marit Voltersvik

Assistant Professor 5%



Prabhjot Kour

Post doc



Pierina Benavente

PhD candidate



Anders Kuvaas Herting

PhD candidate



Ingrid Couto de Azevedo

PhD candidate



Kim A. Haugland

PhD candidate

Pandemic Breakfast

In 2025, the Pandemic Centre continued its tradition of hosting the Pandemic Breakfasts, an informal yet impactful arena for discussion related to global health **preparedness**. These monthly gatherings brought together researchers, students, and practitioners to exchange insights on a range of themes with a coherent narrative: a research community trying to understand how societies can better prepare for, communicate about, and govern complex health threats in an increasingly unstable world.

January

Excess mortality in Nordic countries during the COVID19 pandemic. Ingeborg Forthun, FHI

Regulatory model for hospital competition where hospitals can invest in telemedicine equipment and then compete on quality for patients

Oddvar Kaarbøe, Department of public Health and Primary care, UiB

February

Crises preparedness at the Pandemic Institute, Liverpool. Reyhaneh Dobbash, The Pandemic Institute Liverpool

The Centre for Pandemics and One-Health Research (P1H).

Jason Whittington, University of Oslo

March

Understanding key themes determining vaccine support and opposition.

Samantha Venderslott, Oxford University

Preparedness that expires.

Mari Bjørnaas, Oslo University Hospital

April

Book presentation:

Navigating Pandemic Phases

Øyvind Ihlen, UiO

Jens Elmelund, UIB

Ragnhild Mølster, UIB

May

Everything you need to know about measles. Kristin Greve-Isdahl Mohn,UiB

Global health and external shocks

Magnus Vollset, UIB

June

Book presentation

Proportionality: medicine, law, philosophy and pandemic

Anna Nylund, Faculty of Law, UiB

August

Challenges related to health preparedness at the outer edge of the crisis spectrum, complex threats or hybrid situations, and war.

Jan Sommerfelt-Pettersen, Haukeland University Hospital



**Risk and Crisis Communication:
Connections between risk, crisis,
stakeholders and organizations**

Audra Diers-Lawson, Kristiania University
of Applied Technology

September

**Securing medicines – every day and in
crisis** Trygve Ottersen, Norwegian Medical
Products Agency

**Innovation in infectious disease
prevention and public health.** Christophe
Fraser, Pandemic Sciences Institute Oxford
University



November

**Registry data and severe acute
respiratory infections: monitoring
incidence, disease burden, and vaccine
effectiveness.**

Elina Seppälä, FH

**Individual actors communicating on social
media in the context of health crises.**

Dorthea Roe, Department of information
Science and Media Studies, UIB

Pandemic Breakfast #7

TRYGVE OTTERSEN
Securing medicines – every day and in crisis

- Director general Norwegian Medical Products Agency
- MD with PhD in healthcare prioritisation and global health

CHRISTOPHE FRASER
Innovation in infectious disease prevention and public health

- Professor of Infectious Disease Epidemiology University of Oxford
- Head of Epidemiology at Oxford's new Pandemic Sciences Institute

Sign up. Coffee and something fresh is served

Date: **September 25, 2025**
Time: **08:30-09:15** (Norwegian time)
Location: Online or meeting room Tarleba, Alrek
Language: English

December

**When Heat meets Mental Health: Insights
from Istanbul.**

Emre Sari, NORCE

I participate in the Pandemic Breakfast seminars to gain professional insight into a range of important issues. I appreciate receiving different angles and perspectives on the challenges I often handle in my work as a municipal infection control officer, and I find this incredibly valuable

Björg T. Møllerlekken

Municipal Infection Control Officer and Deputy Chief Municipal
Medical Officer
Specialist in Public Health Medicine
Øygarden Municipality



Conference

Five years after the Pandemic

On **14 March 2025**, almost exactly five years after Norway entered the COVID-19 lockdown, the University of Bergen hosted a major public conference in the University Aula titled *“Five Years After the Lockdown – Knowledge Preparedness for Health Crises.”* The event was led by Rector **Margareth Hagen** and jointly organised by the **Faculty of Medicine** and the **Pandemic Centre**. It marked a significant moment of reflection on the early days of the pandemic, bringing together leading voices from politics, public administration, health authorities, and academia to revisit the challenges, uncertainties, and decision-making processes that shaped the national response around **12 March 2020**.

The conference was **free and open to the public**, attracting **110 participants**, including pupils from Amalie Skram VGS, representatives from multiple sectors, and senior officials such as former Minister of Health **Bent Høie**. The programme featured **nine panel participants**, musical contributions by master’s student **Sigurd Mosbakk** from the Grieg Academy, and a series of discussions focusing on lessons learned and the evolving demands of knowledge preparedness in future crisis scenarios. The event also highlighted broader societal questions: What will the next crisis look like? How will it affect public health, communities, and governance?



Annual Pandemic Conference

Preparing for Health Crises in a Changing World



On **October 27, 2025**, the Pandemic Centre arranged its fifth international conference, titled **“Preparing for Health Crises in a Changing World: The Need for New Evidence Informed Narratives.”** Held in Terminus Hall in Bergen, the event brought together researchers, policymakers, civil society actors, and students to explore how evolving geopolitical dynamics—marked by war, conflict, climate disasters, and misinformation—shape public trust and preparedness. Through keynote speeches, abstract presentations, workshop with Bergen municipality, and a panel discussion, participants examined the potential of narrative-driven approaches to inform

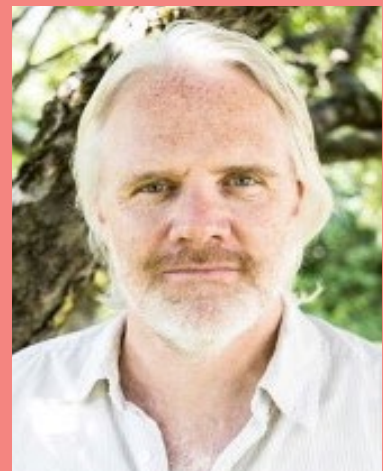
collaborative, sustainable, and evidence-based strategies for future health crises.

The conference featured two keynote addresses. **Bjørn-Inge Larsen**, representing the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, explored *“Public Health Preparedness Priorities under Geopolitical Instability,”* emphasizing the need for adaptable strategies in an era of global uncertainty. **John Launer** from the UK tackled the challenge of misinformation with his talk, *“Meeting Misinformation and Conspiratory Theories with New Narratives,”* offering insights into how evidence-based storytelling can counter disinformation and strengthen public trust.

We are regular participants at the Pandemic Centre’s annual conference. It is the only established meeting place for pandemic researchers in Norway, so of course we have to be there!

Atle Fretheim

Head of the Centre for Research on Epidemic Measures, Norwegian Institute of Public Health





Climate Health Initiative CHI

The **Climate Health Initiative (CHI)**, coordinated by the Pandemic Centre, was established in 2024 to strengthen interdisciplinary and cross sector collaboration on the health impacts of climate change. The initiative brings together researchers from the Faculties of Medicine, Psychology, and Science and Technology, as well as partners such as the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research, Bergen Municipality's Climate Agency, HVL, NORCE, and NERSC. Its purpose is to support knowledge generation, capacity building, and coordinated research addressing national and global climate health challenges.

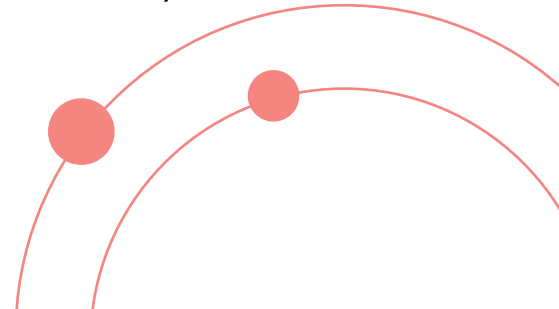
In 2025, CHI continued to build momentum with a diverse and growing portfolio of activities:

- **National webinar series:** CHI hosted a six-part climate and health webinar series featuring speakers from UiB, NIPH, CICERO, and other leading institutions
- **Internal meetings and guest lectures:** CHI arranged several internal academic meetings with speakers from Austrian and Norwegian public health institutions, HVL, Red Cross Norway and others
- **Bergen Summer Research School** CHI led one of the five PhD-level courses in June 2025:

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Climate Change and Health



- **Open seminars at HVL** CHI co-organised two well attended seminars—*Green Health* (Aug 2025) and *Choosing Wisely* (Dec 2025)—bringing together speakers from hospitals, municipalities, HVL, and CHI.
- **International representation** CHI was represented at HAN University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, contributing to discussions on regenerative and sustainable living environments, providing CHI with increased international visibility.



Education

Research Catalyst

The Research Catalyst is one of the Pandemic Centre's core scholarly arenas, designed to strengthen the Centre's interdisciplinary research environment and support the development of new pandemic related projects. Its purpose is to provide a space where students, early career researchers, and senior academics can present ideas, receive feedback from different disciplinary and methodological traditions, and explore new pandemic related topics from diverse scientific perspectives.

Bergen Summer Research School

In June 2025, the Climate Health Initiative (CHI) played a central role at the **Bergen Summer Research School (BSRS)** by coordinating one of the five PhD-level courses offered that year: **“Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Climate Change and Health.”** The course examined both direct and indirect pathways through which climate change affects human health, including infectious disease dynamics, displacement, resource scarcity, and mental health impacts. It brought together lecturers from all CHI-affiliated institutions, reflecting the initiative's strong interdisciplinary foundation.



Blended Intensive Programme

In 2025, the Pandemic Centre coordinated the Erasmus+ **Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) Preparedness for Health Crises: A Multidisciplinary Approach**, in collaboration with NOVA University Lisboa, Bielefeld University, and Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Running from **September to October 2025**, the programme provided twice weekly online lectures, virtual group work, and an intensive course week in Bergen from **27–31 October**, subject to Erasmus+ mobility funding. The course drew on lessons from the COVID19 pandemic and other contemporary crises, focusing on complexity, uncertainty, legal and democratic decision making, and collaborative approaches to preparedness

By offering both 3 and 4 ECTS options and being open to students across disciplines and degree levels, the BIP course significantly expanded the Pandemic Centre's educational outreach and strengthened its role in promoting multidisciplinary training for future health crisis preparedness.



I really enjoyed my time in Bergen! The workshops were highly engaging and I made some valuable connections with fellow students. I was lucky enough to see the Northern Lights and the course was a great addition to my studies.

Jonas Rickermann

Master student at Bielefeld University, Germany



Publications

In 2025, the Pandemic Centre continued to strengthen its scientific footprint, publishing a diverse range of research that advances understanding of preparedness, response, and societal resilience in the face of global health threats.

- Jon H Laake, Hagen M, **Aavitsland P**, Buanes F, Fjone K, Kvåle R, Olsen B, Hofsø K. COVID-19 in Norwegian ICUs 2020–2023: Patient characteristics, management, and outcomes—A nationwide prospective observational study. *Acta Anaesthesiologica Scandinavica* 2025: 4., 1-13 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/aas.70027>)
- Margrethe Greve-Isdahl, Møller Thea, Bekkevold T, Baranowska-Hustad M, Lønning-Halle C, Laake I, Berg A, **Aavitsland P**, Knudsen P, Aase A, Størdal K. Maternal and infant immunity against *Bordetella pertussis*, Norway, 2020 to 2023. *Eurosurveillance* 2025, vol 30, art nr 2500450 (<https://doi.org/10.2807/1560-7917.es.2025.30.50.2500450>)
- **Pierina Benavente**, Blanchet K, Cheryl M, Mena A, Belen M, Tyami M, Teran E, Tran T. Deployment and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines for refugees and migrants in Ecuador. *Frontiers in Public Health* vol 13- 2025 (<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1655392>)
- **Esperanza Diaz, Benavente P**. Contextualising the WHO Global Research Agenda on Health, Migration and Displacement in Norway invites to a reflection for decolonising research. *International Journal for Equity in Health* vol 24, 1-7 (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-025-02410-9>)
- **Esperanza Diaz**, Kumar B, et al. Integration for health or health for integration? *European Journal of Public Health*, Vol 35 supp 6 (<https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckaf180.042>)
- **Pierina Benavente**, Kampalath V, Zan N, et al. Deployment and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines for refugees and migrants in regular and irregular situations: a mixed-method multicountry study. *BMJ Open* vol 15 (<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2024-087629>)
- **Pierina Benavente**, Fadnes L, Lehmann S, Sandel G, Mæland S, **Diaz E**. Feasibility of adhering to COVID-19 preventive measures: a longitudinal comparison study between migrants and non-migrants in Norway. *European Journal of Public Health* Vol 35, supp 6

- **Pierina Benavente**, Fadnes L, Lehmann S, Sandel G, Mæland S, **Diaz E**. COVID-19 home office measures: a longitudinal study comparing migrants and non-migrants in Norway. *European Journal of Public Health* Vol 35, supp 4 (<https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckaf161.1062>)
- **Pierina Benavente**, Kampalath V, Zan N, et al. Deployment of COVID-19 Vaccines for Refugees and Migrants in Nepal. *Kathmandu University Medical Journal* Vol 23 172-181 (<https://hdl.handle.net/11250/5338646>)
- Ayan Sheik-Mohamad, **Diaz E** Straiton M, Andersen A. ‘A Dead Person Cannot Carry a Dead Person’: Health, Social Support and Language Learning Among Syrian Refugees in Norway. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* Vol 23, art 47 (<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph23010047>)
- **Marta-Johanne Svendsen**, Sam D, **Kaarbøe O**, **Diaz E**. Migrants’ experiences as health ambassadors during the COVID-19 pandemic in Norway-a qualitative study. *International Journal for Equity in Health* Vol 24 Art 118 (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-025-02480-9>)
- **Anders Herting**, **Kour P**, Sandberg S, **Diaz E**. Difficulties advising non-native speakers and older adults after point-of-care testing. *European Journal of Public Health*, Vol 35, supp 6 (<https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckaf180.233>) (external link)
- **Prabhjot Kour**, Adari S, Kumar B, **Diaz E**. Living infodemics across borders: experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic among migrants from India living in Norway. *Frontiers in Public Health*, Vol 13, 1-9 (<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1488080>)
- **Prabhjot Kour**, Agata G, **Diaz E**. Voices across difference: a qualitative exploration of health-promoting dialogues between older migrant women and researchers in Norway. *International Journal for Equity in Health* Vol 24 (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-025-02618-9>)
- **Prabhjot Kour**, Veizis A, Kumar B, **Diaz E**. A baton relay race for the health of migrants and displaced people: Experiences from “Vaccines for All” Greece to “Health Ambassador” Norway. *European Journal of Public Health* Vol 35, supp 6 (<https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckaf180.208>)
- Bjørn Blomberg, Myklebust N, **Kaarbøe O** et al. Randomized trial of nirmatrelvir/ritonavir versus placebo for adults with acute COVID-19 to prevent long COVID: PanoramicNOR Trial . *Trials* vol 26 1-14 (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-025-09226-6>)

