



CLIMATE HEALTH INITIATIVE - CHI

2024-2026

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PANDEMIC CENTRE
University of Bergen (UiB)



Western Norway
University of
Applied Sciences



BERGEN
KOMMUNE



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN
Faculty of Science and Technology



Bjerknes Centre
for Climate Research



NERSC
NANSEN ENVIRONMENTAL
AND REMOTE SENSING CENTER
THE NANSEN CENTER · BERGEN · NORWAY



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN
Faculty of Psychology



1. Introduction

Climate change poses wide-ranging and complex risks to human health. These impacts are unevenly distributed across social, geographical, and economic groups, often exacerbating existing inequalities. As awareness of these disparities increases, there is a growing need for academic environments to deepen their understanding of both the direct and indirect health effects of climate change, as well as the mechanisms through which climate-related challenges reinforce social and health inequities.

Addressing these challenges requires a strong foundation in **interdisciplinary** (across faculties) and **transdisciplinary** (across sectors and institutions) research and innovation. Only through such collaborative approaches can the complexity of climate–health interactions be adequately understood and addressed.

In response to this need, the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Bergen (UiB), together with the Faculties of Psychology and of Science and Technology, the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research, and the Climate Agency (Klimaetaten) of Bergen Municipality, launched the **Climate Health Initiative (CHI)** in 2024. The initiative aims to ensure a coordinated and forward-looking approach to climate and health challenges that are timely and relevant for Norway.

Since its launch, CHI has developed a growing portfolio of activities, including academic seminars, funding applications, international collaborations, and public engagement events. In 2024/2025, CHI secured **NOK 100,000 in operational funding** from *Global Challenges/UiB* to support activities in 2025.

2. Core Vision

The main aim of the Climate Health Initiative is to **facilitate collaboration among its members** and to **coordinate efforts with national and international actors** in order to improve understanding of, and develop solutions to, global climate- and health-related challenges.

CHI is founded on an integrated approach that combines:

- Medical and public health sciences
- Environmental and climate sciences
- Social and behavioral sciences

Through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and innovation, CHI seeks to contribute to knowledge generation, capacity building, and evidence-based policy development.

3. Participants and Organisational Structure

The **Pandemic Centre at UiB** has coordinated the Climate Health Initiative since its inception. The constellation of participants within CHI has evolved over time and continues to expand. While the list below refers to participating units and departments, engagement in CHI is primarily driven by **individual initiative and scientific interest** among researchers.

Participating Institutions

University of Bergen (UiB)

- Faculty of Medicine
 - The Pandemic Centre
 - Department of Global Health and Primary Care
 - TVEPS – Centre for Interdisciplinary Workplace Learning
 - Greenness, Air Pollution, and Health (GAP)
- Faculty of Psychology
 - Department of Psychosocial Science
- Faculty of Science and Technology
 - Geophysical Institute
- Global Challenges at UiB
- Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research
- CET – Centre for Climate and Energy Transformation

External Partners

- Bergen Municipality – Climate Agency (Klimaetaten)
- Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL), Division of Health and Social Sciences
- NORCE
- NERSC – Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center



Picture 1 From kick-off meeting in Solstrand, spring 2024

4. Overview of Activities

4.1 Public Engagement and Launch Activities

18 April 2024 - Opening Event (One Ocean Week)

Venue: Statsraadens Bar

Format: Public event

Title: *Could the next pandemic come from the ocean?*

This event marked the public launch of CHI and engaged a broad audience in discussions on ocean health, climate change, and emerging infectious disease risks.



4.2 CHI Webinar Series (2024–2025)

Between October 2024 and March 2025, CHI hosted a series of six monthly webinars aimed at building national networks and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue on climate and health. Speakers represented UiB, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), CICERO, and other leading institutions.

Webinar speakers and dates:

- 18 October 2024 – Jeannette Magnus, SUSTAINIT, University of Oslo
- 22 November 2024 – Professor Håvard Haarstad, CET UiB
- 13 December 2024 – Research Director Kristin Aunan, CICERO
- 17 January 2025 – Associate Professor Stefán Hjörleifsson, UiB
- 14 February 2025 – Dr. Shilpa Rao, NIPH
- 21 March 2025 – Professor Ane Johannessen, UiB

Topics ranged from environmental health and air pollution to planetary health and climate policy.

4.3 CHI Meetings and Guest Lectures

April 2025 – CHI Meeting

Guest speaker: Dr. Andrea E. Schmidt
Austrian National Public Health Institute

26 August 2025 – CHI Meeting

Guests: Visiting students to HVL in climate health

19 November 2025 – CHI Meeting

Guest speaker: Associate Professor Jerome Picard
Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, UiB

26 January 2026 – CHI Meeting

Guest speakers:
Claudia Torrealba, Norwegian Red Cross
Venesca Venhof

These meetings strengthened internal collaboration and expanded CHI's interdisciplinary perspectives.

4.4 Bergen Summer Research School – June 2025

In 2025, CHI facilitated one of five PhD-level courses offered as part of the **Bergen Summer Research School**, which annually gathers more than 100 international students for two intensive weeks.

Course title: *Climate Change and Health*

The course explored how climate change affects human health through:

- Direct impacts (e.g. infectious disease dynamics)
- Indirect impacts (e.g. displacement, resource scarcity, mental health)

Lecturers represented all CHI participating institutions. The course emphasized interdisciplinary perspectives and policy-relevant approaches to resilience and preparedness.

A total of **15 students with diverse academic and national backgrounds** participated. The course was highly successful and relied heavily on in-kind contributions from lecturers and examiners.



Picture 2 Happy students at Bergen Summer Research School

4.5 CHI-Coordinated Seminars at HVL

In 2025, CHI contributed to the development and delivery of two open seminars co-arranged with the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL).

1. "Green Health" – 27 August 2025

Speakers from Bergen Municipality, Haukeland University Hospital, HVL, and CHI discussed how sustainability and environmental considerations can be integrated into health services and local planning.

2. "Choosing Wisely" – 1 December 2025

This seminar focused on responsible resource use, climate considerations in healthcare decisions, and strategies to reduce low-value care with potential climate co-benefits.

Both events attracted participants from academia, healthcare, and local government, strengthening CHI's regional impact.

4.6 International Representation

November 2025 – HAN University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands)

Joost van Wijchen (HVL) represented CHI at the regional seminar *Living in Regeneration – Towards a Healthy and Sustainable Living Environment*.

The event brought together research programmes on sustainable energy, environment, and fair health. CHI's approach and collaborations were presented, contributing to discussions on planetary health and regenerative living environments. This engagement strengthened CHI's international visibility and opened new opportunities for cross-border collaboration.

5. PhD Positions in Climate and Health

To support CHI and strengthen the Faculty of Medicine's commitment to climate and health research, a **three-year PhD position** was allocated to CHI in 2025.

Following a highly competitive recruitment process, **Ingrid Cardoso Couto de Azevedo** accepted the position in March 2025. She has a background as a medical doctor with experience in tropical diseases and infection prevention and control.

Her PhD project includes:

1. To identify how climate goals are translated into concrete policies, tools, and decisions in the Norwegian hospital sector.

2. To assess how healthcare decision-makers weigh health, environmental, and economic impacts when using climate-related governance instruments.
3. To develop and test practical approaches for integrating climate considerations into healthcare funding and resource allocation models.

Supervisors:

Professor Oddvar Kaarbøe (Health Economics, Dept of Global Health and Primary Care UiB)
Professor Håvard Haarstad (CET, UiB)

In 2026, an additional PhD position from the Faculty of Science and Technology will further strengthen CHI's research capacity.



Picture 3 PhD student Ingrid Cardoso from Brazil

6. Funding Applications and Collaborative Projects

CHI has facilitated new collaboration networks across institutions, strengthening coordinated efforts with Norwegian and international partners.

Examples of joint funding applications in 2025 include:

- **PLANET Health**, coordinated by HVL (Erasmus Alliances for Innovation)
- **Cold & Healthy**, coordinated by NERSC (ESA Climate and Health call)
- **Calm Air**, coordinated by NERSC (Nordic Council)
- **Preparing for the evolving climate, food, and health interactions in Norway**, coordinated by the Geophysical Institute UiB/Bjerknes Centre (NFR)
- **Operational decadal outlooks for vector born disease**- with The Norwegian Veterinary institute and the Geophysical Institute UiB/Bjerknes Centre (EU Copernicus)
- **The Norwegian Research School for Climate-Informed Innovation and Decision-Making**, coordinated by the Geophysical Institute/Bjerknes Centre (funded by NFR in 2025)

7. The Way Forward for CHI

The collaborations within CHI have demonstrated strong potential for sustained interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary engagement. Moving forward, CHI will continue to:

- Strengthen national and international research partnerships
- Expand educational activities at graduate and PhD levels
- Support policy-relevant research and public engagement
- Serve as a coordinating platform for climate and health initiatives at UiB and beyond

In 2026, CHI will revisit its organisational structure and consider establishing a formal steering committee composed of three representatives: one from the University of Bergen (UiB), one from the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research, and one from Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL). The committee will decide on a rotating leadership model, with two-year terms shared between two co-leads. It will also outline a minimum set of core activities that the leadership is expected to organise annually to ensure continuity and visibility of CHI's work.

In parallel, CHI has initiated discussions with the Norwegian Planetary Health Alliance (NORPath) regarding potential collaboration. NORPath is a transdisciplinary and multisectoral network for Norwegian institutions working on Planetary Health. It has been coordinated by SUSTAINIT at the University of Oslo, with partners including the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Norway, the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), and the Center for International Climate Research (CICERO). Collaboration with NORPath could strengthen CHI's national positioning and expand opportunities for joint activities, knowledge exchange, and funding.

[Further information on the CHI webpage.](#)