



**UNIVERSITY
OF ERFURT**

Institute for Planetary
Health Behaviour

Planetary health is human health

The *Institute for Planetary Health Behaviour* (IPB) is a research institute of the University of Erfurt. The IPB aims at advancing research on planetary health behaviour and making the results accessible to the public and policy makers.

WHAT IS PLANETARY HEALTH BEHAVIOUR?

Planetary health behaviour protects the climate, our environment and our health. Planetary health means looking at the health consequences of the climate crisis and developing health-promoting and environmentally sustainable strategies to counteract them.



„In our research, we aim to understand what influences climate-healthy behavior. These insights can help in designing effective policy frameworks and good explanatory communication.“

*Prof. Dr. Cornelia Betsch
(Founding Director of the IPB)*

WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND OUR HEALTH?

Climate change and the destruction of the environment are considered the biggest health crises of the coming decades. They lead to various health problems and emergencies, such as pandemics, reduced food availability and quality, respiratory diseases and mental illness. In the long run, protecting the environment will also protect our health.

At the *Institute for Planetary Health Behaviour*, we seek to understand human behaviour in order to promote health and to protect the climate and the environment. In addition to the behaviour of individuals, we also focus on the acceptance of climate protection policies and the readiness to engage in climate action.



„My goal is to strengthen individuals and organizations at the intersection of science, society, and policy to enable evidence-based, risk-competent, and sustainable decisions and to communicate them effectively.“

*Dr. Mirjam Jenny
(Scientific Managing Director of the IPB)*

WHY DOES THIS TOPIC NEED ITS OWN INSTITUTE?

The topic is too complex and multifaceted to be addressed and understood fully through the lens of a single discipline. At the IPB, multiple disciplines come together to investigate climate-friendly and healthy behaviours using approaches from psychology, cognitive science, sociology, education and communication sciences. Moreover, our work also links to climate and environmental sciences, medicine and health sciences, economics, political sciences and other relevant research disciplines.

*„At the IPB we want to understand human behaviour
in order to promote health and to protect the climate
and the environment.“*





„I aim to explain why people break social norms, expectations and rules or behave in ways that harm themselves or others – despite negative consequences. Why are so many people worried about the climate but fail to act?“

Prof. Dr. Guido Mehlkop

(Deputy Founding Director of the IPB)

Crises are often viewed through a predominantly political and economic lens. However, this overlooks an important dimension: the systematic investigation of humans in their environment. This includes what they feel, think and want; how they act; how social processes shape them; how they are influenced by the media; how and why misinformation spreads; etc. As a result of the narrow approach that has been taken thus far, public communication has often been a secondary concern instead of an integral component of crisis management.

„I am particularly interested in what happens when scientific knowledge conflicts with everyday knowledge. How can misconceptions about specific topics be countered?“

Prof. Dr. Johannes Bauer

(Member of the IPB)



The researchers at the IPB are convinced that a human-centred approach is crucial when designing health and climate protection measures and respective communication activities. The design of

interventions should ensure that measures are widely accepted and that the public can participate in shaping strategies and solutions. To achieve this goal, interventions to protect climate and health must be rooted in the behavioural sciences. The IPB promotes scientific exchange and supports policy makers and communicators with its scientific findings.



„My research revolves around the question of what role the internet plays in public communication and opinion formation. At IPB, I am particularly interested in journalism and online discourses on climate change.“

*Jun.-Prof. Dr. Fabian Prochazka
(Member of the IPB)*

SELECTED RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE IPB

- How can we understand and change the readiness to act against the climate crisis? What is the role of perceived risks, social norms, denial and other cognitive processes and habits? For health decisions, how important are the impacts on one's own health compared to the impacts on the health of others? Why do people not take action despite being willing to do so?
- What is the effect of policy interventions on climate and health protection? What are the requirements for them to be accepted? What are the possible social or psychological consequences?

- How can the professional dialogue with multipliers (e.g. doctors) be improved?
- How can we debunk misinformation and strengthen resilience against misinformation?
- What role does the media play in this?

WHICH DISCIPLINES ARE REPRESENTED AT THE IPB?

At the IPB, scientists with a background in health communication, social, organisational and economic psychology, educational research, empirical social sciences and communication sciences work together. In the future, the range of disciplines will be expanded.

THE IPB AND THE MASTER'S PROGRAM IN HEALTH COMMUNICATION

The researchers at the IPB teach in the master's program in health communication and involve students in current research projects.

*„How do people make decisions?
What is the role of habits & how
do decision-making and decision
competence develop? How do
people develop scientific com-
petence & how can movements
against enlightenment in society
be counteracted?“*

*Prof. Dr. Tilmann Betsch
(Member of the IPB)*



OUR PARTNERS

The IPB works with national and international partners from research, teaching, politics and society, as well as with experts from the health and climate protection sector. *Science2Society* (i.e. the transfer of science into society) forms its own pillar at the IPB with the aim of strengthening the value of science as a basis for political and societal decision making and promoting exchange between journalists, politicians, citizens and scientists.

HOW TO CONTACT US

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