

# Annual Report 2023



Karolinska  
Institutet



## Centre for Health Crises

Building the next generation of health crises experts through research, education and interdisciplinary collaboration

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## A Word from our Director

The Centre for Health Crises took on our second year of operation. We continued to provide expertise as well as catalysing research, developing new educations and interdisciplinary collaboration.

2023 was a year of continuous and ongoing polycrises with significant health effects, globally and on our doorstep. We systematically monitored and assessed these health crises and provided expert advice to media and other stakeholders. We seconded experts to work in Turkey after the 2023 earthquake and to cholera affected Malawi. The experience gained provided insights to develop our teaching as well as added contemporary contextual understanding of importance to our work.

During the year we have continued our core mission and trained the next generation of health crises experts. In the annual report, we have selected a number of activities to highlight our work and its relevance. In addition, we have, during 2023, developed national university collaboration, which is also described in this report.

The role of universities in health crises needs to be further developed and clarified. We have an important role to play, but we must ensure preparedness and that we have experts with relevant experience readily available. Moreover, a major role for universities will be to remain open and to do so we must be prepared and resilient. As such we are an important part of total defence and civil society preparedness. The Centre for Health Crises will continue to develop our contribution and remain committed to our dual focus on both short and long-term activities to realise our vision of a society better prepared for future health crises.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Johan von Schreeb'.

/Johan von Schreeb, Director

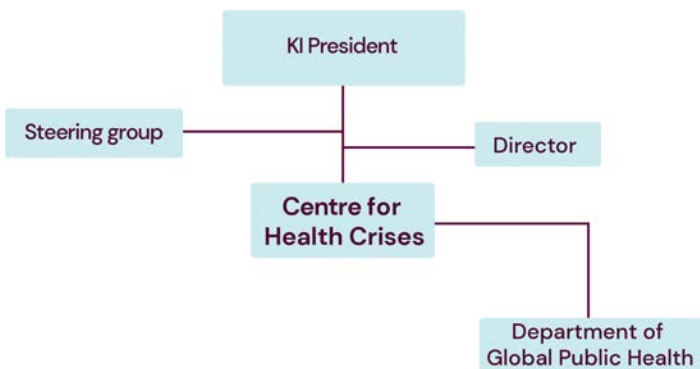
## Vision

A society better prepared for future health crises

## Mission

Building the next generation of health crises experts through research, education and interdisciplinary collaboration

# About the centre



The Centre for Health Crises was established at Karolinska Institutet (KI) in the summer of 2021, with the intention to capture and further develop the experiences and lessons learned from the initiatives, collaborations, and such that the university built up to support the surrounding society during the COVID-19 pandemic. Establishing the Centre was a way for the university to contribute to building a society better prepared for health crises, by way of research, education, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

At the Centre, we believe that, in an era of polycrises, universities could have a 'fourth task' - to contribute their expertise and experience, before and during crises. This was illustrated early on when, just weeks after operations began in the spring of 2022, we quickly adapted and initiated a response to face the health crisis created by the war in Ukraine. Since then, we remain agile and responsive to react to both long- and short-term health crises, at home and globally.

Our vision is a society better prepared for future health crises, and our mission is to build the next generation of health crises experts, through research, education, and interdisciplinary collaboration. We have five strategic goals that define our areas of engagement and that we structure our activities and operative work around. The strategic goals are based on the three tasks for universities, as defined in Swedish law: education, research, and public outreach. The goals are:

1. Catalyse research collaborations within the field of health crises and create meeting spaces for interdisciplinary collaboration
2. Stimulate and participate in the development of new education within different health crises subjects
3. Gather existing and build new health crises expertise, and supply specific know-how and competence
4. Drive policy development and in collaboration, set the agenda for increased health crises preparedness
5. Act as KI's and its managements sensor for new health threats, and contribute to the coordination of KI's efforts in a health crisis

At the Centre we pool expertise from across KI and report directly to the President of the university. For organisational purposes our office is based at the department where our Director is employed, which at present is the Department of Global Public Health. The day-to-day work is managed by a tightly knit office and a group of expert coordinators, led, and managed by our Director and Strategic Process Leader. Our expert coordinators have specific expertise in fields relevant for health crises preparedness and management. They conduct much of our operational activities and collaborations. The expert coordinators work part-time at the Centre, with their remaining time focused on their core clinical and research expertise position. This ensures that their skills and expertise in their field remains up-to-date and means that as a Centre we can draw on their knowledge and extensive networks.

Our Steering group assure that the development and work of the Centre are conducted in accordance with our mission. It has representatives from several KI departments, as well as external representatives.



# Staff

Visit: [ki.se/healthcrises](https://ki.se/healthcrises)

Contact: [healthcrises@ki.se](mailto:healthcrises@ki.se)



**Johan von Schreeb**  
Director



**Anna Zorzet**  
Strategic process leader



**Åsa Svensson**  
Communications officer



**Caroline de Groot**  
Coordinator university  
collaboration



**Mattias Öberg**  
Expert coordinator  
chemical and  
toxicological incidents



**Märit Halmin**  
Expert coordinator  
critical care with  
limited resources



**Petter Ljungman**  
Expert coordinator  
extreme weather, climate  
and health effects



**Jessica Alm**  
Expert coordinator  
laboratory and diagnostic  
surge capacity



**Maja Fjaestad**  
Expert coordinator  
policy and preparedness



**Helena Nordenstedt**  
Expert coordinator  
health system resilience



**Helena Hervius Askling**  
Expert coordinator  
infectious diseases and  
vaccine preparedness



**Hedvig Glans**  
Expert coordinator  
Outbreak preparedness and  
response



**Lisa Stömmer**  
Expert coordinator  
emergency surgery

# University collaborations

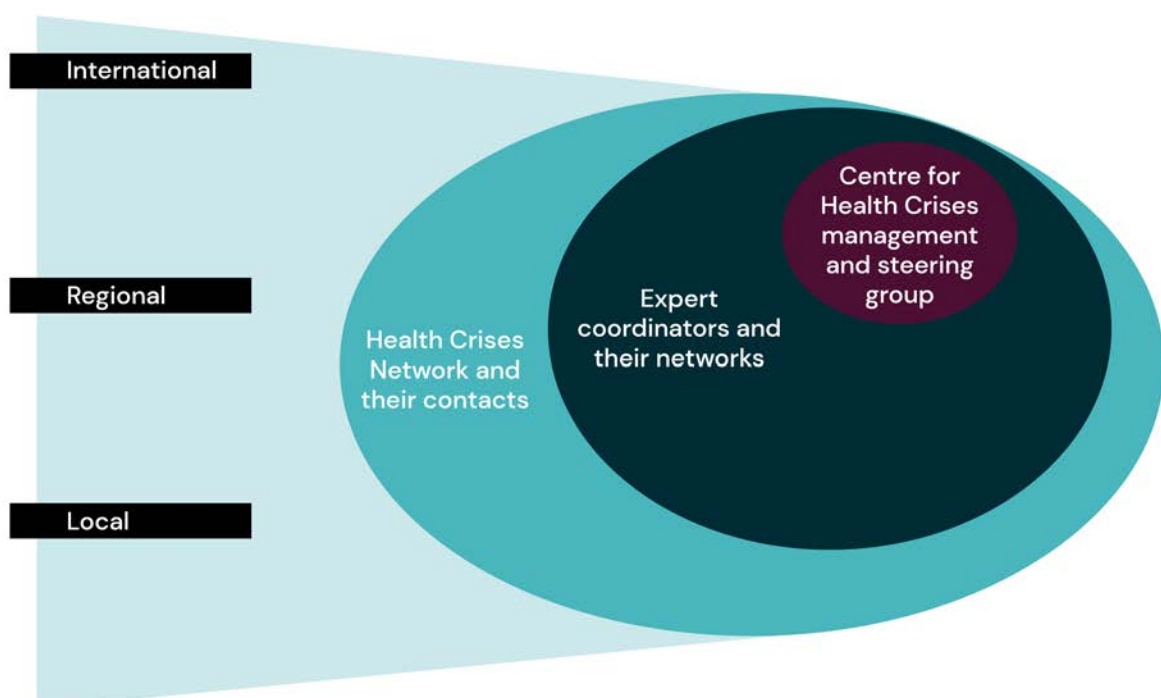
Collaboration and networking with partners at other universities are of utmost importance to us. It enables us to combine our knowledge and expertise and together find effective ways to make our expertise and skill available to the rest of society. There is a wide range of expertise at universities, in areas that are essential in the preparation, management, and evaluation of health crises.

In December 2022 we received funding from the Swedish Government to increase the knowledge about health crises and to collaborate with other universities. In the spring of 2023, we recruited a coordinator to analyse what role universities can have in future health crises and elaborate on how universities can collaborate in an efficient and useful way.

Throughout the year we conducted a mapping and analysis to identify Swedish university activities within the field of health crises, focusing on actors that conducted activities not solely within research, but also in public outreach and/or other areas. We identified ninety-five different centres, research groups and other activities. Based on the mapping, we conducted thirty-five interviews with representatives from twenty-two Swedish universities, to explore the ongoing work in the area.

The mapping resulted in a compilation of ongoing health crises-relevant activities at Swedish universities, as well as an identification of trends, successes, challenges and needs within the field. It also started to identify existing educational courses and programs aimed at enhancing preparedness for future health crises offered by Swedish universities. It is clear that there is current and highly relevant research, education, public outreach, collaboration with civil society and the public sector, and expert mediation being conducted, with a high level of ambition and a desire to contribute evidence, expertise, and education.

However, several interviewees also highlighted that expertise has been underutilised in previous health crises. Challenges that were emphasised included maintaining preparedness between crises, the potential loss of competence (especially in crisis events that happen rarely), difficulties in establishing dialogue with decision-makers, and organisational obstacles when collaborating with different authorities and institutions. In view of these challenges, the idea for a Health Crises Network was formed.



# Results of mapping of Swedish university activities in the field of health crises

**95** research groups/centres identified

**22** universities

**35** interviews

*Not an exhaustive mapping, but rather focused on entities that conduct outreach and other externally focused work, in addition to research and education*





## Health Crises Network

An important step towards an increased collaboration between universities was a meeting in the beginning of December 2023. Experts from fifteen Swedish universities participated and we discussed the role of universities before, during, and after health crises, as well as how we can collaborate to contribute most effectively. The participants shared experiences from previous health crises, ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to refugee crises, fires, and the war in Ukraine. Several of the participants also had experience working with other health crises abroad and in different contexts than the Swedish. The meeting laid the foundation for the Health Crises Network at Swedish universities.

The purpose of the network is to join forces to fulfil the vision of a society better prepared for future health crises, by building the next generation of health crisis experts. It is an interdisciplinary network with expertise from different fields: such as conflict, CBRNE, natural disasters, risk and crises management, defence, extreme weather events, IT, communication, and disaster medicine.

Having a network based around universities is a strength in health crises preparedness, management, and evaluation, because universities represent expertise, independence, and insight into ongoing developments in the field. The Health Crises Network will exchange experiences and collaborate to enhance preparedness for a health crisis and be activated in times of crisis. In the network, members exchange advice and expertise, share experiences, and explore opportunities for collaboration. At this stage, all participants are part of the network in their personal capacity based on their skills and expertise.

The Centre for Health Crises will be coordinating the network and regularly provide updates with relevant events, invitations to activities, collaborations on projects, training opportunities, funding announcements and so on. The network continued to grow, with several new members joining and more being suggested by existing members.

At the end of December 2023, we received renewed funding from the Swedish government for 2024, to continue the work to increase the knowledge about health crises and to collaborate with other universities. We are looking forward to developing the university collaboration and the Health Crises Network further, and in particular to look at how to integrate it in our plans for a National Centre for Health Crises (which is described on the last page of this annual report).







# Selected Activites 2023



## Strategic Goal:

# Catalyse research collaborations within the field of health crises and create meeting spaces for interdisciplinary collaboration



Managing health crises is a multidisciplinary effort, involving many scientific disciplines and areas. The Centre is a catalyst, as well as a forum, to connect and stimulate interdisciplinary research collaboration

## Learning from COVID-19

Collecting, processing, and finding ways to utilise the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic was at the heart of why the Centre was established and it is something we remain very committed to. During the year, we have conducted several activities to this end.

Early in the year we published the report [Being better prepared for the next health crisis – lessons from KI during the COVID-19 pandemic](#). The report focused on changes made to KI's operations, especially in terms of research. The report is based on interviews and survey responses from members of the earlier expert – and resources groups at KI, as well as other, previously conducted reports and compilations of changes made within the organisation. It concluded that among the lessons learned were the value of pre-existing networks and contacts, the swift establishment of resource teams at KI, and partnerships with the health care sector. The report also highlighted that external cooperation with different authorities at times proved challenging, that there was limited collaboration between universities, and that there were limited for internal discussions. Here, the Centre could play a role by facilitating networks and collaborations and creating meeting spaces.

In December we organised an open symposium on 'Clinical trials of COVID-19 treatment during the pandemic in Sweden: How did it go and how can we prepare ourselves to do even better next time?' The agenda included presentations from an international key-note speaker and lessons learned from 8 research leaders from university hospitals who conducted clinical trials during the pandemic. The symposium was followed by a roundtable discussion with selected invitees including politicians from the county council, and representatives from, the Research Council, Ethical Review Authority, the Public Health Agency, the Medical Products Agency and others. The roundtable covered the issues discussed during symposium, what worked well and what changes should be implemented to be better prepared for the next pandemic. The results of these discussions will be further addressed in 2024, in a publication and through continued policy work to try and create better conditions for clinical trials ahead of a future pandemic or other crises.

During 2023, a project has been designed to gather experiences and lessons learned from the health-care staff, and to identify positive and negative factors that could be drawn on to strengthen our preparedness for coming crises. This will be based on focus-group interviews with health care staff in Stockholm who worked clinically with COVID-19 patients during the pandemic and will be carried out during spring 2024. The results will be used as part of the Centre's science-based policy work.

## Climate and Health

We have continued our engagement with the university alliance Stockholm Trio (Stockholm University, KTH, KI) collaboration on Climate and Health. Along with our partners there we applied for and received funding from Stockholm Trio for Sustainable Actions to conduct a workshop, a Climathon (student competition) and symposium on climate and health, hosted at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

The Centre was in charge of organising and leading the workshop, which took place in the form of a lunch-to-lunch retreat in April with participation from all three universities. During the workshop we exchanged experiences, discussed key collaborative areas of research, and looked at options for future collaboration and joint projects in more detail. Other areas of collaboration, such as advocacy and education, were also discussed. A specific outcome of the workshop in terms of research collaboration was a joint grant application to Stockholm trio for funding for an interdisciplinary collaboration in education and research in 2024, which was approved. In addition to the workshop, we also participated in the planning and marketing of the Climathon and gave a presentation at the symposium on climate and health.



We also hosted an open seminar in Brussels together, showcasing the collaboration as a way for universities to contribute to societal preparedness for climate threats. The focus of the seminar was on the importance of knowledge in crisis management and how lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic can be applied. The seminar was part of the Swedish Presidency of the European Council. It was attended by around forty people, including representatives from the European Commission and European Research Executive Agency. Representatives from the Centre also met separately with the Swedish EU representation for Education and Research, the Directorate-General for International Partnerships and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.

Besides our involvement with the Stockholm Trio collaboration on Climate and Health, we welcomed an MD intern from University of Bologna, Italy, for nine months. She worked on a project exploring the health system preparedness for the impact of climate change, with a particular focus on floods and heatwaves. Work is ongoing to secure additional funding for the project.

## Forums for collaborations

Across our areas of expertise, we place great value on being actively engaged in various forums for collaboration. It is a fundamental part of our ability to work towards our strategic goal to catalyse research collaborations and create meeting spaces for interdisciplinary collaboration.

During 2023, we have participated in both national and international forums. In April, we met with the Director of the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence in Berlin. We have also had meetings with the International Vaccine Institute including their newly established European office which is located in Stockholm, and helped them set up meetings with contacts from our network.

Other networking activities include co-organising a workshop titled 'Managing Emerging Health Risks in the Feed and Food Chain' as part of the Uppsala Health Summit, participating in a two-day meeting in Linköping on developing national mass casualty triage, attending the National Disaster Medicine Conference and maintaining a collaboration with the Swedish Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine (SFAI) on the question of prioritisation to intensive care units.

Moreover, we were represented in Focus Group 5 (organisation, governance, and coordination (infrastructures) of important societal functions during a pandemic) for the Swedish Research Council National Research Programme in Viruses and Pandemics.

## Strategic Goal:

# Stimulate and participate in the development of new education within different health crises subjects



As our mission is to create the next generation of health crises experts, it is vital that we act to stimulate education and actively engage in the development of new training and education in preparedness, response, and evaluation of health crises initiatives

## Teaching and course development

In order to carry out our mission, to build the next generation of health crisis expert, teaching and course development is absolutely key.

In November 2023, we developed and taught a course component on outbreak epidemiology as part of the research school 'Epidemiology for Clinicians' at KI. Our two days included both lectures and an interactive case with epidemiological calculations. It was taught by members of our team in collaboration with partners from Médecins Sans Frontières and the Department of Global Public Health at KI.

During the year we have further developed the professional training course Trauma Katastrof Stockholm (Trauma Disaster Stockholm). It is a course on emergency surgery, trauma, and disaster preparedness course. Our focus in 2023 has been on how to make it available for all county councils in Sweden. The course curriculum aligns with the aims described in recommendations from the National Board of Health and Welfare. At time of writing the course is offered by the Karolinska University Hospital to emergency hospitals in Stockholm but it should hopefully be extended to all of Sweden.

Moreover, we have taught on subjects such as war traumatology, health systems resilience, antibiotic resistance, critical care and decision-making with limited resources and been engaged as instructors in triage during mass-casualty simulation exercises.





## Podcast Riskzonen

We co-produced the fourth season of the popular science podcast Riskzonen. The podcast is about risk, vulnerability, worry and how to handle the unpredictability of life. The fourth season contained eight episodes, each around forty minutes long, and aired in the late spring, summer, and early autumn of 2023. It focused entirely on health crises, with topics ranging from extreme heat to infectious diseases. Producing a podcast allowed us to reach a wider audience and use the Centre's wide-ranging areas of expertise in a format that is both educational and entertaining. The fourth season of Riskzonen reached second place in the ranking of most popular science-themed podcasts in Sweden in September 2023.



## Rapid response brief

As part of our intention to bridge the gap between science and policy, and thus make research and scientific expertise more available to decision-makers, we are creating a workshop in developing 'Rapid response briefs'. These briefs are intended to be short, easily accessible, and collate available research and experience from earlier events to facilitate decision-making in crises. The workshop development is done in collaboration with the KI Library and SBU (the Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Assessment of Social Services). The initial target group are researchers wishing to develop skills in making their work more accessible to decision-makers, including members of the newly formed national health crises network. A pilot version of the workshop will run in spring 2024.

## Identifying educational needs in the handling of chemical incidents

Chemical incidents are good examples of rare events that nonetheless can develop into major health crises. Maintaining knowledge and continuing to educate about various aspects of such incidents, including both mitigation and handling, is consequently of great importance, since otherwise know-how and skill risks being forgotten or outdated when an incident does occur. In order to gather and take stock of what education exists and what might be needed, we invited key stakeholders involved in both health care and in the management of chemicals and protection and preparedness for chemical incidents in Sweden to a roundtable discussion. The discussion served to construct joint plans for prioritisation and commence planning of upcoming joint initiatives.

## Strategic Goal:

Gather existing and build new health crises expertise, and supply specific know-how and competence

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The Centre aims to be a resource for expertise during health crises. We map knowledge and skills that exists at KI and other universities, and make it available, both during a health crisis and in crisis-preparedness

### Secondments

Thanks to our collaborations with international partners, we ensure that our expertise and skills remain relevant. Consequently, we make sure that we remain updated in our analysis, research, teaching and, not least that we ensure that our expertise is used where it is needed. Through secondment of staff via operational organisations we are able to provide expertise and assistance before, during and after health crises. It also means that members of our team collect and bring back valuable lessons.

In 2023 we collaborated with the WHO, including their network GOARN - Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, UK-Med, and Médecins Sans Frontières. We seconded one of the Centre's experts to support the deployment of UK-EMT, the British Emergency Medical Team that responded to the earthquake in Türkiye in February. We also seconded an expert to Malawi, to lend support during the cholera outbreak there. Our expert worked on supporting the local health care system, especially in setting up facilities to deliver oral rehydration solutions.



## Expert mediation

Expert mediation, i.e. making sure that the expertise and skill that we gather at the Centre is made available to provide science-based support and clarity, is a key part of our work. We do this in a variety of different ways and in different forums, across our areas of expertise.

During 2023, our expert coordinators and other members of staff featured in the media over one hundred times. These media participations occurred across a range of media outlets, locally, nationally, and internationally. Whilst our media participation to some extent came in waves and was likely to coincide with health crises – such as earthquakes or extreme weather events – our participation was nonetheless constant. This is evident as there was not a single month of the year in which our experts did not feature in the media. Our participation was mainly a result of incoming requests from media outlets, but we also carried out proactive media work.

Whereas media participation reaches a wide, but often less defined audience, our engagement in roundtables and other conversations, were often a result of a more targeted plan to engage with certain groups. Members of our team have participated in roundtables on antibiotic resistance, hosted by the Government Offices and on complex threats and multidimensional resilience, hosted by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Furthermore, we have been invited to spoke about health crises at the Conference on Support to the Recovery and Development of Health Care in Ukraine (Swecare) and at a study visit to the ECDC by the COREPER II Ambassadors, during the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU. In addition, we also conducted a workshop at the annual meeting of all Director Generals for the National state authorities.



## Recruitment

Considering that 2023 was only our second year of operation, recruitment remained key to build our pool of expertise, expanding, and solidifying our work method, and producing tangible outcomes. Structuring our work around a group of part-time expert coordinators, each with in-depth expertise and extensive networks of contacts in their field, has proven to serve us well. It allows us to maintain depth in our expertise and skillset, whilst at the same time covering the wide range of issues that are part of health crises.

During the year a further six expert coordinators began their contracts with us. Their fields of expertise are laboratory and diagnostic preparedness; health systems resilience; politics and preparedness; infectious diseases and vaccine preparedness; outbreak preparedness and response; and emergency surgery. In addition to the expert coordinators, we also, as previously mentioned, recruited a coordinator for university collaboration, to work specifically with the university collaboration and health crises network described earlier in this annual report.

## Strategic Goal:

Drive policy development and in collaboration, set the agenda for increased health crises preparedness



The Centre strives to make sure that the knowledge we gather is used to drive policy and help set the agenda when it comes to building capacities for health crises management, preparation, and evaluation

### Policy lab

In 2023 we launched a Policy lab at KI, in collaboration with the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Health (CESH). A Policy lab is a forum to examine complex societal challenges and discuss evidence-based solutions, with the aim of bridging the gap between research and policy, and eventually policy implementation.

For us, the Policy labs are a way of actively working towards bridging the gap between science and policy, not least by making policy, politics, and political process more understandable and relatable for people working in science and academia. We discuss relevant topics and processes with the aim of mutual learning, drawing upon experiences and expertise from people within and outside KI.

Our main target audience are staff and researchers (including PhD students) at KI; but we have also on occasion welcomed participants from outside the university. The first Policy lab was held in October and focused on the structure and important processes in the political system as well as behind the scenes insights from persons with experience from both politics and research. It was well-attended and sparked great interest and many suggestions for future topics from the participants.





## Advocacy

In May, we gathered a key group of stakeholders, including clinically active doctors and nurses, for a roundtable discussion on Prioritisation to Intensive Care Units during a Crisis – How do we Create Clinically Applicable Prioritisation? The need to prioritise is a fundamental feature of a health crisis and was an issue that arose not least during the most intense waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, we argue that there must be functioning systems in place for this as part of crisis preparedness. The roundtable created a space for fruitful conversations and resulted in an opinion piece on the issue. The piece was co-signed by several participants at the roundtable and had the intention of bringing the issue to the attention of a wider audience.



We also held a seminar on prioritisation to intensive care units during the Anaesthesiology Week, hosted by SFAI. The topic is planned to feature again, more extensively, in the same event next year.

When cuts to the research aid policy was announced in spring and early summer the Centre made official comments on this and co-signed two opinion pieces on the issue, called the Government Stopping Necessary Research (published in Aftonbladet) and I Don't Think Swedish Researchers Realise How Bad This Is (published in Dagens ETC).

In addition to the previously mentioned opinion pieces, our expert coordinators, Director and Strategic process leader have written or co-signed others. A few examples include Develop Emergency Surgery – it is Needed in Peace and Times of Crisis (published in Vårt Försvar) and Let the Universities Contribute to Crisis Preparedness in the Health Care Sector (published in Dagens Nyheter). The intent behind the opinion pieces have been to bring the issues to the attention of the public and putting pressure on decision-makers.

We have also provided comments and given a presentation to the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions' working group on the role of universities in the total defence, as well as given a presentation on the topic to the Stockholm County Council. In June, we also participated in an event organised by SciLifeLab and Uppsala University during the Almedalsveckan, on Pandemic Laboratory Preparedness – What happened, what should we do and what do we need to prepare for next time.

We have organised two seminars in our series KI Contributes, one on building resilience to extreme heat, and one on understanding and process the experience of war through art. Both seminars were well-attended and included participants and presenters both from Sweden and abroad. KI Contributes is a useful forum to welcome a wide audience to seminars on various topics, but that all highlight how research and academia can contribute to the surrounding society.

In May our Director gave the keynote speech when the EU's health ministers met in Sweden for a high-level meeting on crisis preparedness and access to medicine, as part of Sweden's presidency of the EU Council. The topic of the speech was 'Myth busting in Health Crises' Response'.



## Strategic Goal:

Act as KI's and its management's sensor for new health threats, and contribute to the coordination of KI's efforts in a health crisis



Whilst much of the Centre's work has an external focus, we combine it with internal work to assist KI as needed, in its coordination of, and preparation for, future health crises.

### Advice, support and internal collaboration

As a university-wide centre, that draws on expertise and organisation from various departments, we value input on our work from across KI's many areas of expertise and we want to make sure that we engage with the whole university. To make our work known and lay the foundation for collaborations, we have presented the Centre and our work at several KI departments and at other centres, for example the National Pandemic Centre (NPC), the Institute for Environmental Medicine and to the Research & Doctoral Education Office.

During 2023 we have met with KI's new leadership team on several occasions to present the Centre and our work, supply expertise-specific advice ahead of political visits, facilitated workshops and lent advocacy support and establish good working relations.

We have also met with KI's Communications Department and the Safety and Security Team. In these meetings we discussed how the Centre can best contribute to KI's own crisis preparedness; how we can support existing structures within the organisation, what channels we should use to raise awareness when we notice situations or events that might develop into health crises that affects KI, and how we connect to the crisis management plan. The outcome of these meetings and other contacts with the Professional Services at KI have been very positive. We have noted concrete ways in which we can help and support each other and look forward to developing these further.

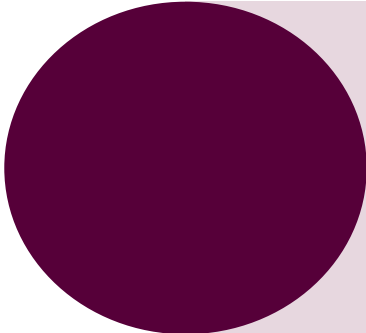
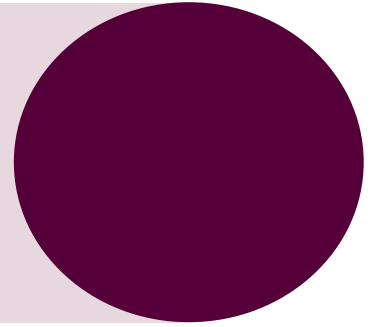
Throughout the year we have been invited by KI's management to participate and present the Centre at several high-level meetings at KI, such as a visit from the German Minister of Health, meetings with the political leadership of Region Stockholm, as well as meetings with the Swedish ministers for Health Care, for Social Affairs and Public Health, and for Education. This has served not just to raise awareness of the existence of the Centre, but of the importance of addressing health crises issues in general and the role of universities in preparedness and response.



# Enablers

## Financing

Stable financing is key to our ongoing work and activities, for further development of the Centre, and for securing and maintaining the staff and expertise we need. In 2023 we were funded by donations from the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation, Stockholm Trio, funds from KI's president and the Swedish Government through KI's appropriation directions.

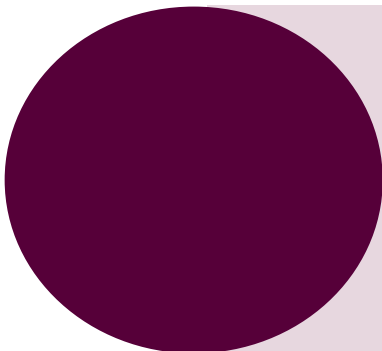
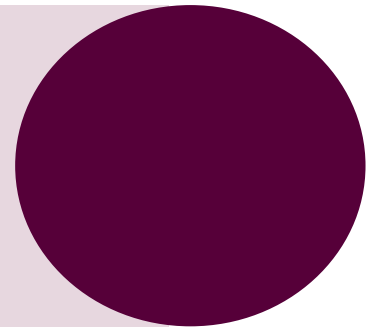


## Communication

Well-articulated, target and timely communication is key to achieving our goals. In addition to communication around events, specific activities, and initiatives such as university collaboration, we produce a regular newsletter and maintain a website. This work is done by our Communications Officer, who also assist the rest of the office and expert coordinators with their communication needs and media engagements. As the Centre has grown during the year, the need for more structured internal communication has also increased.

## Organisation

2023 has proven that the organisation structure we initiated our first year, with a tight-knit team in the office and a group of expert coordinators, continues to serve us well. Substantial time and effort during the year has been spent on investigating how we can continue the Centre's development towards becoming a National centre, which is further outlined at the end of this report.

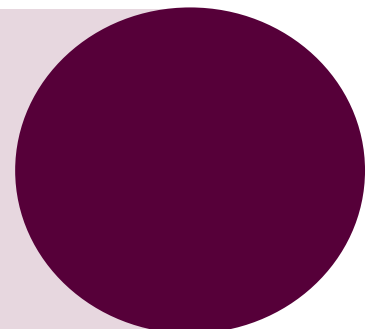


## External monitoring

To make sure we remain up to date and involved in current developments in our field, thorough and timely external monitoring is necessary. Each expert coordinator is responsible for external monitoring in their area of expertise, and during the year we have also initiated a standardised process through which the Centre's office staff conduct general external monitoring weekly, including monitoring funding opportunities and government assignments to share internally and externally.

## Steering group

In 2023, our Steering Group had two meetings per semester, where the Director and Strategic Process Leader also attended and presented various topics for consideration and discussion by the Steering Group. Several expert coordinators were also invited to present their work throughout the year. The Steering Group has provided insightful and useful input to the Centre's work and development, in particular to the new Work Plan for 2024-2026.



# Looking to the future

In a rapidly evolving world, facing both immediate health threats and creeping crises, often in the form of multifaceted polycrises, our analysis is that Swedish universities' skills and competences, could be used better, to increase civil preparedness and strengthen our total defence. Hence, in our second year of operation, we have spent significant time and effort on analyses and strategic development of the Centre, toward becoming a National Centre, in addition to the activities described in this annual report. This work has also included liaising with relevant government departments and agencies, to understand where our added value lies. We have had meetings with the Ministry of Education and Research, and the Ministry of Defence, including the state secretary to the Minister for Civil Defence. A similar meeting with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, including the state secretary to the Minister for Health Care is to be held in early 2024. Moreover, we also described the value of a National Centre in KI's comments to the Research Bill.

The process toward becoming a National Centre has been aided by the specific government funding to work on university collaboration and to support other universities in their work on health crises, received in late 2022. As described in this report, a first important step was the establishment of a Health Crises Network toward the end of 2023. We have also reviewed and gathered insights into the structure and funding system of other National Centres, which has been instrumental in how we have developed plans for funding and organisation of National Centre for Health Crises.

With the renewed government funding received in December 2023, we will continue to develop the network and analyse how universities through our expertise, evidence-based analyses and by being aware of the latest developments in the field can contribute before, during, and after health crises.

