

[Press release](#)

## Lucy Gilson and Johan Rockström awarded the Virchow Prize 2024

***Prize under High Patronage of the President of the German Bundestag endowed with €500,000 for significant contributions towards safeguarding human and planetary health / Award ceremony on October 12 at Rotes Rathaus with the Governing Mayor of Berlin***

**Berlin, July 15, 2024** – The Virchow Prize Committee has decided to bestow the Virchow Prize 2024 upon Lucy Gilson and Johan Rockström for their holistic and systems-based approach safeguarding human and planetary health. With the Virchow Prize 2024, Gilson’s and Rockström’s pioneering contributions to the analysis and understanding of the importance of efficient health systems and the decisive role of climate and planetary boundaries to preserve the conditions for healthy lives on our planet earth are recognised and honoured.

Lucy Gilson heads the Health Policy and Systems Division at Cape Town University, South Africa, and serves as Professor of Health Policy and Systems at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), UK. Gilson’s research includes close cross-level collaboration driving transformative change towards more sustainable, resilient and just governance, advocating for people-centred health systems. Her innovative and consistent contributions to strengthening health systems, essential for achieving the health-related United Nations 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to translating strategy into tangible improvements on the ground embody a strong commitment to solidarity and human rights, fostering substantial progress in universal health coverage and equitable access to quality healthcare.

Johan Rockström leads the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), holds professorships at the Potsdam University, Germany, the Stockholm University, Sweden, and serves as Chief Scientist of Conservation International, United States. Rockström’s pioneering work revolves around the planetary boundaries framework, which defines the safe operating space for humanity to thrive sustainably and responsibly for future generations. This concept which he further developed towards safe and just Earth System Boundaries, addresses critical processes such as climate change, biodiversity loss, freshwater use, and nutrient cycles, highlighting its direct relevance to health. By interconnecting this concept with the SDGs, Rockström exemplifies comprehensive systems thinking.

Both laureates have importantly advanced scientific understanding and awareness in their respective areas and beyond. Their advocacy for a holistic and systemic approach has influenced global policy debates and provided a science-based framework for tackling global health-related challenges at various levels while demonstrating that significant progress is possible by independent, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral science towards the common goal “Health for All”. Lucy Gilson and Johan Rockström share a common focus on human well-being, sustainability, resilience and global health. Recognising that health systems are interconnected with environmental and social systems, influencing and being influenced by them, both scientists exemplify the importance of systems thinking in tackling urgent global challenges while highlighting the role of fundamental research, responsible communication and effective governance. The Virchow Prize 2024 Laureates collectively advance a more resilient, healthier and just world, upholding the Virchow Prize’s values of human rights, solidarity, and equity.

The Virchow Prize 2024 Award Ceremony with a welcome note from the Governing Mayor of Berlin, Kai Wegner, and under High Patronage of the President of the German Bundestag, Bärbel Bas, is held at the Berlin City Hall (Rotes Rathaus) on Saturday, October 12, at 17:00 CET, the eve of the World Health Summit opening. The event will be livestreamed. More information on the award and the official laureate announcement: [virchowprize.org](https://virchowprize.org)

### **About the Virchow Prize**

Established by the non-profit Virchow Foundation, the Virchow Prize is an internationally prestigious award annually celebrated in Berlin and in this year endowed with €500,000. Rudolf Virchow, inspiration and namesake of the prize, is a symbol and role model for the urgently needed holistic approach to improve health for all and thereby providing an example of global responsibility for generations to come. In this spirit, the Virchow Prize, deeply rooted in highest-quality research and profound humanistic academic values, intends to further strengthen our efforts to a better future. Individuals continue the legacy of Rudolf Virchow, and their work embodies the spirit of the United Nations 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals, specifically addressing SDG 3 “Health and Well-Being for All”.

### **About the Virchow Foundation**

The Virchow Foundation was established in 2021 with support of the Presidents of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities as well as Members of the German Bundestag and civil society to contribute to the improvement of health worldwide. This purpose is achieved through the joint commitment of highly respected international individuals and organisations, the close partnership with the World Health Summit, and the establishment of the Virchow Prize. More information: [virchow.foundation](https://virchow.foundation)

### **For media representatives**

Accreditation for media representatives to attend the Virchow Prize 2024 Award Ceremony is open until October 10, 2024. Please use the dedicated form available at [virchowprize.org/communications-kit/](https://virchowprize.org/communications-kit/)

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