



PIK Alumni Newsletter 07/2026

Dear PIK Alumni,



Late June 2026 has seen record temperatures across Europe – including Potsdam. The weather station of the German Weather Service on Telegrafenberg (overlooked by PIK's Süring Building, home mainly to research department 'Earth System Analysis') measured a top temperature of over 40°C on 27th June. Analysis of meteorological parameters and trends in Potsdam can be found on the PIK website [here](#). PIK research has been prominently picked up by the media such as by the *heute* journal with Leonie Wenz ([Link](#)) or the *Tagesschau* with Fred Hattermann ([Link](#)) and Peter Hoffmann ([Link](#)) or internationally by the *Economic Times* featuring Stefan Rahmstorf.

A few developments of the past months:

A publication by Forster and Rahmstorf in *Geophysical Research Letters* in March showed a significant increase in the rate of global warming since 2015, from 0.2°C per decade in the period 1970-2015 to 0.35°C per decade since 2015. Given this rate of warming, it is likely that overshooting the 1.5°C Paris target will occur by 2030.

Ottmar Edenhofer was re-appointed for a second period as Chair of the European Scientific Advisory Board for Climate Change (ESABCC). As well as previous reports on carbon dioxide removal and on amending the EU climate law, the ESABCC recently published a report [calling for adaptation in the agri-food sector](#) and on [strengthening resilience to climate change](#). The work of PIK scientists on scenarios and the analysis of policy instruments such as the EU ETS have been of key importance in these analyses.

A [new science brief](#) by the UN Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board highlights Earth system tipping points as a unique global governance challenge. The brief, produced in partnership with the PIK, argues that the risks of crossing tipping points require decision-making under deep

uncertainty, long time horizons and potentially hard-to-reverse change. Related to this science brief, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres gave a speech on the "global response to the climate and energy crises" opening the London Climate Action Week ([Link](#)).

PIK was also involved in this year's Petersberger Klimadialog and contributed to a breakfast meeting with climate envoys on "Transitioning away from fossil fuels". Another highlight is PIK's contribution to the Science Pre-Conference informing the First Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels convened in Santa Marta by the governments of Colombia and the Netherlands at the end of April 2026.

Our institute has had some recent funding successes. For example, PIK is part of a consortium led by Leibniz Institute for Astrophysics Potsdam (AIP). The project is building the first 'Leibniz Science Campus' in Brandenburg, titled 'Multi-scaled Challenges: from Astrophysics to Climate Modelling'. Further partners are University of Potsdam and the Weierstrass Institute for Applied Analysis and Stochastics (WIAS), the Deutsche Elektronen-Synchrotron DESY, the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics, and the German Center for Astrophysics (DZA). The aim is to strengthen collaboration between the partners and to provide impetus for forward-looking modelling approaches in astrophysics and climate physics. Another major success is the ERC Advanced Grant BRIGHT awarded to Gunnar Luderer of the RD3's Energy Transition Lab. The 2.5 million euro project will advance integrated high-resolution modelling of the long-term energy transition to sector-coupled net-zero energy systems.

Finally, Potsdam's City Cycling weeks just took place: the "PIK-Rad" team headed by team captain Dietmar Gibietz-Rheinbay made 1100 cycle trips amounting to more than



8,500 km, equaling 1.4 tons of CO₂ avoidance. The wider team from "Campus Telegrafenberg" clocked up over 27,000 km and nearly 4.9 tons of avoided emissions.

Publication Highlights

In case you missed them, here are a few more publication highlights of recent months.

Indicators of Global Climate Change

The 2025 "[Indicators of Global Climate Change](#)" report, an annual update of key indicators of the state of the climate system and human influence and including contributions from PIK scientists, was recently published. It finds the Earth is accumulating heat at an accelerating rate. Human-induced warming reached 1.37°C above pre-industrial levels in 2025 and is expected to exceed 1.5°C within around four years. The report gives an update on indicators used in the IPCC 6th Assessment Report as an improved basis for drafting of the 7th Assessment Report. A newly added indicator of temperature extremes is the number of days experiencing marine heatwaves, which has more than tripled between 1991 and 2025. [Read more](#)

Scientists in PIK's department 'Earth System Analysis' have recently published a couple more studies examining effects resulting from weakening of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation. These are described in more detail [here](#) (on a newly identified feedback mechanism between the weakening of the AMOC and a strengthening of the Nordic Seas Overturning Circulation NOC), and [here](#) (on possible release of carbon from the Southern Ocean in the event of an AMOC collapse).

We Are in the Anthropocene—Now What?

In a recent article 'We Are in the Anthropocene—Now What?' published in *Earth's Future*, Johan Rockström and co-

authors from PIK discuss what the Anthropocene might mean for the Earth from the perspective of Earth system science. The Anthropocene stresses both the enormity of the human imprint on Earth, as well as its long-term nature. The paper describes different pathways in the Anthropocene up to the year 3,000, systematically characterizing them according to impacts and causes. The authors also discuss implications for Earth system resilience that could result in possible worst-case scenarios for Anthropocene outcomes and conclude that even minimal unavoidable residual emissions (e.g. from the food sector) risk perpetuating global warming even without other human forcing.

A publisher version of the article can be found in the publications database at: https://publications.pik-potsdam.de/pubman/faces/ViewItemOverviewPage.jsp?itemId=item_34521

Carbon dioxide removal might need to scale faster than solar to meet climate targets

Of course, it's also part of PIK's mission to look at solutions to the climate crisis. The recent [State of Carbon Dioxide Removal](#) report – to which Sabine Fuss, Jan Minx, William Lamb and other PIK colleagues mainly from RD5 contributed – finds that national pledges fall short of pathways limiting warming to 1.5°C this century by more than 5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide removal (CDR) per year by 2050. While cutting emissions remains the first and most important priority for tackling climate change, increased CDR capacity will be needed to address emissions. The report highlights new insights, explores knowledge gaps and defines core concepts while also aiming to improve the reliability and accessibility of CDR data. [Read more](#)

Reminder: recent publications by members of PIK are available here:

<https://www.pik-potsdam.de/en/output/publications>

Workshops @ PIK

Two major workshops were hosted at PIK in June. Firstly, modellers from the REMIND-MAGPIE community came together. REMIND-MAGPIE is an integrated assessment modelling framework used by scientists worldwide in order to quantify the complex dynamics within and between the energy, land-use, water, economy and climate systems.



A week later the joint Cross-sectoral ISIMIP and CROSS-CASCADE Workshop took place on Telegrafenberg, bringing together more than 100 researchers from round the world.



[ISIMIP](#) is a systematic, cross-sectoral climate impact model intercomparison process improving and deepening the

reliable, evidence-based understanding on impacts necessary for effective climate adaptation and mitigation. By systematically comparing results across independent impact models targeting various sectors such as Water, Agriculture, Health, Energy, and many more, driven by the same climate forcing data, ISIMIP produces findings whose robustness can be explicitly quantified. Where models agree, confidence is high; where they diverge, the reasons can be investigated and communicated transparently. Keynote speakers included PIK's Johan Rockström and Bart van den Hurk, Co-Chair of the IPCC Working Group III. A key topic was ISIMIP's strategic alignment with the next generation of climate projections. This is a critical step towards ISIMIP providing state-of-the-art impact projections feeding into the IPCC 7th Assessment Report. The workshop produced concrete next steps for both the [CROSS-CASCADE networking project](#) that underpins certain ISIMIP activities and the broader ISIMIP community.

Outreach

PIK has launched a new [series of short films on YouTube](#) featuring PIK scientists and offering an overview of key research topics at the institute. Films by PIK directors Johan Rockström and Ottmar Edenhofer are already available. In **"How stable is our planet?"** Johan Rockström explains the Planetary Boundaries framework, while in the second episode **"How can we clean up the atmosphere?"** Ottmar Edenhofer discusses the need to create systems to fund atmospheric carbon removal. These complement existing short videos on PIK social media channels featuring PIK scientists like Stefan Rahmstorf, Benjamin Bodirsky, Stefanie Heinicke and others and including topics such as the Global Tipping Point report 2025 or the EAT-Lancet Commission report. Other short films are in preparation. The Planetary Boundary Lab at PIK also has a series of films on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@PlanetaryBoundariesScience>. The latest one is on the Freshwater Boundary with Dr Yassmin Hesham.

PIK at Potsdam Science Day. In May PIK, together with the Kopernikus Project Ariadne, presented research on climate change, the energy transition and societal transformation at 13th Potsdam Science Day on the Golm science campus. Among other talks, Sophie von Loeben and Christoph Gornott from RD2's Adaptation in Agricultural Systems group explained how rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns threaten coffee cultivation worldwide. Inspired by research conducted on the climate change adaptation

potential of Liberica coffee for smallholder farmers in Uganda, Sophie and Christoph served Liberica coffee. Taste testers included Brandenburg's Science Minister Manja Schüle.



PIK Director Bettina Hörstrup, Christoph Gornott, Sophie von Loeben, Manja Schüle and Oliver Günther at Potsdam Science Day



Ariadne NetZero website online

As part of the [Ariadne](#) project, researchers from PIK and TU Berlin are developing a new website 'NetZero' that visualises results from the project's scenario modelling. The first module, "Systemtransformation", is now online (in German). It shows how the path to net zero can be shaped in concrete terms.

[NetZero](#) combines explanatory texts with interactive graphics that illustrate the content of the [Ariadne Scenario Report](#) and supplementary model analyses. The focus is on options that will make climate neutrality by 2045 possible, including the rapid expansion of renewable electricity

generation, the electrification of end-use, innovative infrastructure planning, integration of market-ready technologies, and the use of CO₂-free alternatives like hydrogen where electrification is not possible. The website enables journalists, policy-makers and the public to explore various scenarios relating to the energy transition and to underpin in-depth research with reliable figures.

PIK Annual Report. If you want to know more about PIK's research, its role in policy advice and its achievements of the past year, the [PIK Jahresbericht 2025](#) is now online (in German only).

Upcoming events

GCET27: PIK's research department 'Climate Economics & Policy – MCC Berlin' is organizing the [27th Global Conference on Environmental Taxation](#) at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in September 2026. The international, interdisciplinary conference aims to advance knowledge, understanding, and debate on environmental taxation and its relationship to other environmental protection policies, and will bring together researchers and practitioners working at the intersection of public finance, climate and environmental economics, tax law, international economic law, and climate policy. Registration is still possible until 20 August.

Komm mit auf den Berg! The Telegrafenberg Open Day / Tag der Offenen Tür takes place on 26th September 2026 from 12 noon – 5 pm. The four science institutes on Telegrafenberg – PIK, the GFZ Helmholtz Centre for Geosciences, the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research (AWI) and the Leibniz Institute for

Astrophysics Potsdam (AIP) – are joining forces for a joint open day. Come and meet some (former) PIK colleagues and find out about current research themes. Updates on the programme will be posted under this link: <https://www.gfz.de/veranstaltungen/tag-der-offenen-tuer>.



Congratulations to ...



Sabine Undorf, senior scientist in RD2's Adaptation in Agricultural Systems group, has been appointed as [Professor for Meteorology and Climatology](#) at the University of Trier. There, she will further develop her research on the attribution of climate impacts and teach in the university's environmental and

spatial sciences programmes, while remaining part of the team at PIK.

Kirsten Thonicke has been appointed as a member of the [German Committee Future Earth](#). Appointed by the German Research Foundation (DFG), the committee represents expertise from diverse scientific perspectives and fields within sustainability research. It acts as a national contact point and platform for research in the context of the international programmes "Future Earth" and the World Climate Research Programme.



Christopher Reyer has been appointed a member of the Scientific Board for Forest Policy of the Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture (BMLEM).

Johan Rockström was presented with the [Coppock Research Medal](#) of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in recognition of his outstanding contribution to geographical knowledge through research and publication.

Ottmar Edenhofer has been awarded the [BAUM Environmental and Sustainability Award](#) 2026. BAUM e.V. is a business network committed to sustainable business practices. The award recognises Edenhofer's contributions to the development of scientifically grounded instruments for effective climate policy in Germany and Europe.

Alumni near and far

The PIK Alumni database, started in 2018, now contains the names of about 460 former members of PIK, from former student assistants to professors. Around 130 Alumni are in countries outside Germany, while around 200 are based in either Berlin or Potsdam. Whether you're still near PIK or whether you're far away, we'd like to hear from you and feature you and your current work, recent publications or research highlights in this space. Please get in touch if you're interested.

PIK's Alumni programme



Please keep us up to date: Send an update to alumni@pik-potsdam.de if you have changed your job or want to update your details in our Alumni database. We'd also welcome news about *your recent publications, personal achievements, or research activities*. Best wishes to all! **Alison Schlums**, Alumni Officer.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Keep up to date on PIK's social media channels:

<https://www.pik-potsdam.de/en/institute/about/communications-office/piks-social-media-channels>

IMPRESSUM

Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) e. V.
Telegraphenberg A 31 14473 Potsdam Germany
<https://www.pik-potsdam.de/en/impressum>

DATA PROTECTION STATEMENT

We use your data to keep in touch with you as Alumni, to provide you with occasional news about the Potsdam Institute and its activities, and to send targeted information about scientific and other events. PIK's full [privacy policy](#) can be found on the PIK website (Section 7.2. relates to Alumni). If you have any concerns or queries about the use of your personal data, please contact us.

KEEP US UPDATED

If you have moved to a new job or your contact details have changed, please let us know by sending an email to alumni@pik-potsdam.de.

NEWSLETTER

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