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MAXIMISING THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE ON CLIMATE ACTION IN BELGIUM



Hello, Goodbye,

Those of you who have read me before might know that I like to refer to song lyrics in my writing. Also on this occasion, as the Belgian Climate Centre is sharing its first newsletter, while Ella and I have both announced that we will be stepping down as directors, some Beatles song lyrics seem appropriate.

The idea to establish a Belgian Climate Centre originated after the devastating floods in the summer of 2021 and the havoc that they wreaked in the Vesdre Valley and far beyond. In November 2023, the Belgian Climate Centre was officially inaugurated and within a couple of months, Ella and I came on board. Our mission? To optimize the impact of Belgian climate science on climate action. To provide the science and knowledge that will help decision-makers to reduce the impacts of the next climate extreme to hit Belgium, while transitioning away from fossil fuels in an efficient and just way.

No biggie, we can do hard things. Or in the words of the Beatles:

You say, "Yes", I say, "No"

You say, "Stop" and I say, "Go, go, go"

We went and it's been a hell of a ride. We organized the first [Belgian Science for Climate Action conference](#), which many of you attended and which we plan to organize again in 2026. We listened to the scientists, and we made [Belgium's climate data](#) available. We listened to the stakeholders, and we made Belgium's [regional climate projections](#) available. And now we are collaborating with scientists from the RMI and other institutes to update both of those datasets so that you have access to the most recent results for your work and decisions.

We also made sure that we are not the only ones listening to others. Thanks to our [Climate Science Expert Catalogue](#), scientists, stakeholders from the public and private sector and the media can find and listen to each other. To come up with the best solutions, with the most innovative ideas, and with the most effective communication.

Of equal importance to these projects, was our conceptual redefinition of the term 'climate science' to include not only physical climate science, but also the social sciences, the economic sciences, the motivational sciences, the engineering, the urban planning, and all the fields of scientific expertise we need to address anthropogenic climate change and its impacts. Luckily, we have outstanding and dedicated scientists working in all these fields in Belgium and in its mission of Science for Climate Action, the Belgian Climate Centre stands on the shoulders of giants.

Almost two years have passed since the Belgian Climate Centre inauguration and Europe is in the

midst of another deluge, this time in Central Europe. In a [paper](#) we published earlier this week, we show how the summer jet stream contributed to a hot Eastern Mediterranean, which in turn contributed to the floods in Central Europe. We further show that over the past 700 years, European summer jet stream variability has not only controlled weather extremes, but also societal extremes, such as harvests, wildfires, and even epidemic outbreaks. Our results are a harbinger for things to come: when anthropogenic warming is superimposed on natural jet stream variability, the weather and societal extremes will be further exacerbated.

It's results like these that make the call of science so strong for me. Having built a Belgian Climate Centre from scratch, together with Ella and our team, I have decided to return to science and to the US. I leave the Climate Centre in the master hands of a phenomenal team. They are giants, standing on the shoulders of giants. When you say "stop", they say "go, go, go".

Or to use some other (adapted) song lyrics:

There go my heroes,

Watch them as they go!



Valérie Trouet

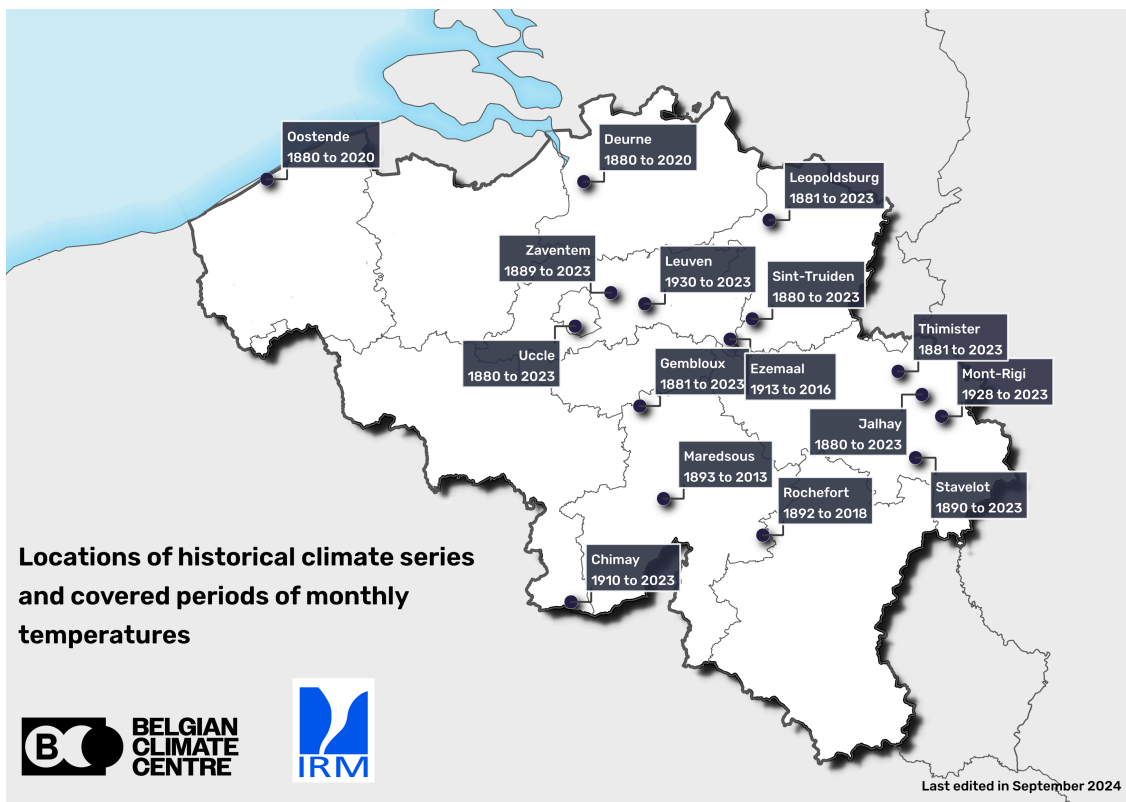
Scientific Director

The Belgian Climate Centre facilitates the access to Belgian climate projections and data

Belgian climate projections and impact indicators are now accessible through the [federal geodata portal of the National Geographic Institute \(NGI-IGN\)](#). The centralized access to these existing projections and indicators constitutes the current and best available information describing the future climate in Belgium and, moreover, meets multiple user needs.

Historical climate observations for Belgium are now available for researchers through the [RMI's OpenData site](#), helping researchers to better understand and address the complex challenges of climate change. The data made available includes:

1. **long monthly climatological series** of temperature and precipitation for multiple station locations around Belgium (see map below);
2. **daily gridded climate data** of minimum and maximum temperatures, precipitation amounts, solar radiation and sunshine duration.



Map: Location of homogenized monthly temperature series pre-1928 to 2023.

The publication of the climate projections and historical climate observations was initiated and supported by the Belgian Climate Centre and realized in close collaboration with the [Royal Meteorological Institute of Belgium \(KMI-IRM-RMI\)](#) and the [National Geographic Institute \(NGI-IGN\)](#).

You can read more on the publication of projections [here](#).

[Download projections](#)

You can read more on climate data [here](#).

[Download climate data](#)

The Catalogue of Climate Scientific Experts is out now



Big news! Belgian Climate Centre has launched the beta version of its [Catalogue of Climate Scientists](#). This searchable catalogue collects information on scientists specialized in climate research working at Belgian universities, federal scientific institutes and regional research centres.

The catalogue currently contains 376 recognized experts active in various aspects of climate research. Users can find experts based on their area of expertise and discipline.

[Explore the Catalogue](#)

Workshop 'Climate litigation in Belgium and beyond' – Belgian Climate Centre, 11 September 2024

Climate litigation has grown in recent years, both in Europe and around the world. These lawsuits cover a wide variety of situations, depending on the actors involved, both on the side of the plaintiffs and defendants, the legal bases on which they lie, and their impact on climate action or governance.

The workshop organised by the Belgian Climate Centre on 11 September provided an opportunity to take stock of the situation, bringing together some of the best experts in the field in Belgium, actors and witnesses from these different cases, and various stakeholders. The diverse interventions and panel discussions allowed to approach the question from different perspectives, and to draw up a very complete state of the art on the issue.

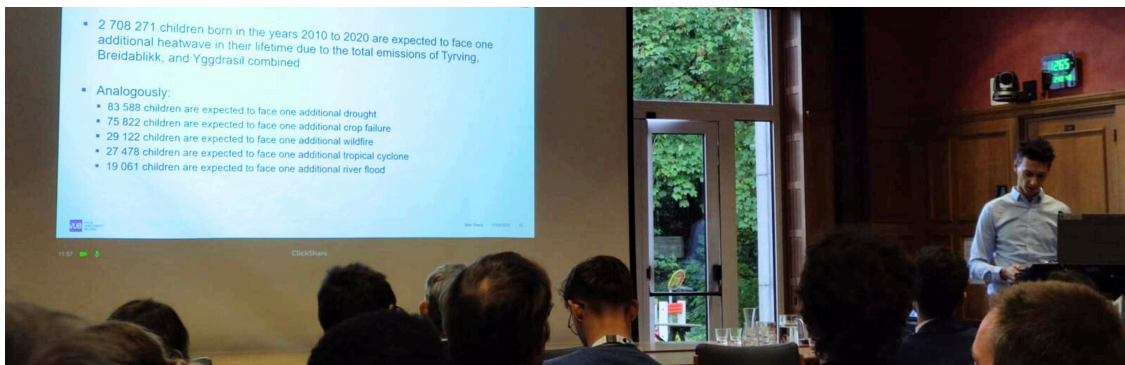
The workshop allowed an [overview of the main cases](#) that have been conducted in Belgium and abroad, aimed at public actors or private companies, as well as to delimit what is meant by '[climate litigation](#)', the blurred boundaries and interactions with many other cases that are more broadly related to environmental or health issues. Many speakers highlighted the significant recent developments in these cases, including the recognition of human rights as a legal basis for the intervention of courts in climate litigation.

Climate scientists, who have been called to testify in certain cases or whose scientific work has been used in the courts, have had the opportunity to share their experience in this field. They provide their reflections on the use of science in climate trials, and the difficulty of finding a common language between law and science, or to scientifically objectify notions such as equity, or responsibility. The concept of 'scientific consensus' and the question of its interpretation in legal texts or in climate trials were also discussed.

Other speakers addressed issues related to the separation of powers, the limits of recourse to the judiciary, its optimal use in our democratic systems, and its role as "keeper" of individual and collective interests, when our governing structures are caught in default.

The different impacts of climate cases, beyond the judicial stage, notably on the social debate, the use of these cases by the various actors involved (whatever the outcome of the trial) to advance the climate objectives and the transition, and in the end, their impact on climate action and governance were also the subject of rich and lively debates.

In the end, this day will have allowed the meeting of very diverse expertise and perspectives on a theme in constant evolution. This workshop will be followed by a series of others organised on a quarterly basis, which will cover various themes, both in the field of climate sciences and in third fields (technologies, life sciences, humanities). The programme will be communicated very soon.



Scientists in the media

- 1/09/2024 [31.3 graden: wamrste eerste september sinds begin van de metingen](#)
- 20/09/2024 [Klimaatstudie waarschuwt: 45 procent kans dat we tegen 2300 minstens één kantelpunt overschrijden](#)
- 15/09/2024 [In vijf dagen tijd net zoveel regen als wij normaal in zes maanden krijgen': niet alleen Centraal-Europa wordt getroffen door noodweer](#)
- 12/09/2024 [Les causes d'un "mystérieux signal sismique sans précédent" identifiées par des scientifiques belges](#)
- 6/09/2024 [Pluie : déjà douze mois au-dessus de la normale. Un déluge continu ces derniers mois ?](#)

Upcoming events

1 October 2024

[Engaging citizens in climate action: Fostering behavioural change \(EU Climate Action Academy\):](#)

3 October 2024

[Urban Climate Simulator Launch event \(VITO\)](#)

14-15 October 2024

[Climate Bootcamp 2024: A systemic look at the climate crisis \(VUB\)](#)

28-30 October 2024

[Climate Neutrality Forum 2024 \(JPI-Climate\)](#)

27 November-8 December 2024

[La quinzaine du climat - plusieurs conférences et événements \(ULiège\)](#)



Who is Belgian Climate Centre?

The Climate Centre has been created to lead scientific research at the highest level on climate and related economic and ecological issues.

It also serves as a contact point for organisations, policymakers and citizens for a wide range of climate-related services. The mission of the Belgian Climate Centre is to maximise the impact of science on climate mitigation and adaptation in Belgium to support an efficient and socially just transition.

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