

## **The first European Climate Risk assessment! What is in it for Belgium?**

The main findings of the European Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA) and the European Commission's Communication urge for active climate risk management that will enhance economic and societal resilience and reduce avoidable costs of recovery and damage repair.

The EUCRA emerges as a pivotal tool by providing a comprehensive analysis of climate-related hazards and vulnerabilities. Across the region, rising temperatures are exacerbating heatwaves and droughts, altering precipitation patterns, and intensifying the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Sea-level rise poses a significant threat to coastal communities, while inland regions are vulnerable to flooding and water scarcity. Ecosystems are under strain, biodiversity is at risk, and crucial sectors such as agriculture (crops or livestock), energy and transport infrastructure, and public health face mounting pressures.

The researchers assessed 36 specific climate change risks in five thematic areas; ecosystems, food, health, infrastructure, and economy and finance. 21 of them need greater attention now. 8 were categorized as particularly pressing. Key takeaways from the report focus on preparing Europe for climate change by restoring nature, transforming farming practices, protecting coastal regions, and addressing vulnerabilities, especially in Southern Europe.

The devastating floods that struck Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands in July 2021 triggered the Federal Government decision to create a Climate and Environment Risk Assessment Center (CERAC) to help Belgium to better prepare for future Climate and Environment disruptions.

For Belgium, a densely populated and low-lying country, the implications of the EUCRA are particularly pronounced. The country's geographical location exposes it to a variety of climate-related hazards, including flooding from rivers and coastal inundation, as well as heatwaves and droughts. Cities like Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent are vulnerable to urban heat islands where densely built environments and limited green spaces exacerbate the effects of rising temperatures.

The European Commission's Communication focusses on clarifying risk ownership between different governance levels and sectors, strengthening the toolbox (including solid national risk assessments), an EU Budget choices recognising climate risks, activating Public Procurement policy, territorial planning and strengthening civil protection capacities to deal with climate risks...

Belgium faces a critical imperative to strengthen its resilience and adaptability to climate change but must also inform these actions by a sound national risk assessment. CERAC is preparing its first comprehensive risk assessment, starting in the second half of 2024.

This assessment will guide and prioritize action in more detail, both geographically and by sector, but the main lessons of the EUCRA for Belgium are already clear!

Belgium needs to invest more in climate-resilient infrastructure, including flood defenses, nature restoration, water management systems and urban green spaces, to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events and sea-level rise. This commitment must navigate the complex division of powers between federal, regional, provincial, and municipal levels, ensuring coordinated efforts between these policy-levels.

By implementing land-use planning strategies that prioritize conservation, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem restoration to safeguard against biodiversity loss and land degradation Belgium can increase its resilience to climate impacts and provide multiple co-benefits for its economy and society.

Links:

- <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment>
- The EUCRA report: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment/resolveuid/a81df2f222524f79a54b2c421a1c9525>
- [Alarmerend rapport over klimaatrisico's in Europa: een dringende oproep tot actie voor België en de EU](#)
- [Rapport alarmant sur les risques climatiques en Europe : un appel urgent à l'action pour la Belgique et l'UE](#)
- Press release European Commission: [Key steps for managing climate risks to protect people \(europa.eu\)](#)