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KlimaatHelpdesk.org: Connecting citizens with climate questions to experts with answers

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When faced with a question, scientists and scholars are trained to search academic and informal literature to find the answer. But where can the public find reliable answers to questions about the climate crisis? After all, the climate crisis is a topic about which our understanding rapidly evolves across a wide array of disciplines. The validity and reliability of offered information is difficult to assess for non-specialists, while scientific consensus is sometimes deliberately undermined in popular articles. Moreover, civil questions about the climate crisis can be very specific, pragmatic or locally applicable, so not all answers can be found on popular sources that commonly provide only the theoretical principles or general background. This raises the question how we can connect citizens with climate-related questions to understandable scientific expert knowledge.

KlimaatHelpdesk.org is meant to become the go-to place in the Netherlands for citizens with climate-related questions. It is a unique, independent, and accessible communications platform that connects the public with scientists and experts, run by a volunteer group of students and academics. People who ask a question on this platform will receive a peer-reviewed answer to their question from a network of affiliated scholars and experts. KlimaatHelpdesk archives the question and corresponding answer on the website and thereby provides an expanding, easily accessible source of reliable and evidence-based information. Since the official launch in November 2020, more than 250 enthusiastic experts have answered and/or reviewed over 130 questions in a variety of disciplines: from meteorology, oceanography and biology to psychology, law, and philosophy.

KlimaatHelpdesk also serves as a platform for students and young academics to get involved in science outreach and public engagement, and for scientists to explain their research to a targeted audience. While KlimaatHelpdesk is further expanding its reach in the Netherlands, we also work to make the platform portable to other countries and disciplines. We are eager and ready to share our gained experience with the wider Science Communication, Engagement &

Outreach community.

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