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Climate literacy for professionals in the Netherlands

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Professionals in sectors such as urban planning, energy transition, health, need knowledge about climate change for e.g. designing tunnels, urban planning, risk assessments related to climate change, giving policy advice about adaptation measures. The required climate data and information is often not easy to find, needs to be processed, or there is so much climate data available that it is difficult to determine what should be used in a specific situation. In addition, these professionals often have contact with administrators and citizens who ask them questions about climate change, why certain adaptation measures are taken, etc. However, there are a lot of misunderstandings about climate and climate change and there is a lot of polarization.

Both the Dutch Meteorological Institute (KNMI) and the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA) have a lot of contact with professionals working on climate adaptation and mitigation and they both recognize that professionals need more tailoring of climate data and, at the same time, they need help with the communication about climate change. Based on the experiences of the HvA and KNMI in recent years, they decided in the autumn of 2021 to combine their complementary expertises into a lectorate “Climate literacy” to develop new knowledge for professionals:

- about climate data and climate change for more effective use in design, risk assessment, policy advice and to be able to make well-informed decisions. This concerns technical knowledge about access to climate data, good use of climate data and climate scenarios, dealing with uncertainties, better linking of climate data and information to the purpose of the sector (i.e. based on knowledge of the technical systems) and decision support.
- to effectively increase the “climate literacy” of citizens and administrators (tools, interventions, design methods, communication strategies, policy-making), so they can act well informed in situations related to climate change. For professional users, reliable and easy to understand climate information is also necessary to create support among stakeholders and the general public. For this, it is necessary to connect with how people experience the environment and to relate causes, consequences and action perspectives to themselves.

During the presentation we will elaborate on why it is important to have a combined focus on the tailoring of climate data and communication for professionals, our experiences in the Netherlands and the ideas for research within this lectorate.

