

PhD opportunity: Climate-related health impacts on children



The [bclimate](#) group of the Department of Water & Climate is looking for a motivated **PhD candidate in climate science to contribute to the improved attribution and projection of climate-related child health risks in one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions**. This PhD position is part of the EU-funded **CLIMES project**.

Key words: child health, impact attribution, climate change, earth system modelling, environmental epidemiology, doctoral networks.

Climate change poses growing risks to child health, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where exposure to extreme heat and climate variability is high, and health systems are often vulnerable. However, region-specific exposure-response relationships for children are scarce, and most existing climate-health assessments do not capture the influence of sub-daily meteorological variability, which is crucial for understanding heat-related impacts.

This PhD project aims to quantify the effects of climate variability and change on child health outcomes across Sub-Saharan Africa by combining epidemiological data analysis with

advanced Earth system modelling. The research will involve running the Community Earth System Model (CESM) under past and future climates.

As part of the [CLIMES Doctoral Network](#), you will be hired along a leading cohort of early-career researchers studying different aspects of impacts of climate extremes in Europe, from public health to societal perspectives and agricultural impacts, and will have access to a rich program of training activities and research exchanges. These are designed to enhance your career prospects in both academia and the private sector, integrating knowledge from climate science, data science, risk assessment, and the social sciences. You will also be affiliated to the Swedish Centre for Impacts of Climate Extremes. You will be based at VUB, and supervised by Prof. Wim Thiery, but as part of your duties, you will be required to complete two in-person international secondments at WASCAL (West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use, Ghana) and ISGLOBAL (Fundación Privada Instituto de Salud Global Barcelona, Spain).

For more questions about the project or the position, please contact us at bclimate_admin@vub.be

What is your profile?

- By the start of the PhD, you hold an **MSc degree in climate science, environmental science/engineering, geography, hydrology, physics, statistics, applied math, computer science, or in a related field**;
- Strong interest for **climate science and human health**;
- Experience in **working with large datasets**, and skills in **quantitative analysis**;
- Experience in **programming**, for instance in Python (ideally), R, or Matlab;
- Good knowledge of written and spoken English;
- Eager to **communicate** your scientific results to fellow scientists and the public;
- Creative personality, who enjoys solving technical and scientific challenges;
- You are curiosity-driven, reliable, and enjoy working in an **international and collaborative research environment**.

Fulfillment of the eligibility criteria:

- The accepted candidate will have to enroll as a PhD candidate at the VUB. See procedure [here](#).
- **Mobility Rule:** you must not have resided or carried out your main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Belgium for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the recruitment date. Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays, and time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention are not taken into account.
- First PhD: candidates who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be considered eligible.

What do we offer?

- A fully funded PhD position for 4 years (12 months contract, extendable), with a competitive salary and other advantages.
- A position at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Brussels, Belgium), in the department of [Water and Climate](#) ([bclimate](#) research group, led by Prof. Dr. Wim Thiery), a dynamic and international environment.
Find all the information on VUB's work environment [here](#).
- International collaborations with partners of the CLIMES project, training events and fully funded secondments.

The starting date of the position is flexible, but ideally somewhere around **September 2026**.

The first 36 months of the position are offered under the conditions of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Network scheme and therefore include a bursary determined by the regulations of this program. This corresponds to a minimum gross bursary of €4010 per month, as well as a mobility allowance of €600 per month. The duration of the mobility allowance may vary, and further details will be discussed during the interview. A family allowance may be available depending on the family situation of the recruited candidate. During the final 12 months, the bursary - without allowances - will be covered by the VUB Research Council.

At the VUB, you're guaranteed an **open, involved and diverse workplace** where you are offered opportunities to (further) build on your career.

As well as this, you will also enjoy **various other benefits**:

- Extensive homeworking options, a telework allowance of 50 euros per month OR an internet fee of 20 euros per month;
- An open and informal working environment where attention is paid to work-life balance, and exceptional holiday arrangements with 35 days of leave (based on a fulltime contract), closure between Christmas and New Year and 3 extra leave days;
- Cost-free hospitalisation insurance;
- Full reimbursement of your home-to-work commute with public transport according to VUB-policy, and/or compensation if you come by bike;
- A wide selection of meals in our campus restaurants at attractive prices;
- Excellent and affordable facilities for sport and exercise, a range of discounts via Benefits@Work and Ecocheques;
- Nursery near campus, discount on holiday camps;
- The space to form your job content and to continuously learn through our VUB learning platforms and training courses;
- And finally: great colleagues with a healthy drive.

Are you interested in joining us on this scientific journey?

If so, please send your application **before the 22nd of March** to **bclimate_admin@vub.be** with 'CLIMES PhD application' in the email subject. This application should consist of a single PDF document that includes:

- (i) a motivation/cover letter (max. 1 page),
- (ii) your CV (including your experience in different programming languages),
- (iii) optional: latest transcript of records.

Please do not include any other documents at this stage.

Tentative timeline for applications: interview invitations in late March/early April, interviews late April.

