

# Expert Meeting on the Robustness of Climate Change Information for Decisions

April 22-24, 2024, European Commission, Brussels (Belgium)

**Problem statement:** *When sources of climate change information do not agree or are misaligned to decision contexts, there is a lack of consensus on how to resolve these two problems to inform local-to-regional decision-making that leads to consequences.*

*How can I know I can act on this information? How do I understand, assess, qualify, or quantify its robustness for my decision in my unique context?*

policy makers, decision-makers, donor agencies



*Will I accept proportional responsibility for societal consequences of a decision based on my information?*

scientist / information creator or provider



**Importance of Context:**  
Where you begin determines the journey you follow.

**Non-congruency**  
A misalignment between information sources or with the decision-context

**What is "robust"?**  
How do we perceive, assess, measure, and communicate the robustness of information

**Example:** *You have to make a key decision that is sensitive to changes in future climate, and the decision could have significant socio-political, environmental, and economic consequences. Consider a decision to develop climate resilient storm water infrastructure for an urban expansion. You have finite resources, limited climate literacy, a host of non-climate factors, and operate under demanding time constraints. Your decision must accommodate climate change and needs information that is fit-for-purpose, defensibly robust, and relevant to the risk exposure. Yet, depending on the choice between seemingly equi-defensible data sources, your decision outcome and societal consequence may change.*

**What did the meeting seek to achieve?** The meeting was explicitly designed to be a **first step**, a **catalyst** for new cross-community recognition of the challenge, and to **stimulate new actions** to address this.

It was noted that while many examples exist which seek to develop robust or actionable information that is fit for purpose, these are largely rooted in local and regional case study projects whose solutions have unclear transferability, can be labor intensive with poor scalability, or commonly adopt a presumption of a value chain modality.

Collectively the meeting sought to develop forward thinking on building new cross community collaboration to **advance and demonstrate the development of relevant information that is defensibly robust, aligned to context, in ways that are scalable and transferable, and thus broadly accepted** and widely applicable. In responding to this need the meeting adopted a process that was deeply conversational and fostered careful listening to alternate perspectives.

The meeting engendered a broadening of understanding of the role of decision contexts, and explored the diversity of perspectives, priorities and values inherent in different communities. Through this the meeting sought ways to **better collaborate to foster transparency in how climate data is generated, context-relevant information is constructed, and policy and decision-makers engaged.**

**How to be involved:** Individuals / institutions are encouraged to contact the **WCRP-RiFS Interim Working Group**.



Multiple levels of engagement are available, including helping coordinate and build collaboration, initiating pilot actions, or donor support to address gaps and weaknesses in developing robust information for decisions.

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**Outcomes** The participants were all highly engaged, including strong voices of early career researchers. All were motivated by concern for cross community weakness in addressing the core issues for decision-worthy robust information, and **acknowledgement that the challenge is fundamental and of high priority**. Discussion was vigorous and thoughtful, with willingness to learn through discussion, rather than defending a particular domain or perspective.

Over 60 participants expressing a desire to be included in new developments, including many volunteering to champion or lead new initiatives.

A range of topics were identified as in urgent need of deeper attention. These include topics (among others) on **context sensitive metrics, ethical dimensions of information transparency and accountability, cross community collaboration, defining “robustness”, and guidance and standards for information.**

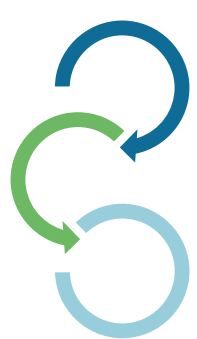
A **new interim working group** has been constituted under WCRP-RIFS to facilitate the development of new initiatives, and RIFS has allocated budget to support their activities. Its remit includes developing relevant publications and reference materials, building new collaboration across the silo'd communities, and facilitating and coordinating new research with regional teams.



## Process and design

The program was explicitly designed for maximizing conversations, with attention to structured listening, and providing substantial time for open discussion. The agenda included only one keynote address to set the stage and help participants gain insight on the diversity of perspectives.

The balance of the 3 days given over to panels, open plenary discussion, and breakout groups (in-person and dedicated virtual groups). This was supported by dedicated rapporteurs to capture all sessions, with a Miro online board for capturing comments and further inputs where there was not enough time for these to be accommodated in the open discussions.



In advance of the meeting participants received suggested primary readings along with an extended reading list of additional resources. All sessions were framed by a narrative to set the discussion foci to assist common understanding despite the differences in backgrounds, terminology, and concepts.

Sessions chairs were carefully assigned to make sure that all voices were heard, with attention given from the beginning to structured listening to encourage participants to see issues from other communities' perspectives. Following the three days of discussions all participants were surveyed to gauge their views on priorities for going forward, and to offer opportunity to volunteer to be part of the continued activities.

## Who came?

The meeting was by invitation with approximately ~65 in-person participants and over 40 virtual participants.

Through the invitations the organizers tried to ensure there was a balanced representation across:

- gender, geography, career stage
- WCRP core projects and lighthouses
- relevant communities: **donor agencies, institutions engaged with decision makers, climate impacts research, climate services, and core physical climate science**

**Donor agencies** Donors have been productively engaged to explore the funding of new actions to develop the research avenues identified as high priority, and initial concept notes drafted.

We value opportunity to explore further with all donors who see the question of robust and context-relevant climate information as of importance to their activities.