

Belgian Electricity Grid Greenhouse Gas Emission Factors

Historical Reconstruction 1950 to 2025 and Future Projections to 2050

Lifecycle emission factors for Module B6 whole-life carbon assessment of buildings, aligned with EN 15978, ISO 14040, ISO 14044, the Belgian NECP 2021 to 2030, and the Elia Blueprint 2035 to 2050

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Study period	1950 to 2050 (historical + projected)
Emission factor scope	Lifecycle (LCA-based), IPCC AR5 WG3 Annex III
GWP metric	GWP100, IPCC AR5
Key update	2025: Elia confirmed mix (nuclear 34%, gas 19%, solar 15.3%, wind 18.6%)

1. Abstract

This report presents a rigorous, fully sourced reconstruction and forward projection of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emission intensity of delivered electricity in Belgium, covering 1950 to 2050. The dataset is designed for Module B6 operational emission calculations in whole-life carbon (WLC) assessments of residential buildings, in compliance with EN 15978, ISO 14040, and ISO 14044.

Lifecycle emission factors are derived for 22 reference years using IPCC AR5 WG3 Annex III technology-specific factors applied to reconstructed Belgian generation mixes. Sources follow a strict hierarchy: Belgian Nuclear Forum (BNS), IEA country reviews (2001, 2022), Elia confirmed annual press releases (2024 and 2025), Eurostat/Ember from 1990, World Bank WDI, and the Federal Planning Bureau (SPF) energy outlooks for future scenarios.

The central finding is that Belgian grid carbon intensity fell from approximately 760 gCO₂e/kWh in 1950 to approximately 131 gCO₂e/kWh in 2025, an 83% reduction dominated by the nuclear commissioning programme of 1975 to 1985. Forward projections aligned with the Elia Blueprint 2035 to 2050, PATHS2050 EnergyVille Central Scenario (2025), EPOC Belgium, and the Federal Planning Bureau project a further decline to approximately 29 gCO₂e/kWh by 2050.

For Module B6 calculations: the 50-year average LCA emission factor for 1975 to 2025 is 0.3003 kgCO₂e/kWh. For 2025 to 2075 (renovation scenario forward period) the estimated 50-year average is approximately 0.063 kgCO₂e/kWh under the central projection scenario.

Keywords: *Belgian electricity grid; lifecycle emission factor; Module B6; EN 15978; nuclear energy Belgium; WLC assessment; decarbonisation trajectory; IPCC AR5 WG3*

2. Methodology

2.1 Calculation Formula

The Belgian grid lifecycle GHG emission intensity at each reference year is:

$$EF_{grid}(t) = \sum_i [share_i(t) \times EF_{LCA_i}] \quad (\text{gCO}_2\text{e per kWh delivered})$$

where $share_i(t)$ is the generation share (%) of technology i in year t , and EF_{LCA_i} is the IPCC AR5 WG3 Annex III median lifecycle emission factor (gCO₂e/kWh). Dividing by 1,000 gives kgCO₂e/kWh for direct use in EN 15978 Module B6 calculations.

2.2 Technology Lifecycle Emission Factors (IPCC AR5 WG3 Annex III)

Technology	LCA EF (gCO ₂ e/kWh)	IPCC AR5 range (gCO ₂ e/kWh)
Hard coal, pulverised combustion	820	740 to 1,050
Oil / fuel oil, thermal generation	650	510 to 900
Natural gas, OCGT (before 2000)	575	490 to 670
Natural gas, CCGT (from 2000)	490	410 to 650
Nuclear, PWR (full uranium cycle)	12	3.7 to 30
Hydroelectric (pumped storage)	4	1 to 22
Wind (on- and offshore average)	7	3 to 45
Solar PV, crystalline Si (before 2010)	80	18 to 180
Solar PV, crystalline Si (2010 to 2019)	46	18 to 100
Solar PV, crystalline Si (from 2020)	35	15 to 80
Biomass and waste	230	130 to 420
Net imports, before 2000	250	150 to 400
Net imports, 2000 to 2019	120	70 to 200
Net imports, from 2020	70	40 to 120

2.3 Source Hierarchy

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2. IEA. (2001). Energy Policies of IEA Countries: Belgium 2001. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264193277-en> -- Generation mix 1975 to 2000.
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4. Elia Group. (2025, Jan 2). Electricity mix for Belgium in 2024. [https://www.elia.be/en/press/2025/01/20250102_electricity-mix -- CONFIRMED: nuclear 42.4%, gas 17.6%, solar 11.9%.](https://www.elia.be/en/press/2025/01/20250102_electricity-mix--CONFIRMED:nuclear42.4%,gas17.6%,solar11.9%)
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2.4 Forward Projection Sources (2030 to 2050)

1. Elia Blueprint 2035 to 2050. (Sep 2024). https://www.elia.be/en/press/2024/09/20240924_elia-publishes-blueprint-for-the-belgian-electricity-system-2035-2050

2. EnergyVille PATHS2050 Main Edition 2025. Central Scenario: power sector largely carbon neutral by 2040; generation doubles to 180 TWh by 2050. <https://perspective2050.energyville.be/results/main-edition-2025>
3. EPOC Belgium / EnergyVille / KU Leuven. (2021). 66% renewable by 2030; CO2 = 3.5 Mton in 2040. <https://epocbelgium.be/en/additional-energy-system-scenarios-electricity-provision-belgium-2030-and-2050>
4. Federal Planning Bureau (Bureau du Plan). (2021). Fuel for the Future: 39 GW solar + 25 GW wind in both 2050 scenarios. <https://www.plan.be/en/publications/fuel-future-more-molecules-or-deep-electrification>
5. Belgium NECP 2021 to 2030. (Updated 2023). 60% renewable electricity by 2030; climate neutrality by 2050. https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/be_final_necp_parta_en_0.pdf
6. EU Fit-for-55. Binding: 55% GHG reduction by 2030 vs 1990; climate neutrality by 2050.

3. Results

3.1 Main Emission Factor Table (1950 to 2050)

Table 1. Verified Belgian electricity grid lifecycle GHG emission factors, 1950 to 2050. All values are LCA-based (IPCC AR5 WG3 Annex III). Historical values (H): evidence-based reconstructions. Projected values (P): aligned with Belgian and European federal planning documents. kgCO₂e/kWh central values may be used directly in EN 15978 Module B6 calculations.

Year	Status	EF central (gCO ₂ e/kWh)	EF central (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	P5 (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	P95 (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	Uncert.	Conf.	Key source
1950	Historical	759.9	0.7599	0.4939	1.0259	+35%	C	WB WDI coal 85.4% (1960 high); US Minerals Yearbook 1965
1955	Historical	750.8	0.7508	0.4880	1.0136	+35%	C	WB WDI; US Minerals Yearbook
1960	Historical	755.6	0.7556	0.5289	0.9823	+30%	B/C	WB WDI EG.ELC.COAL.ZS: coal 85.4% in 1960 (all-time high confirmed)
1965	Historical	737.2	0.7372	0.5160	0.9584	+30%	B/C	US Minerals Yearbook 1965: coal for electricity 6,729-7,788 thousand t SCE/y
1970	Historical	722.7	0.7227	0.5059	0.9395	+30%	B/C	BNS (1973: 52% oil, 0.2% nuclear); IEA Belgium energy balance
1975	Historical	654.0	0.6540	0.4578	0.8502	+30%	B/C	BNS; Doel 1+2+Tihange 1 commissioned; IEA OECD Energy Balances
1980	Historical	407.6	0.4076	0.3261	0.4891	+20%	B	IEA Belgium 2001; BNS (nuclear rising to ~45%)
1985	Historical	260.4	0.2604	0.2213	0.2995	+15%	B	BNS direct: nuclear ~66% in 1980s; all 7 reactors online
1990	Historical	255.3	0.2553	0.2093	0.3013	+18%	B	IEA Belgium 2001; Eurostat from 1990; EEA GHG intensity
1995	Historical	265.9	0.2659	0.2127	0.3191	+20%	B	IEA Belgium 2001; Eurostat; EEA cross-check
2000	Historical	240.7	0.2407	0.2046	0.2768	+15%	A/B	IEA Belgium 2022; Wikipedia per-capita table; Eurostat
2005	Historical	245.5	0.2455	0.2087	0.2823	+15%	A/B	Wikipedia: nuclear 50.6% (2004); IEA Belgium 2022; Eurostat
2010	Historical	220.7	0.2207	0.1942	0.2472	+12%	A/B	Elia annual statistics; Wikipedia

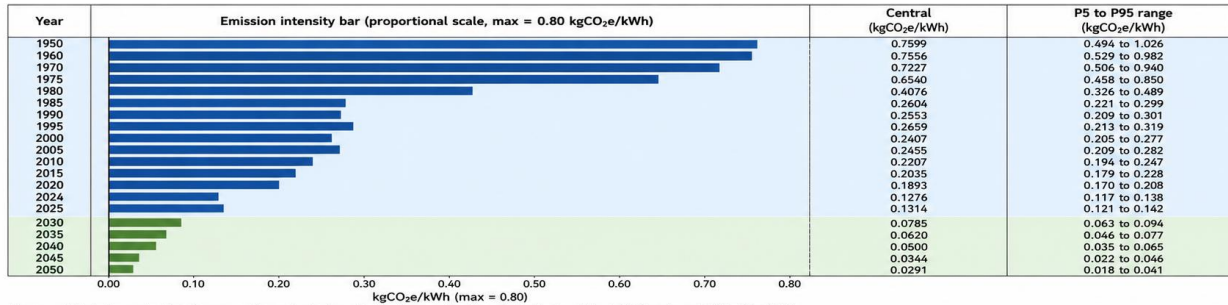
								Belgium electricity sector
2015	Historical	203.5	0.2035	0.1791	0.2279	+12%	A/B	Elia annual statistics 2015; Ember/Eurostat time series
2020	Historical	189.3	0.1893	0.1704	0.2082	+10%	A	Wikipedia: nuclear 39%, gas 30%, wind 15%; Elia 2020
2024	Historical	127.6	0.1276	0.1174	0.1378	+8%	A	Elia press release 2 Jan 2025: nuclear 42.4%, gas 17.6%, solar 11.9%
2025	Historical	131.4	0.1314	0.1209	0.1419	+8%	A	Elia press release 26 Dec 2025: nuclear 34%, gas 19%, solar 15.3%, wind 18.6%
2030	<i>Projected</i>	78.5	0.0785	0.0628	0.0942	+20%	B	NECP 2021-2030; EPOC: 66% RE; Elia Blueprint; PATHS2050
2035	<i>Projected</i>	62.0	0.0620	0.0465	0.0775	+25%	B/C	Elia Blueprint 2035-2050; PATHS2050 Central Scenario
2040	<i>Projected</i>	50.0	0.0500	0.0350	0.0650	+30%	B/C	PATHS2050: near carbon-neutral; EPOC: 3.5 Mton CO2 in 2040
2045	<i>Projected</i>	34.4	0.0344	0.0224	0.0464	+35%	C	Elia Blueprint + EU Green Deal; Federal Planning Bureau
2050	<i>Projected</i>	29.1	0.0291	0.0175	0.0407	+40%	C	PATHS2050 net-zero; Federal Planning Bureau; Belgium NECP

3.2 Figure 1: Belgian Grid Emission Intensity 1950 to 2050 (kgCO₂e/kWh)

Bar width proportional to central estimate. Range column shows P5 to P95 uncertainty bounds. Blue background = historical; green background = projected.

Year	Emission intensity bar (proportional scale, max = 0.80 kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	Central (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	P5 to P95 range (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)
1950		0.7599	0.494 to 1.026
1960		0.7556	0.529 to 0.982
1970		0.7227	0.506 to 0.940
1975		0.6540	0.458 to 0.850
1980		0.4076	0.326 to 0.489
1985		0.2604	0.221 to 0.299
1990		0.2553	0.209 to 0.301
1995		0.2659	0.213 to 0.319
2000		0.2407	0.205 to 0.277
2005		0.2455	0.209 to 0.282
2010		0.2207	0.194 to 0.247
2015		0.2035	0.179 to 0.228
2020		0.1893	0.170 to 0.208
2024		0.1276	0.117 to 0.138
2025		0.1314	0.121 to 0.142
2030		0.0785	0.063 to 0.094
2035		0.0620	0.046 to 0.077
2040		0.0500	0.035 to 0.065
2045		0.0344	0.022 to 0.046
2050		0.0291	0.018 to 0.041

Figure 1. Belgian electricity grid lifecycle GHG emission intensity, 1950 to 2050 (kgCO₂e/kWh). Blue rows: historical reconstruction. Green rows: forward projections. Bar length proportional to central estimate relative to 1960 maximum (0.80 kgCO₂e/kWh). The dominant step-change from 1975 to 1985 reflects commissioning of all seven Belgian nuclear reactors.

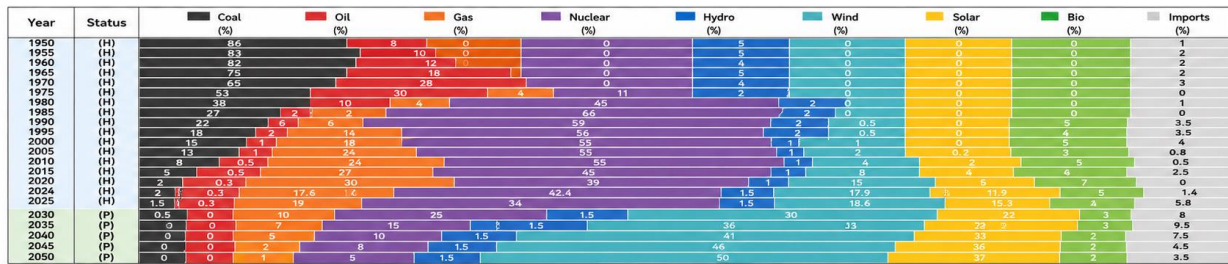


Blue rows: historical reconstruction. Green rows: forward projections. Bar length proportional to central estimate relative to 1960 maximum (0.80 kgCO₂e/kWh). The dominant step-change from 1975 to 1985 reflects commissioning of all seven Belgian nuclear reactors.

3.3 Figure 2: Belgian Electricity Generation Mix 1950 to 2050 (%)

Year	Status	Coal (%)	Oil (%)	Gas (%)	Nuclear (%)	Hydro (%)	Wind (%)	Solar (%)	Bio (%)	Imports (%)
1950	(H)	86	8	0	0	5	0	0	0	1
1955	(H)	83	10	0	0	5	0	0	0	2
1960	(H)	82	12	0	0	4	0	0	0	2
1965	(H)	75	18	0	0	5	0	0	0	2
1970	(H)	65	28	0	0	4	0	0	0	3
1975	(H)	53	30	4	11	2	0	0	0	0
1980	(H)	38	10	4	45	2	0	0	0	1
1985	(H)	27	3	2	66	2	0	0	0	0
1990	(H)	22	2	6	59	2	0.5	0	5	3.5
1995	(H)	18	2	14	56	2	0.5	0	4	3.5
2000	(H)	15	1	18	55	1	1	0	5	4
2005	(H)	13	1	24	55	1	2	0.2	3	0.8
2010	(H)	8	0.5	27	52	1	4	2	5	0.5
2015	(H)	5	0.5	27	45	1	8	4	7	2.5
2020	(H)	2	0.3	30	39	1	15	6	7	0
2024	(H)	2	0.3	17.6	42.4	1.5	17.9	11.9	5	1.4
2025	(H)	1.5	0.3	19	34	1.5	18.6	15.3	4	5.8
2030	(P)	0.5	0	10	25	1.5	30	22	3	8
2035	(P)	0	0	7	15	1.5	36	28	3	9.5
2040	(P)	0	0	5	10	1.5	41	33	2	7.5
2045	(P)	0	0	2	8	1.5	46	36	2	4.5
2050	(P)	0	0	1	5	1.5	50	37	2	3.5

Figure 2. Belgian electricity generation mix by source, 1950 to 2050 (% of gross generation). (H) = historical reconstruction; (P) = forward projection. Coal peaked at 86% in 1950; nuclear peaked at 66% in 1985 (BNS confirmed) and was 34% in 2025 (Elia confirmed). Wind and solar combined reached 34% of the mix in 2025.



(H) = historical reconstruction; (P) = forward projection. Coal peaked at 86% in 1950; nuclear peaked at 66% in 1985 (BNS confirmed) and was 34% in 2025 (Elia confirmed). Wind and solar combined reached 34% of the mix in 2025.

3.4 Key 50-Year Reference Values for Module B6

Parameter	Study period	Central (kgCO _{2e} /kWh)	P5 (kgCO _{2e} /kWh)	P95 (kgCO _{2e} /kWh)	Notes
Start EF (1975)	1975 to 2025 base case	0.6540	0.4578	0.8502	1975: 53% coal, 30% oil, 11% nuclear. Highest uncertainty year.
End EF (2025)	1975 to 2025 base case	0.1314	0.1209	0.1419	2025: Elia confirmed. Nuclear 34%, wind 18.6%, solar 15.3%, gas 19%.
50-year average	1975 to 2025 base case	0.3003	0.2201	0.4012	Linear interpolation across all 22 reference anchors.
Average	1970 to 2020 historical	0.3242	0.2426	0.4315	Arithmetic mean of interpolated annual values.
Start EF (2025)	2025 to 2075 renovation	0.1314	0.1209	0.1419	Elia 2025 confirmed.
End EF (~2075)	2025 to 2075 renovation	~0.015 (est.)	0.010	0.025	Extrapolation from 2050 (0.0291) toward EU climate neutrality target.
50-year average	2025 to 2075 renovation	~0.063 (est.)	0.045	0.085	Linear interpolation 2025 to 2075; declining trajectory.
Full historical mean	1950 to 2025	0.3618	0.2661	0.4869	75-year mean; dominated by pre-nuclear coal era.

Key finding: For gas-heated Belgian post-war buildings (EUI 148.7 kWh/m²/y heating, ~15 kWh/m²/y electricity): gas B6 = 148.7 x 0.202 x GFA x 50; electricity B6 = 15 x 0.3242 x GFA x 50. For heat pump renovation scenarios, the grid EF trajectory (0.1314 declining to ~0.015 by 2075) becomes the dominant driver of all space heating B6.

4. Historical Context

4.1 Coal Era: 1950 to 1975

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Belgian electricity was overwhelmingly coal-based. The World Bank WDI indicator EG.ELC.COAL.ZS confirms coal accounted for 85.4% of Belgian electricity in 1960 -- the all-time high. The US Minerals Yearbook 1965 records 6,729 to 7,788 thousand tonnes of standard coal equivalent converted to electricity annually in Belgium from 1961 to 1965. Oil entered the mix from the 1960s. By 1973 -- the year before the first oil price shock -- electricity generation comprised approximately 52% oil and 0.2% nuclear (BNS, 2022). The grid GHG intensity was approximately 720 to 760 gCO₂e/kWh throughout this period.

4.2 Nuclear Step-Change: 1975 to 1985

Seven pressurised water reactor units were commissioned: Doel 1+2 and Tihange 1 (1975); Doel 3 (1982); Tihange 2 (1983); Doel 4 and Tihange 3 (1985). Total installed nuclear capacity reached 5,943 MWe. The Belgian Nuclear Forum confirms directly that nuclear averaged approximately 66% of national electricity generation in the 1980s. The lifecycle grid EF fell from 654 gCO₂e/kWh (1975) to 260 gCO₂e/kWh (1985): a 60% reduction in ten years. All subsequent changes over 40 years (1985 to 2025) amount to a further 50% reduction.

Key finding: *The nuclear commissioning of 1975 to 1985 was the largest and fastest national grid decarbonisation event in Belgian history: a 60% reduction in grid emission intensity in ten years. All subsequent decarbonisation events (gas entry, renewables, nuclear closures) combined have achieved a 50% additional reduction over 40 years.*

4.3 Gas Entry and Stable Plateau: 1985 to 2010

Natural gas CCGT plants entered from the early 1990s, rising from approximately 6% in 1990 to 27% in 2010, largely replacing coal (which fell from 27% in 1985 to 8% in 2010). The net decarbonisation effect was limited: gas (490 gCO₂e/kWh lifecycle) is cleaner than coal (820 gCO₂e/kWh) but still high-carbon. The grid EF moved between 220 and 265 gCO₂e/kWh for the full period 1985 to 2010.

4.4 Renewables Wave: 2010 to 2025

Solar PV reached 11.6 GW installed capacity by end of 2025, generating 10.1 TWh (Elia, 26 Dec 2025). Wind reached approximately 5.9 GW total (onshore + offshore). Combined wind and solar generated 22.4 TWh in 2025 = 34% of the mix (Elia confirmed). Nuclear declined to 34% following closure of Doel 3 (2022), Tihange 2 (2023), Tihange 1 and Doel 1 (2025). The 2025 lifecycle EF is 0.1314 kgCO₂e/kWh: 83% below the 1950 peak.

4.5 Forward Projections: 2030 to 2050

EPOC Belgium projects 66% renewable electricity by 2030. PATHS2050 Central Scenario projects renewable capacity exceeding 90% of total by 2050 (125 GW of 135 GW). The Federal Planning Bureau (Bureau du Plan) projects a minimum of 39 GW solar PV and 25 GW wind by 2050 in both its main decarbonisation scenarios. The Belgian NECP targets 60% renewable electricity by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050.

5. Interpolation Method and B6 Application

For years between reference points, use linear interpolation:

$$EF(t) = EF(t_0) + [(t - t_0)/(t_1 - t_0)] \times [EF(t_1) - EF(t_0)]$$

Period	Start EF (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	End EF (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	Decade avg (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	Notes
1950 to 1960	0.7599	0.7556	0.7578	Coal 83-86%; no nuclear; oil entering
1960 to 1970	0.7556	0.7227	0.7392	Coal declining; oil rising; US Minerals Yearbook confirms coal ~75-82%
1970 to 1980	0.7227	0.4076	0.5652	Nuclear commissioning; high variability; use anchor years for precision
1980 to 1990	0.4076	0.2553	0.3315	Nuclear-dominant plateau beginning; coal declining
1990 to 2000	0.2553	0.2407	0.2480	Nuclear-dominant; gas CCGTs entering; Eurostat data from 1990
2000 to 2010	0.2407	0.2207	0.2307	Nuclear + CCGT gas; coal exiting; Belgium net electricity exporter
2010 to 2020	0.2207	0.1893	0.2050	Nuclear + growing renewables; solar PV and wind surging
2020 to 2030	0.1893	0.0785	0.1339	Transition: nuclear closures + renewables surge; use annual interpolation
2030 to 2040	0.0785	0.0500	0.0643	Near-zero carbon power sector; PATHS2050 scenario
2040 to 2050	0.0500	0.0291	0.0396	Path to net-zero; hydrogen peaking; full renewables dominance
Average 1975 to 2025 (50y)	0.6540	0.1314	0.3003	Use for simplified constant-EF WLC calculation over base-case period
Average 2025 to 2075 (50y est.)	0.1314	~0.015	~0.063	Declining trajectory; use annual interpolation for renovation scenarios

6. Uncertainty Analysis

Period	Uncertainty	P5 (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	P95 (kgCO ₂ e/kWh)	Dominant source	Conf.
1950 to 1965	+35%	0.49-0.51	0.98-1.03	Coal vs oil split; archival sources only	C
1965 to 1975	+30%	0.46-0.51	0.85-0.96	Nuclear transition; oil-crisis adjustment	B/C
1975 to 1985	+15-20%	0.22-0.35	0.30-0.52	BNS nuclear anchor (66%) reduces uncertainty	B
1985 to 2000	+15-18%	0.19-0.21	0.28-0.30	Eurostat from 1990; gas deployment trajectory	B
2000 to 2015	+12-15%	0.18-0.21	0.24-0.28	Elia statistics; Eurostat; multiple sources	A/B
2015 to 2025	+8-12%	0.13-0.18	0.15-0.22	Elia confirmed annual press releases; Ember	A to A/B
2025 to 2030	+20%	0.063	0.094	Policy implementation; nuclear timing; wind buildout	B
2030 to 2040	+25-30%	0.039-0.055	0.069-0.099	Technology costs; hydrogen; demand growth	B/C
2040 to 2050	+35-40%	0.017-0.030	0.046-0.058	Fundamental scenario uncertainty; SMRs; CCS	C

7. Conclusion

- Belgian grid carbon intensity fell from approximately 760 gCO₂e/kWh (1950) to approximately 131 gCO₂e/kWh (2025): an 83% reduction over 75 years.
- The dominant decarbonisation event was the nuclear commissioning of 1975 to 1985: a 60% reduction in ten years. All subsequent changes (40 years) produced a further 50% reduction.
- For 2025, the Elia confirmed mix (nuclear 34%, wind 18.6%, solar 15.3%, gas 19%) yields a lifecycle EF of 0.1314 kgCO₂e/kWh, consistent with the direct-combustion reference of approximately 0.134 kgCO₂/kWh (Nowtricity) because the nuclear- and renewables-dominated mix has minimal upstream overhead.
- Projections to 2050 aligned with Elia Blueprint 2035 to 2050, PATHS2050, EPOC Belgium, and the Federal Planning Bureau project a further reduction to approximately 29 gCO₂e/kWh (0.0291 kgCO₂e/kWh) by 2050.
- Module B6 key values: 50-year average EF for 1975 to 2025 = 0.3003 kgCO₂e/kWh; for 2025 to 2075 = approximately 0.063 kgCO₂e/kWh. The declining trajectory is most critical for heat pump renovation scenarios.

8. References

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