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Climate change on extreme winds already affects off-shore wind power availability in Europe

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Abstract. In Europe, off-shore wind energy plays a key role in the transition to renewable energy, and its usage is expected to increase in the next few decades. According to the working regimes of a wind turbine, wind energy production can be disrupted by extreme atmospheric events related to low wind speed below the cut-in wind speed and high wind speed above the cut-out wind speed. The purpose of this work is to estimate the behavior of extreme winds on the European panorama, over the period 1950-2020, in order to investigate the large-scale weather regimes related to them and their impact on off-shore wind energy availability. We detected significant changes in the frequency of high and low extreme wind events, proving that climate change or long-term climate variability has already affected the off-shore wind power output. Moreover, the analysis of weather regimes showed that high and low extreme wind events can occur simultaneously over Europe. Our results suggest the necessity to implement efficient European energy management policies, to minimize the deficit in wind power supply.

Keywords: Extreme winds - Climate change - Off-shore wind power availability

1 **1. Introduction**

Climate change is one of the most urgent challenges that humankind confront nowadays. As reported by the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change Synthesis Report, adaptation and mitigation are the main guidelines to follow in order to reduce and manage the impacts of climate change. Substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions are necessary to reduce climate risks in the future (XXI century and beyond) as they can contribute to climate-resilient pathways for sustainable development [1]. To this purpose, the European Union (EU) has planned ambitious strategies: to cut emissions by at least 55% with respect to the values in 1990 by 2030 (and 80% by 2050) and to become, by 2050, the first “net-zero” carbon continent, *i.e.* able to compensate all emissions of CO₂ [2], in the world. In this context, renewable energy (RE) play a key role: on one hand their development and extensive usage can slow down climate change effects and help to obtain the “net-zero” carbon goal, on the other hand substantial local changes in atmospheric conditions could modify, for better or worse, their efficiency [3] [4] [5] [6], and their demand [7].

Due to its increasing price competitiveness and the development of high-efficiency technologies, wind energy is playing, and it will play more and more in the future, a significant role in the transition to a RE system [8]. To gain the climate targets, the EU is planning to scale up the off-shore wind industry from the 12 GW capacity currently installed to 60 GW by 2030, and to 300 GW by 2050 [9]. Nevertheless, wind energy is one of the most variable and weather-dependent RE, because of its natural dependence on the wind speed, which can vary at different time scales, ranging from small-scale turbulence to seasonal oscillations and up to long-term climate variability. Moreover, wind energy can be heavily affected by extreme events, since under these conditions winds can easily reach such speeds to force the turbines to be parked or idled, or, conversely, not be strong enough to move them, thus interrupting the energy production.

Indeed, the potential wind power production[‡] (W_{pot}), according to the working regimes of a wind turbine [10], depends on the wind speed V by the following relation:

$$W_{pot} = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } V < V_i \\ \frac{V^3 - V_i^3}{V_R^3 - V_i^3} & \text{if } V_i \leq V < V_R \\ 1 & \text{if } V_R \leq V < V_o \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

2 where V_R is the rated speed ($13 \frac{m}{s}$), V_i ($3.5 \frac{m}{s}$) and V_o ($25 \frac{m}{s}$) are the cut-in and
3 cut-off speed respectively[§] [11].

4 When the cut-off threshold is overcome, the turbines stop working for security reasons
5 (*storm control*), and the loss in the wind power production can be high, ranging from
6 the 50% of the installed capacity in half an hour to 70% in one hour [12]. Similarly,
7 the turbines do not work when the wind speed is lower than the cut-in threshold, with
8 consequent losses in the W_{pot} .

9
10 In Europe, high-speed winds are mainly associated with the passage of the so called
11 *extra-tropical* or *mid-latitude cyclones* [13], especially in autumn and winter. This type

[‡] Dimensionless indicator of the potential power production at each location and time.

[§] We chose these values because they are the most common, but we specify that they are not universal and they correspond to a specific wind turbine technology.

12 of cyclone is defined as a synoptic scale low pressure system that occurs in the middle
 13 latitudes, *i.e.* between 30° and 60° latitude from the equator [14]. They are formed in
 14 regions of strong baroclinicity, which are the regions associated with a strong merid-
 15 ional temperature gradient. In the Northern hemisphere, winds flow counterclockwise
 16 around the cyclone, and they can reach high speeds. *Vice versa*, areas of high pres-
 17 sure are called *anticyclones*: winds flow around their center clockwise^{||} and they are
 18 usually characterized by a mild intensity.

19 Extra-tropical cyclones (anticyclones) are identified with local minima[¶] (maxima) in
 20 the geopotential height at a certain pressure level [15], which represents the height
 21 of a pressure surface in the atmosphere above the sea level. The separation of the
 22 isohypses, *i.e.* lines of equal geopotential height, also gives a measure of the wind
 23 speed: the smaller the separation, the higher the wind speed (and *vice versa*).

24
 25 Changes in the intensity or frequency of the cyclones (anticyclones) can cause changes
 26 in the occurrence of intense storms or low-speed winds events, with serious impacts
 27 on the electric power generation. Therefore, it is of strong interest having informa-
 28 tion about their features and tracks, as well as knowing which weather regimes are
 29 related to them, where by weather regime we mean a quasi-stationary and recur-
 30 ring large-scale spatial circulation pattern, typically defined in terms of atmospheric
 31 variables (*e.g.* geopotential height, pressure, *etc.*), which persists for an extended
 32 period (usually from 10 days to a month). While Grams *et al.* [16] have already
 33 analysed the importance of weather regimes in the average wind energy production by
 34 assuming stationarity in weather regimes over the historical period (1979-2015), here
 35 we extend this viewpoint by specifically looking at the relationship between extreme
 36 high/low-speed wind conditions and weather regimes and by releasing the assumption
 37 of weather regime stationary. Indeed, Brönniman *et al.* [17] and Corti *et al.* [18]
 38 evidenced that significant trends in extreme winds frequency in the historical period
 39 exist, as well as that natural atmospheric circulation regimes have already changed
 40 due to anthropogenic forcing. This motivates the present study.

41
 42 Identifying which weather regimes are associated with extreme winds⁺ is of prominent
 43 importance in order to have a complete view of the distribution of the European wind
 44 energy resources. In fact, if the same weather regime affects different zones, we could
 45 have simultaneous multiple outages in the turbines operation with consequent short-
 46 ages in the wind energy supply. In a future scenario with only RE, this might even lead
 47 to partial or total blackouts, with heavy impacts especially on cities and urban areas.
 48 Contrariwise, if the weather regimes that cause extreme wind events differ from area
 49 to area, with the perspective of European energy management policies, which provide
 50 investments for the construction of infrastructures aimed to distribution, storage and
 51 energy transmission, it would be possible to redirect the energy to the affected zones
 52 and thus avoid temporary blackouts [19] [20].

53
 54 In light of these considerations, the general purpose of this work is to estimate the
 55 behavior of extreme winds on the European panorama, over the period 1950-2020, in
 56 order to investigate the large-scale weather regimes related to them and their impact

^{||} In the Northern hemisphere.

[¶] In order to filter the cyclones from other low-pressure systems, there are usually introduced also empirical *minimum* thresholds, *e.g.* in the duration or in the intensity [21].

⁺ See Section 2 for the definition of “extreme winds”.

57 on off-shore wind energy availability.

58

59 The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we present the data which we will use
60 in our forthcoming analysis. In section 3, we investigate the presence of significant
61 trends in the occurrence of high/low-speed wind events, over selected periods and re-
62 gions, by means of a non-parametric trend test. Finally, in section 4, we investigate
63 the weather regimes at which the high/low-speed wind events occur, in order to detect
64 changes in their pattern, before drawing our conclusions in section 5.

65 2. Data and methods

66 The more recent climate reanalysis released by the European Centre for Medium-
67 Range Weather Forecasts is ERA5, which provides data, from 1950 to present, over
68 different timescales, describing many atmospheric, land-surface and oceans parameters
69 together with estimates of uncertainty. These data-sets are publicly available at the
70 Copernicus Climate Data Centre [22] on regular latitude-longitude grid, at $0.25^\circ \times 0.25^\circ$
71 resolution.

72 For our analysis we used two subsets of ERA5 [23], *ERA5 hourly data on single levels*
73 *from 1950 to 1978* [24] and *ERA5 hourly data on single levels from 1979 to present*
74 [25], covering a period from 1950 to 2020 and selecting 6-hourly values, at 00:00, 06:00,
75 12:00 and 18:00. In particular, we selected three variables:

- 76 • 100 m u-component of wind, u ($[\frac{m}{s}]$): eastward horizontal component of wind
77 speed, measured at 100 m above the Earth surface;
- 78 • 100 m v-component of wind, v ($[\frac{m}{s}]$): northward horizontal component of wind
79 speed, measured at 100 m above the Earth surface;
- 80 • geopotential, z ($[\frac{m^2}{s^2}]$), at 500 *hPa*: the gravitational potential energy of a unit
81 mass, at a particular location at the surface of the Earth, relative to mean sea
82 level;

and we extracted a sub-region corresponding to the European area: -12°W - 30°E , 32°N - 70°N .

To obtain the horizontal wind speed at 100 m^* , V , we combined the u-component of
wind with the v-component:

$$V = \sqrt{u^2 + v^2} \quad (2)$$

83 To calculate the geopotential height, zh , instead, we simply divided z by the Earth's
84 gravitational acceleration ($9.80665 \frac{m}{s^2}$).

85

86 In figure 1, panel **a**, it is represented the climatology \ddagger of the horizontal wind speed
87 at 100 m over the period 1950-2020. As shown by the map, the strongest winds blow
88 off-shore, with a peak of $11.12 \frac{m}{s}$ off the British Islands.

89 In this paper, we will refer to “extreme (wind) events” as the wind events with the
90 wind speed in the non-operating regime, according to (1). We will call “high wind
91 events” the wind events with the wind speed over the cut-off threshold and “low wind
92 events” those with the wind speed under the cut-in threshold. Moreover, we will con-
93 sider as event every time-step with the wind speed that satisfies one of these two latter

* We use the wind speed at 100 m as reference wind speed for the off-shore turbines, which have a
typical hub height ranging from 80 m to 120 m .

\ddagger The climatology of a variable is the variable's mean value over a certain period of time.

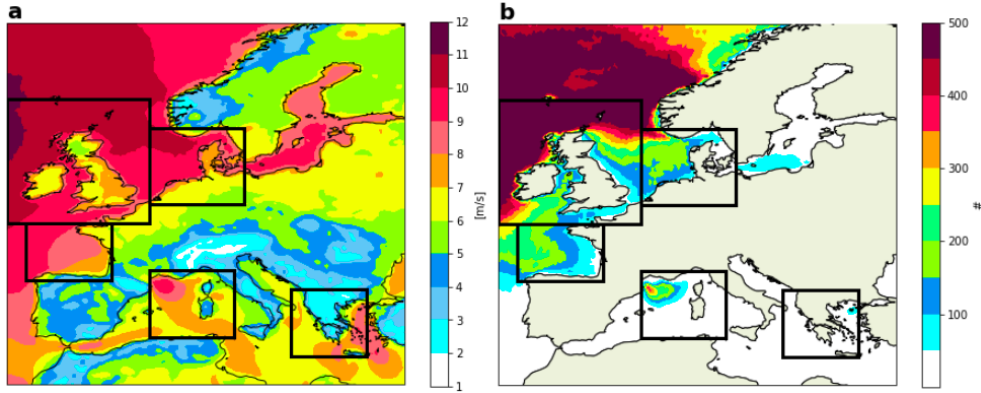


Figure 1. (a) 1950-2020 average 100 *m* horizontal wind-speed [$\frac{m}{s}$]. (b) Total number of events # above the 100 *m* horizontal wind-speed cut-off threshold ($25 \frac{m}{s}$) over the period 1950-2020. In order to distinguish more clearly the zones with the highest number of events, we limited the range of values to 500. All the values ≥ 500 are mapped with the last color of the colorbar. The black boxes indicate the areas specifically considered in this study: British Islands ($12^{\circ}W-3^{\circ}E$, $49^{\circ}N-62^{\circ}N$), North Sea ($3^{\circ}E-13^{\circ}E$, $51^{\circ}N-59^{\circ}N$), Bay of Biscay ($10^{\circ}W-1^{\circ}W$, $43^{\circ}N-49^{\circ}N$), Central Mediterranean ($3^{\circ}E-12^{\circ}E$, $37^{\circ}N-44.5^{\circ}N$), Balkan Peninsula ($18^{\circ}E-26^{\circ}E$, $35^{\circ}N-42^{\circ}N$)

94 constraints.

95 To have a clearer view of which zones are affected by high wind events, we first
 96 masked the 100 *m* horizontal wind speed, keeping only the values higher than the cut-
 97 off speed. We then counted, grid point by grid point, the number of events during the
 98 period 1950-2020 that satisfy this latter constraint (figure 1, panel b). As expected,
 99 we found that this condition occurs mainly off-shore, and we focused especially on
 100 five regions, where high winds are observed more frequently and where most of the
 101 farms are installed: British Islands, North Sea, Balkan Peninsula, and the areas off
 102 the south of France and north of Spain. These regions are particularly favourable
 103 to the installation of offshore wind farms because they are affected by quasi-constant
 104 wind patterns. Specifically, the Bay of Biscay, the British Islands and the North Sea
 105 lie on the Atlantic storm track [26]; Central Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula
 106 are affected by the Mistral and Etesian wind patterns, respectively [27]. During the
 107 summer months (June-July-August, JJA) no high wind events are detected, while the
 108 peak occurs in winter (December-January-February, DJF).

109

110 3. Trends in wind events

111 Focusing on the regions indicated in Figure 1, to investigate if there exist significant
 112 long-term changes in the occurrence of extreme events during the period 1950-2020
 113 and to quantify them, we analysed the trends, separately region by region, by means of
 114 the Mann Kendall test at 95% level of confidence [28]. We computed the test not only
 115 considering the number of events during the whole year, but also apiece for summer
 116 and winter, during which most of the events occur respectively for the low and the
 117 high wind events.

118 Figure 2 shows the average change, per decade, in the number of high wind events,
 119 over the period 1950-2020, during the whole year (**a, b, c**) and for the winter months
 120 (**d, e, f**), for British Islands (**a, b**), North Sea (**c, d**), Bay of Biscay (**e, f**). In large part
 121 of these regions a significant increasing trend is detected throughout the years and for
 122 the DJF period (figure 2), as well as in very small areas of Central Mediterranean. In
 123 Balkan Peninsula, instead, in both cases, where detected, the trends are significantly
 124 decreasing.

125 Figure 3 shows the average change, per decade, in the number of low wind events, over
 126 the period 1950-2020, during the whole year (**a, b, c**) and for the summer months
 127 (**d, e, f**), for British Islands (**a, b**), North Sea (**c, d**), Bay of Biscay (**e, f**). For these
 128 latter regions it is observed a general average decrease in the number of these events,
 129 with a significant negative trend particularly strong in the number of events during
 130 the whole year. Contrariwise, in Central Mediterranean and Balkan Peninsula, the
 131 number of low wind events has markedly increased, especially considering its trend
 132 during the whole year, as shown in figure 4.

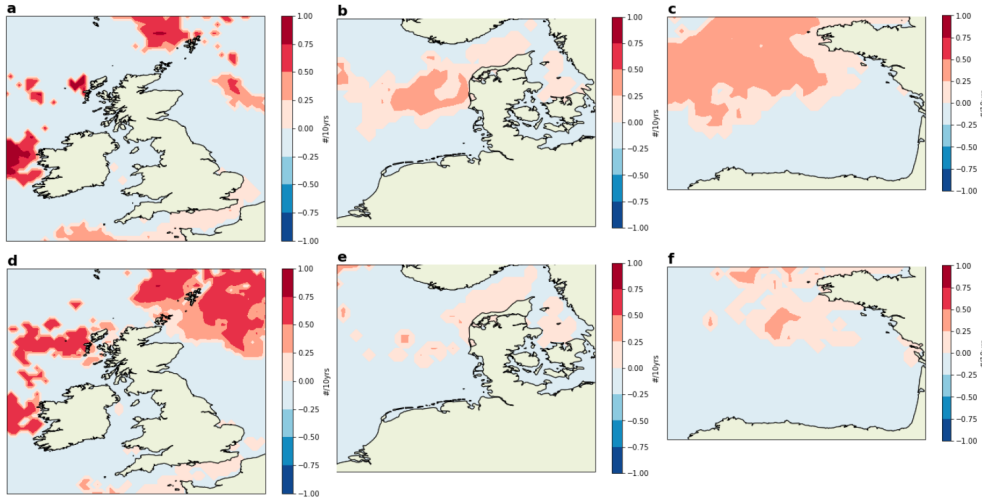


Figure 2. Average change (red: increase, blue: decrease) in the number of high wind events per decade $\#/10yrs$ over the period 1950-2020, during the whole year (**a, b, c**) and for the winter months (DJF, **d, e, f**), for British Islands, North Sea and Bay of Biscay. Shadings indicate significant changes.

133 4. Weather regimes analysis for high/low wind events

134 Since we want to investigate the extreme events that may have, in each region, the
 135 most widespread impact on the off-shore wind energy production, we restricted the
 136 analysis to the events that involve a high number of grid points. To do so, starting
 137 from the data-sets with only the 6-hourly wind speed values over the cut-off threshold
 138 and under the cut-in threshold, we selected, separately for each zone, the time-steps
 139 with the number of affected grid points respectively above the 95th percentile and the
 140 99th percentile [1].

141 As expected, the British Islands is the region with the most widespread high winds
 142 (457 time-steps identified), followed at a distance by North Sea (97) and Bay of Biscay

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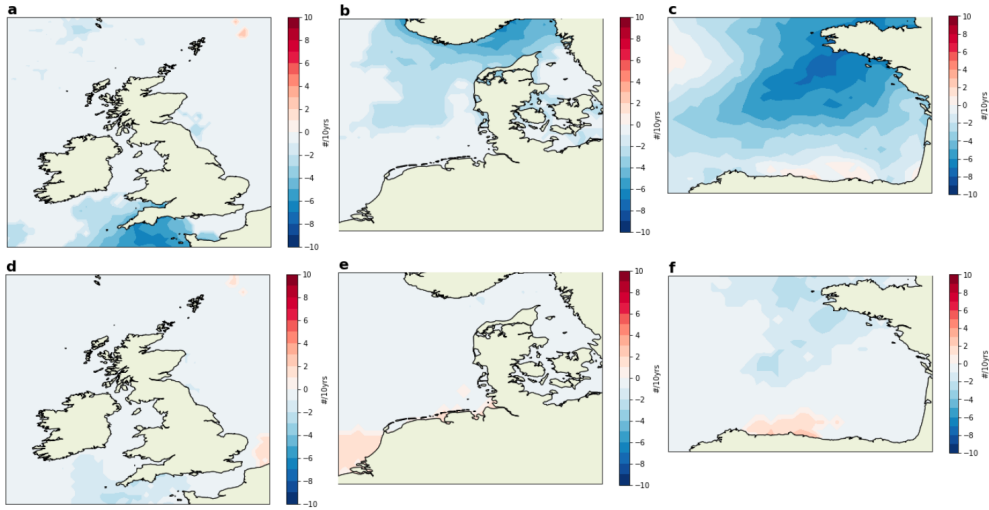


Figure 3. Average change (red: increase, blue: decrease) in the number of low wind events per decade $\#/10yrs$ over the period 1950-2020, during the whole year (a, b, c) and for the summer months (JJA, d, e, f), for British Islands, North Sea and Bay of Biscay. Shadings indicate significant changes.

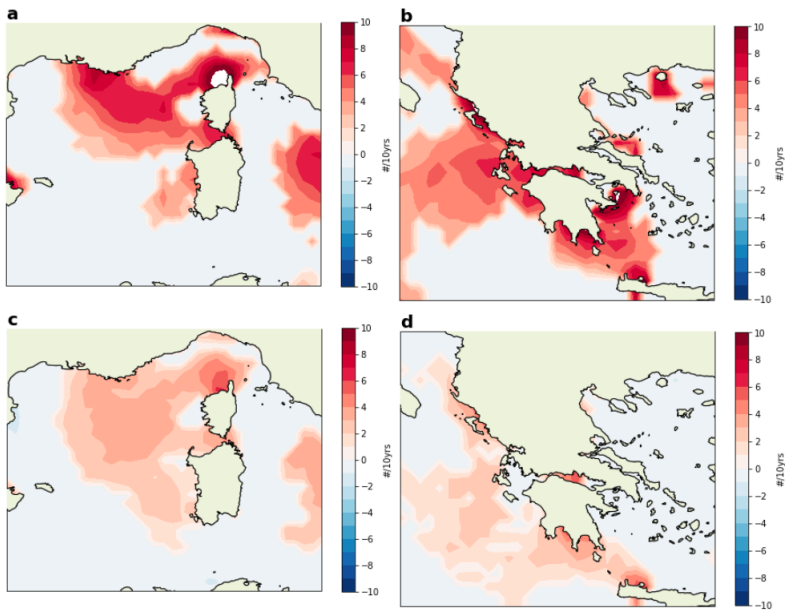


Figure 4. Same as in figure 3, but for Central Mediterranean and Balkan Peninsula. Shadings indicate significant changes.

143 (85).

144 By a cross-check with a European storm database [29], which covers the period 1948-
 145 2020, we found for these three areas coincidences between high winds and intense
 146 storms, particularly during the winter months: 23 concurrences for the British Is-
 147 lands, 27 for North Sea and 18 for the Bay of Biscay, as reported in tables A1, A2,
 148 A3 (5).

149

Region	High winds	Low winds
British Islands	419	1104
North Sea	207	668
Bay of Biscay	244	505
Central Mediterranean	85	778
Balkan Peninsula	47	671

Table 1. Number of affected grid points above the 95th percentile (**high winds**) and above the 99th percentile (**low winds**) for all the areas considered in this study.

150 Considering the European synoptic atmospheric circulation, four weather regimes
 151 have been traditionally identified to classify the weather over the continent [30]
 152 [31] [32]. Weather regimes are typical maps where high/low pressure systems are
 153 arranged in different patterns, corresponding to different positions of the mid-latitude
 154 jet stream:

- 155 (i) North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) positive (+): low pressure anomalies over
 156 Iceland and higher than normal pressure in Central and Southern Europe. The
 157 NAO+ is generally associated with wet/windy weather over Northern Europe and
 158 dry/warm weather in Southern Europe.
- 159 (ii) NAO negative (-): an anomalous high pressure system covers the area over
 160 Greenland and Iceland, while negative anomalies concern the south, with opposite
 161 meteorological features than the NAO+.
- 162 (iii) Scandinavian Blocking: higher than normal pressure over the Scandinavian
 163 Peninsula and low pressure anomalies in South-Western Europe; this pattern
 164 is often associated with cold spells in winter and heatwaves in summer, mostly
 165 over Central and Northern Europe.
- 166 (iv) Atlantic Ridge: positive pressure anomalies in the mid-eastern Atlantic and
 167 negative anomalies over Europe. This regime leads to warm spells over the Iberian
 168 Peninsula and South of France, cold conditions over Eastern Europe and intense
 169 precipitations in correspondence to the maximum pressure gradients.

170 In order to identify the different weather regimes associated with the occurrence of
 171 extreme wind events and to detect changes in their pattern, we took some preliminary
 172 steps.

173 Firstly, for each region, we computed the anomalies in the geopotential height, for
 174 the high and low wind events, over the time-steps selected following the procedure
 175 mentioned above. To do this, for each time-step we subtracted to zh the value
 176 of zh at the same instant averaged over the period 1950-2020. For example, to
 177 the value of the geopotential height on the 01/02/1953 at 06:00 we subtracted the
 178 mean of the geopotential height values on the first of February at 6 a.m. from
 179 1950 to 2020. Then, we grouped the selected time-steps in two sub-periods, past

180 period (01/01/1950-30/06/1985) and present period (01/07/1985-31/12/2020), and
 181 we computed the anomalies in the geopotential height averaged over these two time-
 182 windows, together with the difference between present and past average anomalies.
 183 To test the significance of the differences we applied the bootstrap method, at the
 184 95th level of confidence.

185 As shown in figure 5, high winds in British Islands (**a, b, c**), North Sea (**d, e, f**)
 186 and Bay of Biscay (**g, h, i**) occur during the NAO+ phases. In the second period,
 187 the positive zh anomalies become more intense and widespread over Central-Southern
 188 Europe, and the gradient between positive and negative anomalies is accentuated,
 189 leading to a higher frequency of these extreme events (table 2) over the zones
 190 considered and to stronger winds over the British Islands and North Sea (figure 6,
 191 **a-f**). Instead, an Atlantic ridge pattern is found for the Central Mediterranean (figure
 192 5, **j, k, l**) and, in the first period, for Balkan Peninsula (figure 5, **m, n, o**), for
 193 which then it shifts to a Scandinavian blocking, with the center of the low pressure
 194 system remaining located over the Balkan Peninsula. In both cases, contrary to what
 195 happened for the areas in North Europe (British Islands, North Sea and Bay of Biscay),
 196 there are substantially no changes in the occurrence of high winds. However, there is a
 197 slight decrease in their intensity in Central Mediterranean (figure 6, **j-l**) and changes,
 198 both positive and negative, in Balkan Peninsula (figure 6, **m-o**).

199 Regarding the low winds, in each period and for each region, their occurrence is related
 200 to a blocking pattern with the high pressure zone over the affected area (figure 7). In
 201 all cases, in the second period the intensity of the positive anomalies increases, leading
 202 to stronger pressure gradients and to higher anticyclonic (clockwise) winds, causing a
 203 significant reduction in the number of low wind events (table 2). In Balkan Peninsula,
 204 on the contrary, we detected a slight increase in the average number of days with low
 205 winds: indeed, by looking at the associated zh patterns (figure 7, **m-o**), rather than
 206 changes in the pressure gradients we observe an extension of the high pressure area
 207 over the Mediterranean. This is consistent with the results presented in [33], where a
 208 strengthening in the anticyclones intensity is found over this region.

209 To measure the presence of clusters in the events occurring over the selected time-
 210 steps and to detect changes in their behaviour, we computed the persistence[34] and
 211 the number of clusters, separately for each region and for both sub-periods (tables 3,
 212 4). Nevertheless, even if there are slight changes in the persistence values, none of
 213 them is statistically significant (bootstrap method at the 95th level of confidence).

Region	01/01/1950-30/06/1985		01/07/1985-31/12/2020	
British Islands	176	552	281	382
North Sea	38	493	59	369
Bay of Biscay	29	585	56	372
Central Mediterranean	32	531	31	513
Balkan Peninsula	9	477	10	561

Table 2. Number of events with the number of affected grid points above the 95th percentile (**high winds**) and above the 99th percentile (**low winds**) for the past period (01/01/1950 – 30/06/1985) and for the present (01/07/1985 – 31/12/2020) for all the areas considered in this study.

Region	01/01/1950-30/06/1985		01/07/1985-31/12/2020	
British Islands	10.53	118	11.11	131
North Sea	9.38	27	8.33	37
Bay of Biscay	9.38	21	7.89	37
Central Mediterranean	10.17	16	8.7	20
Balkan Peninsula	6	5	11.32	5

Table 3. Persistence ($[h]$) and number of clusters for high winds, for the past (01/01/1950 – 30/06/1985) and for the present (01/07/1985 – 31/12/2020) period for all the areas considered in this study.

Region	01/01/1950-30/06/1985		01/07/1985-31/12/2020	
British Islands	11.32	244	11.11	246
North Sea	8.57	304	8.33	301
Bay of Biscay	8.7	329	9.09	319
Central Mediterranean	9.38	324	9.84	315
Balkan Peninsula	9.68	315	10.34	303

Table 4. Persistence ($[h]$) and number of clusters for low winds, for the past (01/01/1950 – 30/06/1985) and for the present (01/07/1985 – 31/12/2020) period for all the areas considered in this study.

214 **5. Concluding remarks**

215 In this work, we have estimated the behavior of extreme winds on the European
 216 panorama, over the period 1950-2020, and related them to the large-scale weather
 217 regimes, drawing conclusions on their potential impacts on off-shore wind energy
 218 availability. In particular, we focused on five regions: British Islands, North Sea,
 219 Bay of Biscay, Central Mediterranean and Balkan Peninsula. By means of the Mann
 220 Kendall test, we have detected the presence of significant trends in the occurrence of
 221 wind events with the wind speed above the cut-out threshold and below the cut-in
 222 threshold, during the period 1950-2020. In British Islands, North Sea and Bay of Bis-
 223 cay a significant increasing trend has been observed for high winds, and a decreasing
 224 trend for low winds. Contrariwise, in Central Mediterranean and Balkan Peninsula,
 225 the number of low wind events has increased. Finally, we have identified the weather
 226 regimes at which the extreme wind events occur, analysing the changes in the average
 227 geopotential height anomalies and in the average 100 m horizontal wind speed be-
 228 tween the past period (01/01/1950-30/06/1985) and the present period (01/07/1985-
 229 31/12/2020). The low winds events are related to blocking patterns with the high
 230 pressure zone centered over the affected area. This implies that extreme events with
 231 the wind speed under the cut-in threshold can not occur, on average, at the same
 232 time at different locations. Whether this condition will persist also in future climates,
 233 simultaneous multiple outages can be avoided, *e.g.* by transferring energy from an
 234 area with higher availability to those affected by low winds conditions. Conversely,
 235 we have found that high winds for British Islands, North Sea and Bay of Biscay were
 236 related to the same weather regime, namely the NAO+ phase. This fact could lead,
 237 in the future, to widespread shortages in the wind energy supply, possibly leading to
 238 partial or total blackouts, with heavy impacts especially on cities and urban areas, in
 239 a scenario where energy is produced mostly by renewable sources. We remark that,
 240 although the frequency of extreme events related to high winds is relatively modest
 241 compared to the low wind ones, they could lead to heavier impacts. In fact, high

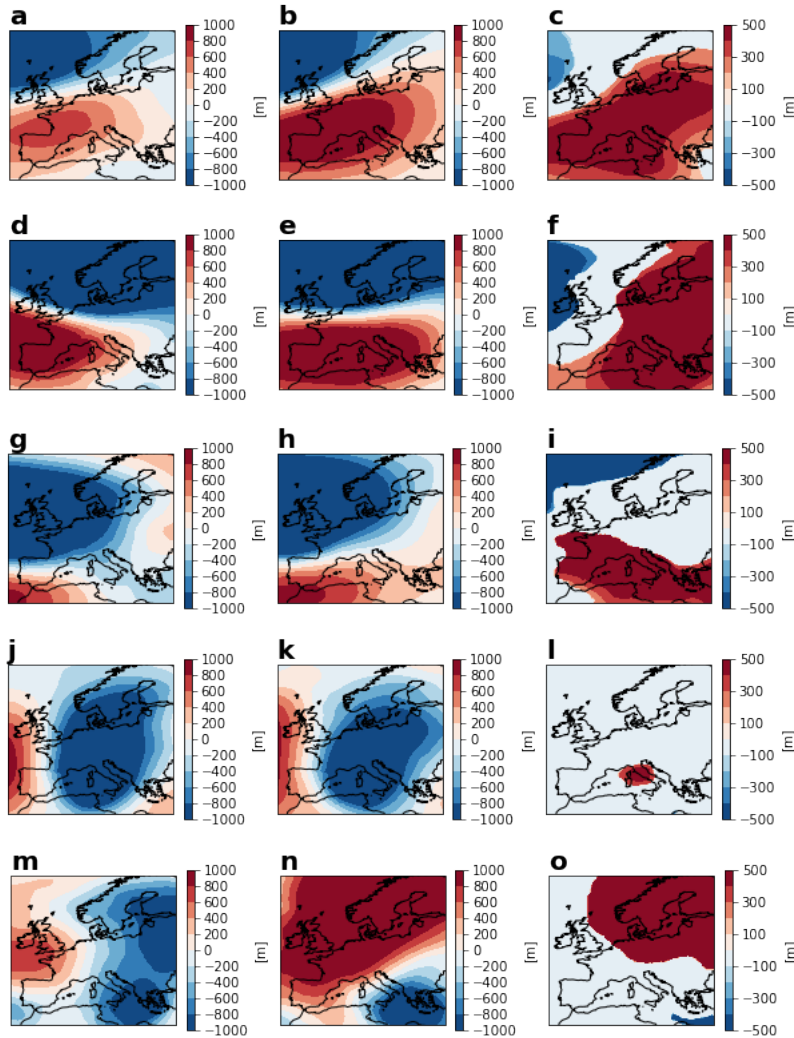


Figure 5. High winds. Geopotential height anomalies averaged over the time-steps selected for the period 01/01/1950-30/06/1985 (a, d, g, j, m) and for the period 01/07/1985-31/12/2020 (b, e, h, k, n); difference between the climatology of present and past anomalies (c, f, i, l, o). British Islands (a, b, c), North Sea (d, e, f), Bay of Biscay (g, h, i), Central Mediterranean (j, k, l), Balkan Peninsula (m, n, o). In the third column, shadings indicate significant changes.

242 winds not only prevent the RE infrastructures from operating, because of the storm
 243 control, but they may damage and sometimes even destroy the wind turbines, making
 244 maintenance interventions necessary and so extending the downtime.

245
 246 Since our analyses, focused on historical climate data for the period 1950-2020, have
 247 shown that climate change already affects wind power availability over Europe dur-
 248 ing extreme weather events, the natural continuation of this study will be to look at
 249 future climate scenarios. Various studies suggest that climate change will not consid-

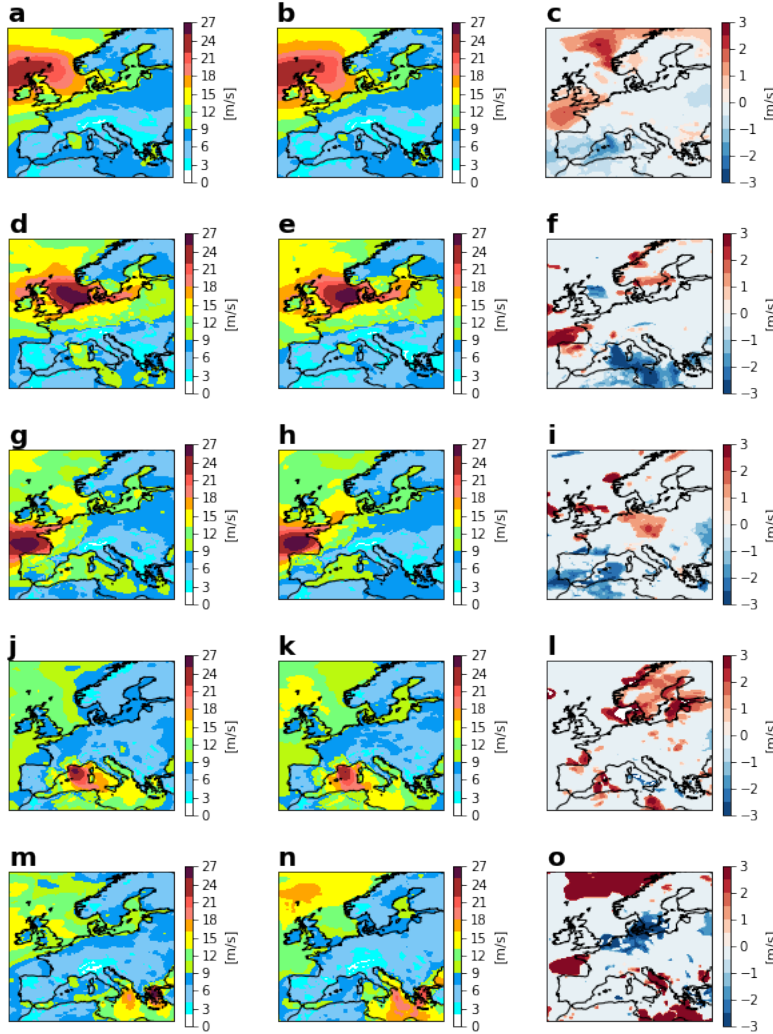


Figure 6. High winds. 100 m horizontal wind-speed [$\frac{m}{s}$] averaged over the period 01/01/1950-30/06/1985 (a, d, g, j, m) and over the period 01/07/1985-31/12/2020 (b, e, h, k, n); difference between the climatology of present and past 100 m horizontal wind-speed (c, f, i, l, o). British Islands (a, b, c), North Sea (d, e, f), Bay of Biscay (g, h, i), Central Mediterranean (j, k, l), Balkan Peninsula (m, n, o). In the third column, shadings indicate significant changes.

250 erably affect the average near-surface wind speed [35] [36] and therefore the average
 251 energy production. However, our analysis could motivate further research by specifi-
 252 cally looking at extreme low/high winds that could not necessarily follow the behavior
 253 of average wind speed. In this context, it will be appropriate to use the new convec-
 254 tion permitting simulations available at high resolutions [37]. A natural strategy to
 255 ensure robustness of the results would be the use of *ensembles* climate simulations
 256 corresponding to different Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs).
 257 The results of our work are consistent with the previous literature that analyzed the

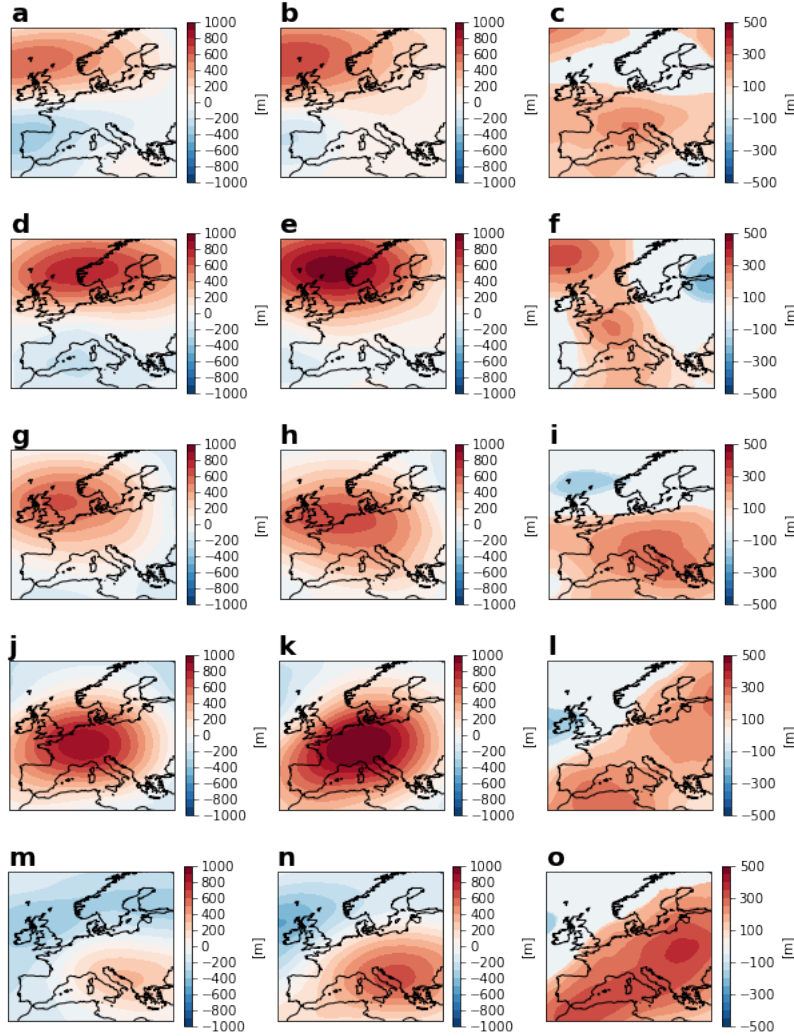


Figure 7. Same as in figure 5, but for **low winds**. In the third column, shadings indicate significant changes.

258 influence of the weather patterns, and consequently of the wind conditions, on the
 259 wind power generation [38] [39] [40] [41]. In particular, our paper has taken a clue
 260 from the work of Grams *et al.* [16]. In their paper, Grams *et al.* underline the lack of
 261 well-deployed installations and of an efficient electric European net that could handle
 262 electricity deficit periods. In addition, they stress the necessity to plan the installation
 263 of new capacity basing on the meteorological understanding. Combining these con-
 264 siderations with the results of our study, we can state that the planning of new wind
 265 farms should take into account also the behaviour of the extreme wind events, which
 266 can represent a threat to an efficient operation of the installations. Furthermore, to
 267 deal with this problem, it would be necessary to implement European policies for the
 268 energy management that provide the construction of infrastructures aimed to distri-

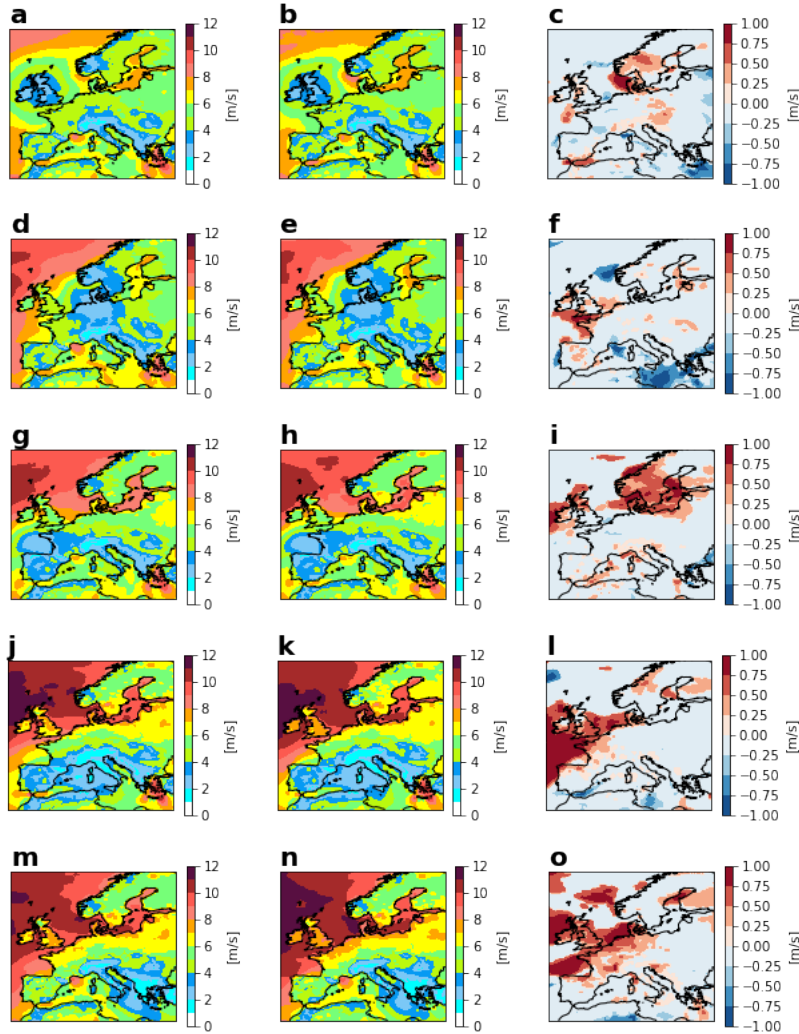


Figure 8. Same as in figure 6, but for **low winds**. In the third column, shadings indicate significant changes.

269 bution, storage and energy transmission, which could be used during the extreme wind
 270 events to avoid temporary blackouts. Nevertheless, the expected improvement in the
 271 wind power generation technology [42] [43] could make possible the construction of
 272 wind turbines able to produce energy at lower/higher wind speeds than the actual
 273 cut-in and cut-out wind speeds. This fact would lead to changes in the wind resources
 274 distribution, due to the possibility of constructing wind turbines in areas currently
 275 unsuitable, and, for the existing infrastructures, it would lead to a significant increase
 276 in their wind energy production.

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282 **Author contributions**

283 LR performed the analyses. LR and DF conceived the study and wrote the paper. The
 284 authors declare that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization
 285 or entity with any financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in
 286 this manuscript.

287 **Data availability statement**

288 ERA5 is the latest climate reanalysis being produced by ECMWF as part of
 289 implementing the EU- funded Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), providing
 290 hourly data on atmospheric, land-surface and sea-state parameters together with
 291 estimates of uncertainty from 1979 to present day. ERA5 data are available on the
 292 C3S Climate Data Store on regular latitude-longitude grids at 0.25° x 0.25° resolution
 293 at <https://cds.climate.copernicus.eu/#!/home>.

294 **Appendix**

Day(s) of high winds	Name(s) of the storm	Region affected
31/01/1953	North Sea Flood	British Islands
16/02/1962	The Sheffiled Gale	British Islands
11/01/1974	Irish Windstorm	British Islands
24/11/1981	1981 November Storm	British Islands
14/02/1989	Scottish Windstorm	British Islands
26-27/02/1990	Vivian	British Islands
08/01/1993	Braer Storm	British Islands
10-12/01/1993	Braer Storm	British Islands
15/01/1993	Braer Storm	British Islands
17/01/1993	Braer Storm	British Islands
12/01/2005	Erwin (Gudrun)	British Islands
11/01/2007	Franz	British Islands
25/01/2008	Paula	British Islands
08/12/2011	Friedhelm (Bawbag)	British Islands
25/12/2011	Patrick	British Islands
19/12/2013	Bernd (Emily)	British Islands
24/12/2013	Dirk	British Islands
10/12/2014	Alexandra	British Islands
10/01/2015	Elon, Felix, Hermann	British Islands
12/01/2015	Elon, Felix, Hermann	British Islands

Table A1. Day(s) of high winds and name(s) of the storm for the British Islands.

Day(s) of high winds	Name(s) of the storm	Region affected
01/02/1953	North Sea Flood	North Sea
16/02/1962	The Sheffiled Gale	North Sea
23/02/1967	"Adolph Bermpohl" storm	North Sea
15/01/1968	The Glasgow Hurricane	North Sea
03/01/1976	Capella Storm	North Sea
24/11/1981	1981 November Storm	North Sea
18/01/1983	Christiansborg Storm	North Sea
16/10/1987	Great Storm of 1987	North Sea
14/02/1989	Scottish Windstorm	North Sea
25/01/1990	Burns' Day Storm (Daria)	North Sea
08/02/1990	Judith	North Sea
26/02/1990	Vivian	North Sea
28/01/1994	Lore	North Sea
27/12/1998	Boxing Day Storm (Stephen)	North Sea
03/12/1999	Anatol	North Sea
08/01/2005	Erwin (Gudrun)	North Sea
14/01/2007	Franz	North Sea
09/11/2007	Tilo (Andrea)	North Sea
27/11/2011	Berit (Xaver)	North Sea
09/12/2011	Friedhelm (Bawbag)	North Sea
03/01/2012	Ulli (Emil)	North Sea
24/12/2013	Dirk	North Sea
09-10/01/2015	Elon, Felix, Hermann	North Sea
29/10/2017	Storm Herwart	North Sea
09/02/2020	Storm Ciara	North Sea
16/02/2020	Storm Ciara, Storm Dennis	North Sea

Table A2. Day(s) of high winds and name(s) of the storm for North Sea.

Day(s) of high winds	Name(s) of the storm	Region affected
11/02/1974	Norway Windostorm	Bay of Biscay
15/10/1987	Great Storm of 1987	Bay of Biscay
25/01/1990	Burns' Day Storm (Daria)	Bay of Biscay
07/02/1990	Judith	Bay of Biscay
10/01/1993	Braer Storm	Bay of Biscay
26-27/12/1999	Lothar, Martin	Bay of Biscay
30/10/2000	Oratia	Bay of Biscay
24/01/2009	Klaus	Bay of Biscay
09/02/2009	Quinten	Bay of Biscay
13/12/2013	Ivar	Bay of Biscay
15-16/12/2013	Ivar	Bay of Biscay
23-24/12/2013	Ivar	Bay of Biscay
05/02/2014	Nadia (Brigid)	Bay of Biscay
14/02/2014	Stephanie	Bay of Biscay
27/12/2020	Storm Bella	Bay of Biscay

Table A3. Day(s) of high winds and name(s) of the storm for Bay of Biscay.

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