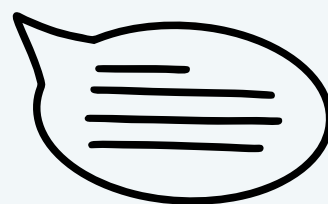


THE SOLUTIONS APPROACH TO CROSS-BORDER CLIMATE STORIES

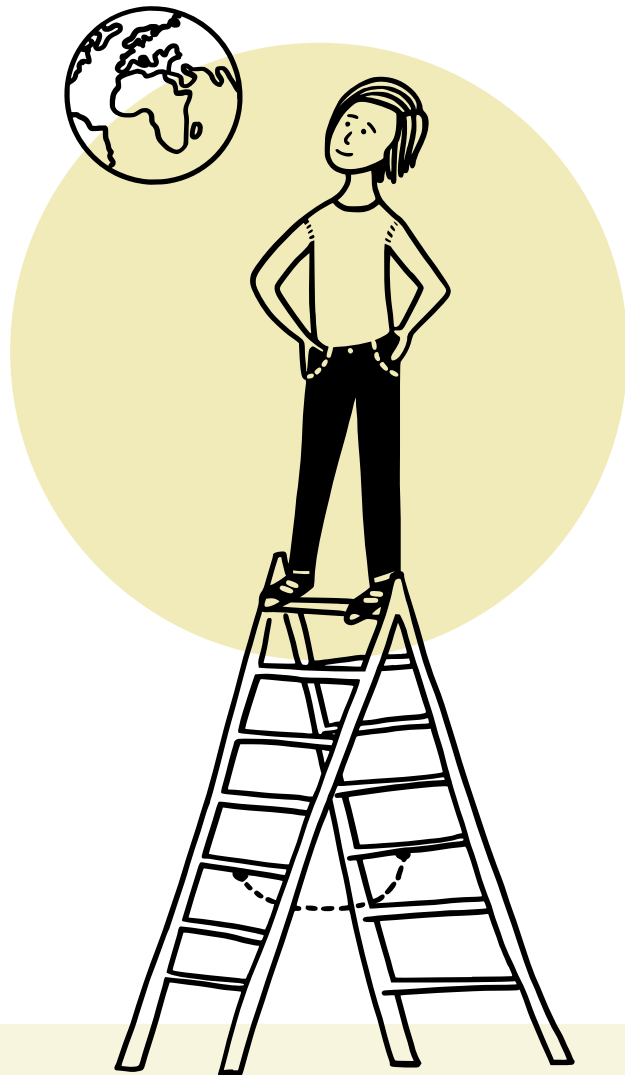


Journalists are often generalists; this flexibility becomes an asset when covering the climate crisis. Collaborations and cross-border reporting can open up insightful comparisons of how various communities respond to similar climate challenges. In this guide, we asked members and mentors of cross-border teams in the [Constructive News: Fostering Solutions Journalism Across Europe](#) or [SoJo Europe](#) Program about their experiences, best practices, and insights into preparing for cross-border climate solutions projects.



GETTING STARTED

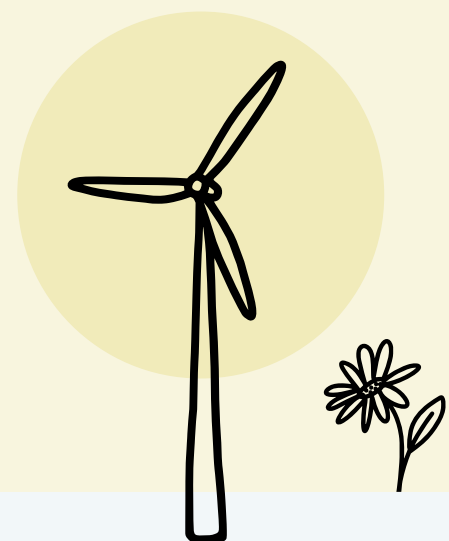
Collaboration makes cross-border work easier and expands a community of practice where journalists share insights and compare notes on applying solutions thinking across beats. [Andrea Giambartolomei](#) from [lavialibera](#) sees it as “an opportunity to start thinking about other possible ways of working together.” For Irena Buřivalová, editor at Czech business and sustainability website [EkoneWS](#), this space allows journalists to share reporting strategies since similar climate problems, regardless of country-specific solutions, “often have some major common denominator.”



Cross-border teams not only combine the journalistic rigor of their respective newsrooms but also expand a story's cultural, regional, and contextual dimensions. [El Confidencial's](#) multimedia journalist Lola García-Ajofrín appreciates how cross-border teams can analyze a problem with totally different responses from separate towns. Individual journalists can share research and findings and “see how the same solution [works] in one place but not in another—we can explore why and start addressing other questions.”

When in the midst of a rigorous investigation, [Anna Violato](#), science writer and editor at the Italian independent media [RADAR Magazine](#), suggests “keeping an open mind” because a promising solution in one aspect of a climate issue might reveal limitations or unintended consequences. “You are not there to advocate for that solution, but to see if that’s actually working and what limitations are there.”

- Journalists often cover their own region and its specific concerns and may fall into a **knowledge gap** when writing on climate issues. Highly technical terms like “agri-voltaics”, “carbon capture and sequestration”, or “circular economies” demand extended research. “I’m still working on research and background [reading] to gain the knowledge I need to do the work,” says [Paolo Valenti](#) of the Italian magazine *lavalibera*.
- Lacking knowledge is one thing; adjusting perspectives is another. It may be hard for some journalists to **avoid over-hyping the success or promise in a climate story**. *RADAR Magazine*’s director [Marta Frigerio](#) and her colleague Anna Violato find this a big challenge, but they tell journalist colleagues: “Solution stories aren’t always positive. There can be [stories about] responses that have failed—or “*instructive failures*”.
- Cross-border teams also face the **challenge of combining data from different regions**. Data from two or more countries may not necessarily link together because of political systems, media landscapes, or cultural norms. *Slow News* editor-in-chief [Alberto Puliafito](#) also notes that problems that seem unique to one region may have parallels in other parts of the world. “Exchanging insights can reveal unexpected strategies or alternative solutions,” he adds.
- As Irena Buřivalová of *Ekonews* explains, **data alone may be insufficient to assess the effectiveness of solutions or responses**. In these situations, Lola García-Ajofrín (*El Confidencial*) suggests **zeroing in on the available evidence** and analyzing a project’s effectiveness over a specific time frame.
- Scena9*’s [Oana Filip](#) also reminds cross-border teams to **plan the logistics of their investigations well ahead**. Seasonal factors, geography, and access to visuals may be available at only a certain time of the year, and losing this window might complicate how teams illustrate the story. “We faced this constraint,” Filip shares, referring to an investigation into a dumpsite later covered with snow. “We had to wait a little bit to have better weather, and to do better reporting.”
- Just because the impact of climate policies might take years to show up doesn’t mean journalists can’t report on them. When doing this kind of story, tell the audience why, Paolo Valenti (*lavalibera*) advises. Meanwhile, freelancer Kaja Seruga says, “Anything can change at any time—accounting for that would mean using up half of your word count for disclaimers. **That’s what follow-up stories are for!**”



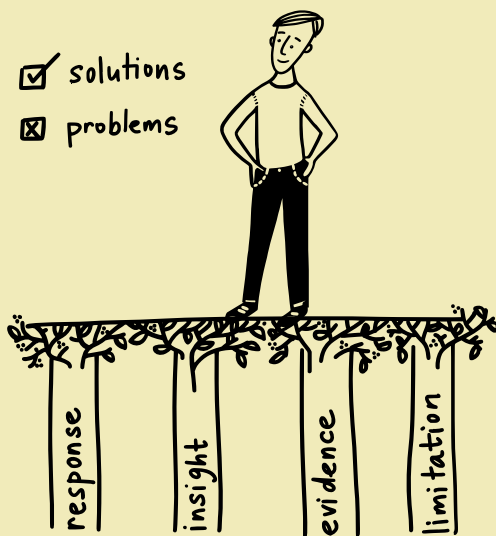
MENTORS AS SOUNDING BOARDS

Cross-border projects are also refined by mentors whose experiences add insight to investigations. SoJo Europe Project cohort members such as Violato and Valenti consider mentors as “**sounding boards**” who help confirm if journalists are on the right track or veering off into less effective approaches. “It is really useful to have someone come to us with examples of things from different countries that could be interesting to look at,” Violato says.

On the other hand, mentors also build a relationship based on trust and learning with their teams. [Matty Edwards](#), who was previously a reporter and editor at *The Bristol Cable*, believes it’s not always about giving advice, “but building some trust with [mentees] so that they see you as a genuine help.” For Kaja Seruga, it is crucial to “never assume what people already know and don’t know.”

SoJo Europe Project trainer Henrik Grunnet, senior advisor at Denmark-based [International Media Support](#) (IMS), warns against inadvertently taking over the story path and process, because mentees “respect you for being the most experienced ... Let them come with their experiences and realize by themselves that maybe they should go a slightly different way so it’s more that they come to that and not that you sit and say, ‘This is right’ or ‘This is wrong,’” Grunnet adds.



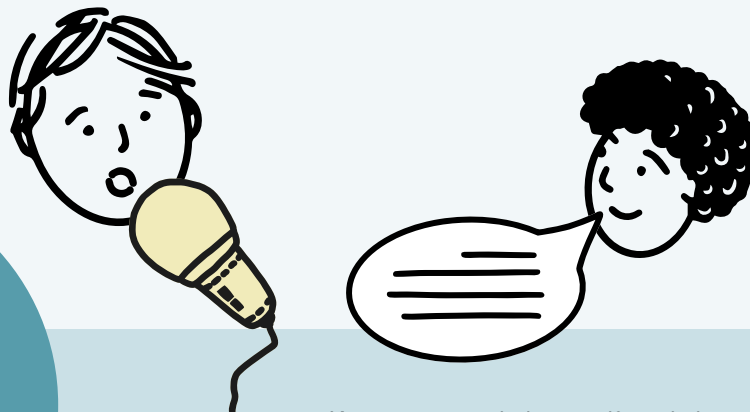


Solutions journalism builds on the tried-and-tested skills of investigative rigor, critical analysis, and community engagement. Its **four pillars** (response, insight, evidence, and limitations) allow a refocus not just on what's not working but what's being done about it. For some SoJo Europe cohort members, mentors, and trainers, it is more than just a journalistic approach; it is a mindset.

"Once you have that mindset built in," Grunnet shares, "then the skills will come."

A MINDSET SHIFT

SUMMING IT UP



A cross-border climate solutions project isn't just about involving many journalists from various countries. Such a project must integrate local wisdom into a much larger regional context. Summing up the advice of SoJo Europe Program journalists:

- Keep an open mind to see if a solution or response actually works or has serious limitations.
- Address the knowledge gap by doing due research—getting details from reading, experts, or communities will enhance your climate solutions stories.
- Ask whether combining data from different locales or regions is warranted, since datasets may have been acquired in different ways and may have been gathered from different time frames or situations.
- Plan well ahead, particularly in the logistics, as environmental factors may affect reporting and visualizations of the story.
- Think of collaborations as ways to find common denominators in global or regional climate issues and apply them to local conditions.

CONTACT US

Whether you have questions, want a solutions journalism training or want to collaborate, our team is dedicated to supporting you. Reach out to us at transitions@tol.org to explore solutions journalism, share ideas, and make an impact together.



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