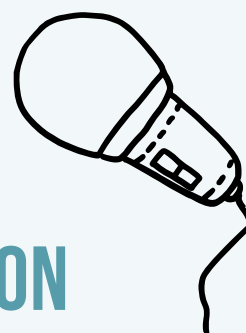




PITCHING SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM CLIMATE STORIES

TELLING STORIES THAT INSPIRE ACTION
IN THE FACE OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS



A compelling pitch is the foundation of any successful journalism project. Whether you're applying for a grant, seeking editorial support, or collaborating across borders, how you present your idea can make all the difference.

This guide brings together insights from mentors and members of the first [Constructive News: Fostering Solutions Journalism Across Europe](#) (SoJo Europe) initiative to help journalists refine their climate solutions journalism pitches. From framing a strong angle to demonstrating impact, their advice will help you craft pitches that stand out—whether for funding, publication, or broader support.

With the right approach, a great pitch doesn't just secure resources—it strengthens the storytelling itself. Let's explore what makes a pitch truly compelling.



QUESTIONS BEFORE ANSWERS

Cross-border investigative work often combines local insight and global relevance, which is all the more relevant for climate-focused solutions journalism projects. While there are endless topics a cross-border team can examine, there are also key questions they must ask before launching an investigation.

- **Why you?** Or, more generally, why are you (or your newsroom or cross-border team) positioned to tell the story? You may have access to communities directly affected by a climate issue. As Solutions Journalism Network climate initiatives manager [Angela K. Evans](#) suggests, “You have colleagues within your newsrooms who are environmental or climate experts.” The best collaborators may already be a few desks away or from regional newsrooms with established networks. “Maybe it can be a co-byline [piece],” Evans adds. “That’s great. I know [journalists are] not always keen to have co-published pieces, but it’s necessary sometimes.”
- **Why your location?** Multimedia journalist Lola García-Ajofrín from the Spanish digital newspaper [El Confidencial](#) urges journalists or cross-border teams to “think local [and find something] that you can extrapolate or replicate in another place.” She says there may be “a bridge or a border” in policies between countries, which are not always necessarily similar but can become points of comparison between data or responses. But only if it makes sense, she says: “We don’t need to force ourselves to do an investigation, say between Belgium and Spain, if it doesn’t work.”
- **Why solutions journalism?** Its [four-pillar](#) framework (response, insight, evidence, and limitations) provides strong guidance. However, for first-time practitioners, applying the framework might be pressuring. Oana Filip, a reporter with the Romanian online publication [Scena9](#), has a reminder: “Sometimes, it’s okay to focus not on the word ‘solution’ but ‘response.’ We’re not looking for the silver bullet that will solve everything.” Environmental journalist [Viktoriiia Hubareva](#) from Ukrainian solutions media [Rubryka](#) shares: “We don’t just name and describe ready-made solutions, but in detail, we also talk about their shortcomings, analyze them, and find new alternatives.”



THE EMOTIONAL CORE OF YOUR CLIMATE STORIES

Data and evidence back strong solutions stories, but too much of this can make them dry and technical. Many SoJo Europe cohort members and mentors emphasize the power of experiences, especially from people or communities whose direct engagement with climate problems or responses makes stories more relevant, memorable, and impactful. For freelance journalist [Matty Edwards](#), previously a reporter at [The Bristol Cable](#), “When there is so much journalism to potentially read, that emotional, human connection is all the more important.”

Presenting emotional, human connections in stories takes not just good storytelling or narrative techniques but also lived experiences as expressed by people or communities. Interviewing on the ground has always been a powerful way to capture these impactful stories—it is also an important reminder that **local knowledge and human connection are as vital as expert analysis or deep research**. [Andrea Giambartolomei](#) of the Italian magazine [lavialibera](#) appreciates how sources open up and “[tell] their hopes or their troubles to a stranger.” Very often, lived experiences show more than what is covered and assumed by journalists in their faraway newsrooms. As Filip notes, “Obviously, from the comfort of the capital, things seem very easy. But then when you go into the field, you see a solution that doesn’t apply or needs a lot of tweaks because the local environment is different.”

Whatever strategy your cross-border team will deploy to gather lived experiences, several SoJo Europe cohort members recommend some approaches: [RADAR Magazine’s](#) director [Marta Frigerio](#) talks of the “empathetic and experiential approach” of interviewing: “Our story puts people and their problems at the center. [Talking to them is] not just [doing] a one-on-one interview or a cold [conversation], but a closer and more relaxed way of getting to know and talk with them.” Meanwhile, [Slow News](#) editor-in-chief [Alberto Puliafito](#) encourages engaging with people who don’t actively experience climate-related problems to understand how they perceive or think about them.



ADDRESSING POTENTIAL BLIND SPOTS IN PITCHES

Preparing a climate solutions story pitch or grant proposal is as important as writing the article itself. For sure, you or your cross-border team want to make it foolproof. But even the most carefully crafted proposals can have blind spots—and we see them only after we have submitted the email! So, before hitting send, slow down and rethink these key points:

- **Your proposal's groundwork.** It's a no-brainer that proposals must clearly define a problem, the solution or response to be examined, and the key people involved or relevant to the story. Beyond this, think of feasibility and access, says freelance broadcast journalist and producer Petra Kovačević. "People have very big ambitions, but when they get the funding, they're in big trouble because they cannot deliver what they promised."
- **Avoid stereotypes.** You've probably heard this advice in a Journalism 101 class. Still, stereotypes can slip in unnoticed. Edwards suggests seeking feedback not just from editors but also from people from a place or community you are reporting on. Also, [International Media Support](#) (IMS) senior adviser Henrik Grunnet recommends having open conversations about cultural sensitivity. As he notes, messages such as "I want to be sensitive towards how your culture sees these things" are necessary for these conversations and collaborations.
- **Is the collaboration genuine?** Cross-border work isn't about involving multiple countries—or as Grunnet says, "an alibi because you need two [or more] countries" in the investigation. Edwards says the collaboration needs to be genuine, and "the context of each [reporter's home area] needs to have relevance for the other." More than that, "it is very important that I sense they are equal and [have met] before they start on the story," Grunnet adds.
- **Cover all sides of the story:** The four-pillar solutions journalism framework offers a good starting point when conducting prior research and clarifying details about solutions or responses with experts and communities impacted by climate issues to strengthen their stories. **It is important to report on who the solution serves but also those left behind,** Kovačević notes.



EDITORS,
TAKE NOTE

Calls for pitches or grant proposals attract a lot of interest from cross-border teams. Evaluations take a while, and reviewers assess submissions based on very strict criteria. However, some mentors call for flexibility, especially when teams comprise journalists who don't share the reviewer's native language.

"Editors need to read pitches for their content, not the wording," enjoins Kaja Seruga, who writes about architecture and urban development. "Otherwise, they risk unwittingly excluding excellent reporters writing in their second, third, or fourth language, who might have a deep local understanding of issues."

With feedback, journalists can review pitch angles or plans for stereotypes or biases. However, over-thinking word choices can be counterproductive, especially during the pitch preparation. "Any such issues can be addressed in the editorial process," Seruga adds.

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.



WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Project partners:

Transitions



**SOLUTIONS
JOURNALISM
NETWORK**



Co-funded by
the European Union

