

Cross-Border Journalism

A Guide for Students and Teachers



How to connect your students to others
around the country and the world to
produce cross-border journalism



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News Decoder



TEHRA
The Environment and Human Rights Academy

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This document was written by:

Authors: Amina McCauley (News Decoder), Hannah Choo (News Decoder), and Andreea Pletea (The Environment and Human Rights Academy).

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The purpose of these educational materials is to help young people understand the climate crisis on a systems level through engaging with the topics and foster agency through the skills and techniques of journalism.

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For further information on the use of this resource, please email andreea.pletea@tehra.org or maria.krasinski@news-decoder.com.

We cannot be held liable for how these materials are used in practice.

These educational resources have been developed to the best of our knowledge, using reliable and widely-recognized sources. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and clarity, we cannot guarantee that the materials are free from errors or omissions. Climate change is a field of knowledge that continues to evolve, and teachers and learners are encouraged to consult up-to-date scientific sources (e.g. IPCC, IPBES or national agencies) to complement and enrich these activities.

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When we localise issues of climate change, to understand the changes in our own environment and to the people in our own communities, we grow to care more about the land, the air, the water on which we live.

Then as an audience, when we hear that similar things are happening to people who live in different parts of the world, we begin to understand the wider topics more deeply, and to care for each other more.

By finding stories in their own communities or nearby areas, students can start to feel the topic of climate change as tangible – and not just as something big, out-of-reach, and doomed. And when they connect their story with the story of someone of their age across the country or across the world, empathy and solidarity come up. We're in the same boat, and we should look out for one another.

Here's how you can do cross-border journalism with your students.



1. What is Cross-Border Journalism?

Cross-border journalism is when two or more people from two or more different countries get together to report on an issue that is playing out in both countries.

Typically, the process begins with finding an issue that is present in more than one country. Many topics have global significance, may it be issues in healthcare, the effects of climate change, or political instability.

Afterwards, journalists will establish connections with one another, identifying a shared focus and goal. From then on, journalists will work together to find information and draw connections, each journalist reporting on the topic in their own country, and working with the other to provide the context, background, and links needed to tie the two reports together.

The products of these journalist investigations will often be published by media sources of any relevant countries, reaching an expansive audience.

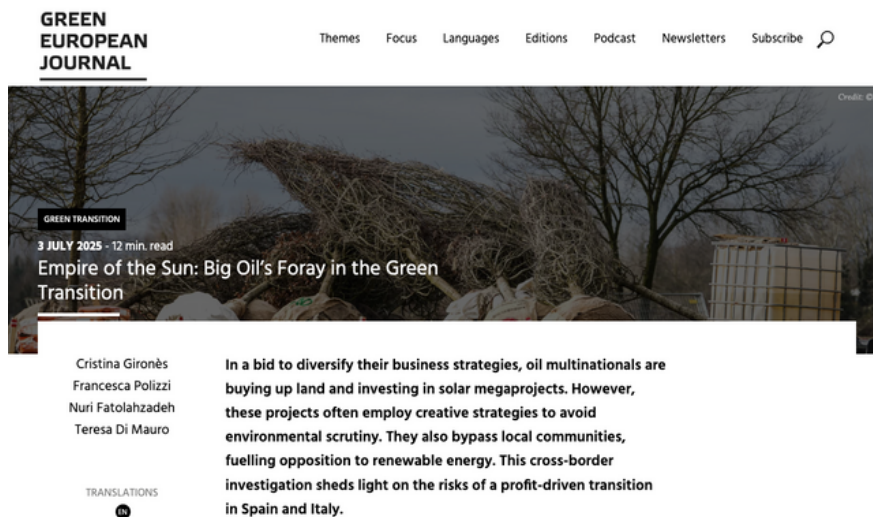


Examples

In an investigation funded by Journalismfund Europe, journalists in Catalonia and northern Italy found local case studies of solar projects promoted by big oil companies like Shell and BP, that were employing strategies to avoid environmental scrutiny. The companies' projects are bypassing local communities, despite using their land to develop on, and thereby fueling opposition to renewable energy.

By finding multiple case studies in these two different countries, the reporters looked at the risks of a profit-driven green transition in Europe and beyond.

You can find the full story at [Green European Journal](#).



In an another example, a Serbian journalist and a Bosnian journalist wrote about the resistance to lithium mining in both countries. Lithium is an important resource for the energy transition, but its mining harms ecosystems and human health.

By reporting on case studies from both countries, this piece shone light on community resistance and global civic movements opposing lithium mining at the expense of biodiversity and community.

You can find the full story at [Deutsche Welle](#).



2. Why does Cross-Border Journalism in education matter?

Most issues hold global relevance. Particularly climate change. Although every country may have their own version of an issue, many of these problems share similar underlying root causes.

By root causes, we mean the economic, political and social systems that drive environmental degradation and inequality: unsustainable production and consumption driven by economic models focused on perpetual economic growth and profit maximisation, poverty, racism and other forms of discrimination, inadequate laws and policies. These systems contribute both to climate change and to the unequal distribution of its impacts.

For example, take the issue of water scarcity. In many regions, rivers and groundwaters are under pressure. The specific effects might vary, but the deep root causes often overlap: climate change, intensive industrial agriculture, deforestation, and water pollution – often driven by the maximising of short-term economic gain.

Despite local differences, these issues are connected through shared global pressures. Cross-border journalism helps students see how these systems play out across borders, and how people might learn from one another and work together to address common challenges.

When talking about climate change, while the impacts seen in one country might be entirely different to the impacts seen in another, they're often just different sides of the same coin. Cross-border journalism has the ability to draw these connections and demonstrate that such issues are never isolated to a single community.

In bringing light to the stories in different situations, the parallel observations of journalists can spark discussions on what countries can learn from each other, or how they can collaborate together to solve the same problem.

As a student, cross-border journalism can be a challenging but highly rewarding endeavour that teaches many of the core skills of journalism: researching, networking, and connecting the dots.



3. How to set up cross-border student journalism

3.1 Get your students pen pals

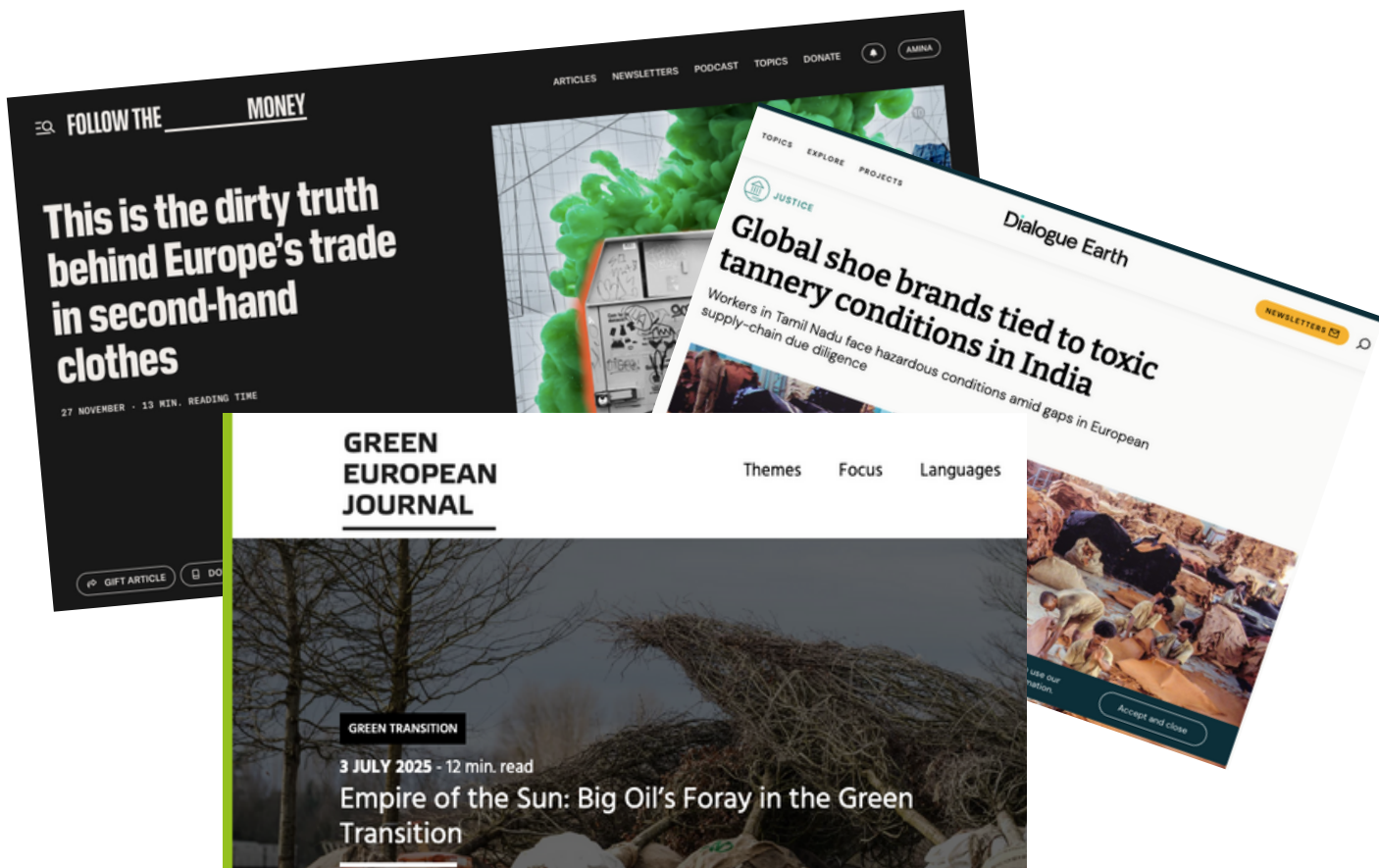
One way to do it is to set up your students with pen pals in a different school.

We set up our EYES students in Kenya, Slovenia, and Colombia with each other. First, each student wrote a letter, filmed a video or recorded an audio of what they notice happening around them environmentally, politically, and socially, to do with climate change. They signed off with their first name, age, and name of city or town.

In Colombia, we heard stories of long droughts and severe water rationing, in Kenya, shrinking forests due to urban expansion, illegal logging, and changing weather patterns. And in Slovenia, winter sports, a large part of the culture, are facing declining amounts of snow each year.

We exchanged students' letters, but you could set this up yourself.

Use the [eTwinning](#) platform to connect with teachers in other parts of Europe. Become a member of the [Education for Climate Community](#) and connect with other members there. Or, do it the old fashioned way and find the email addresses of teachers from other schools you find online.





As one student in Kenya wrote about their Slovenian pen pal's experience:

"Still, as Jaha wrote, "It feels like we know what's happening, but we aren't doing enough about it collectively." That line stayed with me. It reminded me that even in countries with strong environmental laws and awareness, climate change is still taking its toll from hotter summers to less snow in winter. These changes don't just affect the weather; they affect memories, traditions, and daily life."

They can write an article, or make a multimedia piece, using audio or video received from their pen pal. Make sure to send the final product back between pen pals, so they can each ensure accuracy and see how their perspective has been given context.

It doesn't have to be in a different country. It could be a school in another part of the country. The point is that students first connect to their own territory, and then connect this understanding to a reality happening in someone else's territory. This can build a sense of global community.

When the letters are swapped, have students produce a report based on their pen pal's experience. What links can they find between their reflection and their pen pals? Are some of the same issues being seen? Or is the angle that climate change is being experienced completely different depending on where you live and what your context is?





3.2 Set them up as reporters

Another way to do it is to set students up, either in pairs or in groups, to first come up with a shared topic and then report on the topic from each of their own regions prior to putting their reports together.

1. Get in contact with another teacher and form pairs or groups between your students.
2. Tell students to find a topic that can be discussed in both countries' or regions' contexts (e.g., communities being impacted by polluted water due to intensive agriculture, or the rise of urban, organic gardens).
3. Students go off to do their individual reporting, conducting interviews, gathering data, etc.
4. The students get back together to put their reports together, adding context and data that provide the global or regional context.

We'll go through each of these steps in detail in the following sections.



4. Ethics, safety and data privacy

When students collaborate across borders, it is essential that the process is safe, respectful, and aligned with school policies. Before beginning any cross-border activity, you should review the following guidelines with your students.

4.1 Protecting students' personal information

Students should only share the minimum amount of personal information needed to participate. As a general rule:

- First names only
- No home addresses, personal phone numbers, or private email accounts
- No sharing of personal social media handles
- Use teacher-moderated or school-approved communication channels

Any letter, video or audio recording exchanged with another school should be treated as if it may be viewed by more than one audience. Encourage students to think carefully about what they choose to share, and to check with you if in doubt.

Remind students that should they feel uncomfortable or unsafe, they should talk to you or a trusted adult.



4.2 Follow school policies and national laws on data privacy

Before starting an international exchange, teachers should ensure compliance with:

- National data protection laws (e.g. GDPR in the EU, or equivalent laws outside the EU)
- School policies on student data sharing
- Approved platforms for storage and file transfer
- Requirements for parental or guardian consent

All communication between schools should be facilitated by teachers, not by students directly through personal accounts.

4.3 Respectful cross-cultural communication

When reporting on climate change or social issues, students may receive accounts of people facing hardship or living in very different circumstances.

Encourage them to:

- Avoid assumptions or stereotypes
- Use neutral and inclusive language
- Prioritise accuracy over opinion
- Represent others' experiences fairly and sensitively

This helps build a sense of global community and mutual understanding - a core purpose of cross-border journalism.

4.4 Review materials before sharing or publishing

Before any student work is shared between schools or published online, teachers should review it to ensure:

- No personal information other than first name and age are included (if permitted by school policy)
- Images or recordings respect privacy and consent
- Interview quotes are accurate and fair
- Statistics are sourced from reputable data
- The story does not unintentionally expose someone to harm

This final check reinforces that journalism carries responsibility - and that ethical storytelling is as important as good storytelling.



Step 1: Find a cross-border topic

So you've been put in contact with a student, or some students from another school, and now you're wondering what you're supposed to investigate.

Start by talking to one another about what topics interest you. If you're choosing to find something within the broad topic of climate change, there are multiple sub-topics to choose from.

Perhaps the winter months have just started and you're wondering how weather conditions and temperatures are compared to how they were 10 or 20 years ago.

If you're in a different country to your partner, it might be interesting to show how your two countries' weather patterns have changed.

Or maybe you're interested in crop production, and want to find out how different crops are being impacted by climate change in each of your countries.

Or how climate change impacts the rise of mosquito populations in each of your countries. Or the rates of climate anxiety, or what sorts of building materials are being used in new constructions.

You can start by talking about each of your interests, or what sorts of things you've heard lately, and then narrow it down.



Try to make your topic as specific as possible, so that you each have a clear understanding of what sort of information you need to go out and get.

For example, "crop production" is too broad. Instead, you might want to find out what each country's major crop is, and discover that fodder (crops grown to feed livestock) is one of the main crops grown in each your countries.

Then, your topic could be "How the production of livestock feed is being impacted by changing weather patterns in ____ and ____-"



Step 2: Do the reporting

Use our units on The Principles of Journalism, How to Write a Pitch and Misinformation and Fact Checking for guidance at this step of the process. Next, you'll each go off and do the reporting, starting by figuring out what information you'll need to gather.

If you take the topic of animal feed, and you live in France, you will conduct some research online (starting with a Google search and letting that take you to articles published in reputable media, or scholarly articles published in journals, or statistics and reports from official sources), to maybe find that maize (corn) is one of the most widely-grown crops for livestock feed in France.

Your question is to find out how climate change, specifically changing weather patterns, are impacting animal-feed crops in France – so you'd first want to look into how climate change is impacting weather in France, and then into how drought (or heatwaves, flooding) is impacting maize.

If you find out that drought is significantly impacting maize

production in France, you're really starting to narrow down your story. Next, you have to gather the information.

1. Gather the data on how much crops have been reduced by looking at statistics and forecasts published by the Ministry of Agriculture in France, Eurostat, or AGPM (Association Générale des Producteurs de Maïs).
2. Gather the data on how much more frequent droughts are and where in France they tend to effect the most.
3. Find out who you want to interview and reach out to them (See our unit on *Interviewing*).
4. Start to put your case study together – presenting the hard data, the interesting quotes, and the background information you find. Maybe you'll visit a farm yourself and gather footage from there - anecdotes, descriptions, etc. It might be that you find a family farm, whereby you hear stories of hardship and pressure. Be very open to human stories!



Step 3: Put your reports together

How to shape your story

So you've each done your reporting, you've conducted interviews and found some hard data, but what now?

Sticking with the fodder crop story example, let's say that your partner is in Denmark and they've also discovered that maize production is declining due to water shortages in Denmark.

So you have a strong story:

Climate change is causing more frequent and long droughts, which is impacting crops across Europe – including the crops that are used for feeding livestock. In turn, the livestock sector significantly contributes to the climate crisis through methane emissions from cattle, nitrous oxide from fertiliser use, and deforestation to make space for growing animal feed.

But the interesting fact that your Danish partner has found out is that 80% of agricultural land in Denmark is used for growing animal feed.



So, a detail you might want to look into, now that you've compared notes on your reports, is this question:

*What are governments doing to face this vicious cycle – that agriculture, which is often subsidised, is both
a) being impacted by climate change and
b) contributing significantly to climate change?*

Or maybe ask an agricultural policy expert this: Should governments be focusing on producing food that goes straight to the plates of citizens given that growing corn for cows is also inefficient – in terms of calorie conversion – compared to direct human food?

This turns a simple 'impact story' into a richer investigation of systems, policies and paths forward - which is at the heart of climate literacy.

You don't have to include your opinion here. By stating the facts and providing the context, your audience will be able to formulate their own understanding and opinion.



How to practically put your reports together

First, decide what format you want it to be in – a written piece with photos, long-form audio, a series of visuals, or perhaps a video.

You should see our guides on How to Write an Article, How to Make a Podcast and our video series on How to Make a Climate Video to give you some more practical information. Once you've decided on the format, piece your reports together in a structure that makes sense. What information needs to be introduced first to show your audience why you're exploring this topic in these different geographical areas? What are the main facts or statistics that give meaning to your overall story?

Could you produce a chart or infographic, using the reputable data you find, to visualise a piece of what your story is telling? For example, you could make a chart showing how much land in each France and Denmark is used for animal feed compared to how much land is used for human food and livestock (pasture) itself.

Then, it's a matter of storytelling. Weave together your reports in a way that makes sense – to you and to your audience.

Ask your classmates, your family, and your teacher for feedback. Is there some information they feel is missing?

Publishing and sharing

You've done all that hard work, now it's time to share! Maybe you've translated the piece into both your countries' languages meaning you can publish it in multiple places – your school magazines or websites, your own personal blog, or at a documentary night you organise with your friends and family. Make sure your partner agrees to you publishing the piece, and that you credit them accordingly.

Tell others what you learned by doing cross-border journalism!





CROSS-BORDER REPORT WORKSHEET

When you start brainstorming with your partner, you can write dot points below.

Names of reporters in your cross-border team:

Topic you will focus on:

Data and other information needed to link the two stories together:

Angle of each report (specific case study or story from each country or region):