

cXc Insights

• June 2025

Making Climate Pay

*Creating climate editorial for
sustainable commercial success*

6th Edition • Europe



duction • Introduction • Introduct

Prototypes

Prototype A · Climate Story Live

Prototype B · Blueprint for Utopia

Prototype C · The Honey

What's Next

About Us

In recent years, European newsrooms have encountered mounting pressures that threaten the sustainability of public-interest journalism, especially on climate. While the climate crisis accelerates media organisations across the continent face declining advertising revenue, increasing production costs, and shifting audience behaviours. The digital transformation has brought new opportunities, but also intensified competition for attention and eroded trust in traditional institutions, at a critical time.

A 2024 report by the Reuters Institute¹ showed that climate stories often fail to reach beyond already-engaged audiences, while threats against environmental reporters are on the rise across parts of Europe². These challenges are compounded by the polarisation of public discourse and underinvestment in local, solutions-focused reporting. In this environment, climate journalism must work harder to earn attention, build connection, and deliver impact. ClimateXchange (cXc) has been considering solutions to this.

Using the output of the Europe cXc knowledgeXchange in April 2025, this report offers three prototype ideas for sustainable climate journalism editorial products. These have been developed using our cXc proprietary tool 'Sustainable Climate Journalism Business Model Canvas', which underscores our commitment to strategic and climate-conscious news product collaborations.

These product ideas are in response to the key challenges highlighted by European media organisations, as covered in [cXc Global Climate Journalism Insights: Europe](#), published in June 2025:

1. The relevance gap
2. The struggle to prove impact
3. Climate stories missing the human thread
4. Imagination deficit

The cXc approach targets the intersection of audience needs and broader stakeholder requirements. We aim not only to achieve financial sustainability, proving that climate reporting can be lucrative, but also to empower newsrooms to create impactful climate journalism. These product prototypes are crafted to address these multifaceted needs, enhancing financial viability, community engagement and climate.

¹ Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. (2024). Climate Change and News Audiences: A report on attitudes and engagement in eight countries. ([here](#))

² The Guardian. (2024). Violent attacks against environmental journalists on the rise. ([here](#))



Revenue and funding strategies

The climate news product prototypes shared in this report have been developed in relation to the broader financial challenges facing media organisations raised at the Europe knowledgeXchange event. We have leveraged eight possible revenue and funding strategies which have been grouped for journalistic and newsroom applicability with a climate lens:

- 1. Commercial (Advertising, Sponsorships, Brand Partnerships)** Commercial revenue remains a significant source of income for newsrooms. However, there's a growing emphasis on aligning with brands that share similar values, particularly those focusing on sustainability and social responsibility.
- 2. Reader (Subscription, Membership)** Central to newsrooms are reader revenue models, emphasising the need for direct reader support and community building. These models benefit from deepened engagement and loyalty of readers who value the content enough to pay for it.
- 3. Transactional (Events, Ticket Sales, Branded Merchandise)** Transactional strategies turn content and brand affinity into direct income, providing audiences with tangible ways to support and engage with their favourite newsrooms and causes.
- 4. Syndication (Content, Format)** Strategic licensing of original content and formats, both domestically and internationally, can generate new revenue streams. Without additional editorial creation costs, newsrooms can capitalise on the global appeal of high-quality climate content and innovative storytelling formats.
- 5. Philanthropy (Philanthropic Connections, CSR Initiatives)** Securing funding through philanthropic alignment with journalistic endeavours drives social and environmental organisational goals. As newsrooms create climate desks and hire staff to cover the topic, there is a growing commitment to climate reporting—and this appeals to philanthropic donors.
- 6. Venture Capital (VC) / Angel Investment** VC and Angel investors want significant returns that are in line with values, beliefs and predicted growth, where climate is a driving force for investment. This is particularly relevant for newsrooms that are venturing into innovative journalistic endeavours or tech-driven / environmental storytelling.
- 7. Crowdfunding** Harnessing the collective financial power of the audience and allowing individuals to contribute directly to projects they believe in is a compelling model for engagement and deeper audience understanding. This grassroots funding strategy is effective for initiatives that resonate deeply with public interests and concerns.
- 8. Business-to-Business (B2B)** Offering a range of options from subscription-based access to exclusive, specialised content and expertise, to tailored consultancy services designed to meet specific organisational challenges, this flexible model allows newsrooms to cultivate steady revenue streams while fostering industry-wide collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Principles for sustainable news products

In addressing the economic challenges facing climate journalism, the following climate product prototypes are designed with a dual focus: ensuring the financial viability of newsrooms and maximising their climate impact.

By adhering to four core principles, these prototypes are not just innovative content products but also strategic tools for financial resilience and enhanced journalistic impact. They are intended for immediate development and real-world use.

Our four core principles for sustainable news products:

- 1. Audience driven** Directly addressing the challenge of relatability, ensuring content resonates with and engages the audience.
- 2. Monetisable** Identifying and leveraging diverse financial avenues to support the newsroom's sustainability, whether they are revenue-generating or funded.
- 3. Cross-platform** Utilising multiple media platforms to enhance reach and engagement.
- 4. Climate-conscious** Prioritising initiatives and partnerships with entities that are environmentally responsible, reflecting a commitment to climate-conscious reporting.

We encourage newsrooms to craft climate news products rooted in all four principles, positioning them for a climate-conscious and financially sustainable future.



Climate story live 



**A touring festival
that transforms
published climate
journalism into
immersive stage
experiences.**



Climate story live 



Climate story live 

Climate story live 

Climate story live

From page to stage: turning climate stories into shared experiences

Statement of need: How media organisations might leverage reader revenue to move away from grants to be more sustainable.

Climate journalism in Europe has grown richer in depth and scope, but too often, even the most powerful stories fade after publication. As audiences grow weary of doom-laden narratives, they also crave connection, joy, and purpose. Journalism has not yet fully tapped into the growing appetite for community-driven, cultural experiences, especially among younger, socially conscious audiences. Climate Story Live bridges that gap by transforming the best climate reporting into live, curated events that re-centre the human story while deepening impact and engagement.



The Idea

Climate Story Live is a touring storytelling festival that brings published climate journalism to life on stage. Built around powerful, human-centred climate stories already reported by journalists, the festival reimagines them as immersive, live experiences, featuring photography, screenings, music, and dialogue. Whenever possible, the people at the heart of the stories take the stage themselves. If they're not confident speakers, journalists step in to represent them through performance, interviews, or dramatic readings. These hybrid cultural events offer climate storytelling as entertainment, emotional connection, and social gathering, amplifying the reach of published work while building lasting community around climate action.



Value Proposition

Unlike traditional reporting formats, Climate Story Live allows audiences to feel climate stories rather than just read them. It creates a live, shared environment where journalism becomes participatory and social, bringing the emotional depth of climate narratives to the fore. For journalists, it's an opportunity to showcase their work in a tangible format. For newsrooms, it's a chance to generate reader revenue and brand alignment through cultural events. And for audiences, it's a joyful, moving way to connect with others who care.



Jürgen Jester / Unsplash



Target audience

Young, urban audiences aged 25–45 who are climate-aware but disconnected from traditional formats. They value immersive experiences, seek community, and are likely to support causes and content that align with their values. Many are already contributing to social change through lifestyle choices or advocacy and are eager for media that reflects their concerns and aspirations.



Societal benefits and risks

Climate Story Live fosters deep public engagement with climate journalism by offering joy, reflection, and solidarity in a live setting. It builds community around shared values, enhances visibility for journalists and story subjects, and turns passive audiences into active climate participants.

However, risks include creating an echo chamber if outreach remains narrow, and potential sensitivities around trauma, satire, or commercial sponsors. Careful story framing and ethical programming will be critical to ensure respect, relevance, and inclusivity.



Environmental benefits and risks

By showcasing local climate solutions and centring real-life changemakers, Climate Story Live encourages behavioural shifts and normalises sustainable practices. It also extends the lifespan and impact of stories that already exist, reducing the need for additional content creation.

Yet, as a live touring event, the project must mitigate its own environmental footprint: ensuring waste reduction, green venue choices, low-emission logistics, and sustainable catering and materials at every stage.

Revenue/Funding streams:	Distribution channels	Key resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reader - membership• Commercial - brand partnership• Transactional - events• Transactional - ticket sales• Philanthropy (incl. CSR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media (via media outlets, journalists, and event partners)• Owned digital platforms (websites, newsletters, podcasts)• Cultural venues and festival listings• Word of mouth and local collaborations• Partner media and newsletter cross-promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Event producers and festival organisers• Journalists and editors for curation and moderation• AV teams and sound designers• Partnerships and media liaisons• Venue access, permits, and environmental support services
Key activities		Key partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repackaging published journalism into live performance formats• Speaker coaching and logistical coordination with featured storytellers• Partnering with cultural venues, artists, and sound/visual designers• Marketing and audience development• Production of side content: videos, short documentaries, behind-the-scenes footage		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate-conscious brands and cultural institutions• Local governments and municipalities• Community media or public broadcasters• Journalism organisations with story archives• Sound and visual production teams



From citizen questions to real-world solutions: research with a public purpose.

Statement of need: How media organisations might use science-based narratives to build a practical roadmap for public opinion to support a political philosophy that embeds climate considerations.

Across Europe and globally, people feel increasingly disempowered by climate communication that focuses on crisis without pathways to change. Meanwhile, scientific research and journalism often operate in parallel, missing opportunities to collaborate meaningfully with communities. There is a growing appetite (especially among younger people) for models that go beyond storytelling, helping them participate in shaping real-world solutions. Blueprint for Utopia is designed to meet this need: connecting communities, researchers, and journalists in a shared process of inquiry, experimentation, and public impact.



The Idea

Blueprint for Utopia is a participatory research and storytelling cycle that begins with questions from the public — not journalists, scientists, or funders. In this prototype, young people and grassroots organisers from countries around the world are invited to surface the problems that matter most to them, ranging from climate justice to housing, transport, or energy transitions. These questions are then taken up by interdisciplinary teams of researchers, artists, and philosophers, who apply for project funding to explore and propose real-world solutions. Once results emerge, journalists step in to “translate” the findings, helping researchers publish in academic journals while simultaneously crafting compelling, accessible narratives for the wider public through podcasts, events, visual storytelling, and investigative coverage. The goal is to replicate and scale the model across diverse regions, building citizen engagement in research and ensuring community-identified problems receive multidisciplinary attention. At its core, Blueprint for Utopia is a celebration of citizen science rooted not in prestige but public values, and committed to collective imagination and impact.



Value Proposition

Unlike conventional journalism or research, Blueprint for Utopia centres the community at every step, from defining the questions to receiving the answers. It creates a meaningful role for journalists as connectors, not just communicators. And it gives researchers the chance to work on questions with direct social relevance, beyond the academic bubble. For audiences, it offers not just information, but agency: the chance to shape what gets researched, how findings are communicated, and how new models of change are developed. The prototype turns solutions journalism into a shared process of learning and reimagining.



Target audience

Primary audiences include young people aged 18–35 in climate-affected regions, particularly those active in civil society or grassroots networks. The project also engages researchers, artists, and journalists eager to work across disciplines and make their work more publicly impactful. Secondary audiences include green economy actors, policymakers, and media platforms seeking stories of public-led climate innovation.



Societal benefits and risks

Blueprint for Utopia strengthens public trust in science and journalism by making both visibly accountable to community priorities. It builds research literacy, empowers people to frame the questions being asked, and creates space for more democratic forms of knowledge. It also offers journalists a new role: as conveners, not just narrators.

Risks include tokenism or extractivism if community participation is not meaningfully sustained. Managing timelines across disciplines may prove difficult, and institutional gatekeeping in academia may create barriers. Ethical concerns around funding and ownership must be carefully documented and openly addressed.



Environmental benefits and risks

By generating community-centred, evidence-based solutions, Blueprint for Utopia supports adaptive climate strategies with local relevance. It encourages interdisciplinary responses to systemic environmental challenges and gives visibility to grassroots innovation.

However, if not carefully managed, the research process may duplicate existing efforts or produce insights without uptake. Environmental costs from travel and event production must be mitigated by favouring digital methods, localised pilots, and green logistics.

Revenue/Funding streams:

- Reader - membership
- Commercial - sponsorship
- Transactional - ticket sales
- Philanthropy (incl. CSR)
- Research/Academic grants

Key activities

- Community listening and question-mapping workshops
- Pairing interdisciplinary teams to tackle selected questions
- Journalist collaboration in research communication and editorial framing
- Public showcases of findings (events, stories, visual outputs)
- Cross-border learning and replication through documentation and toolkits

Key resources

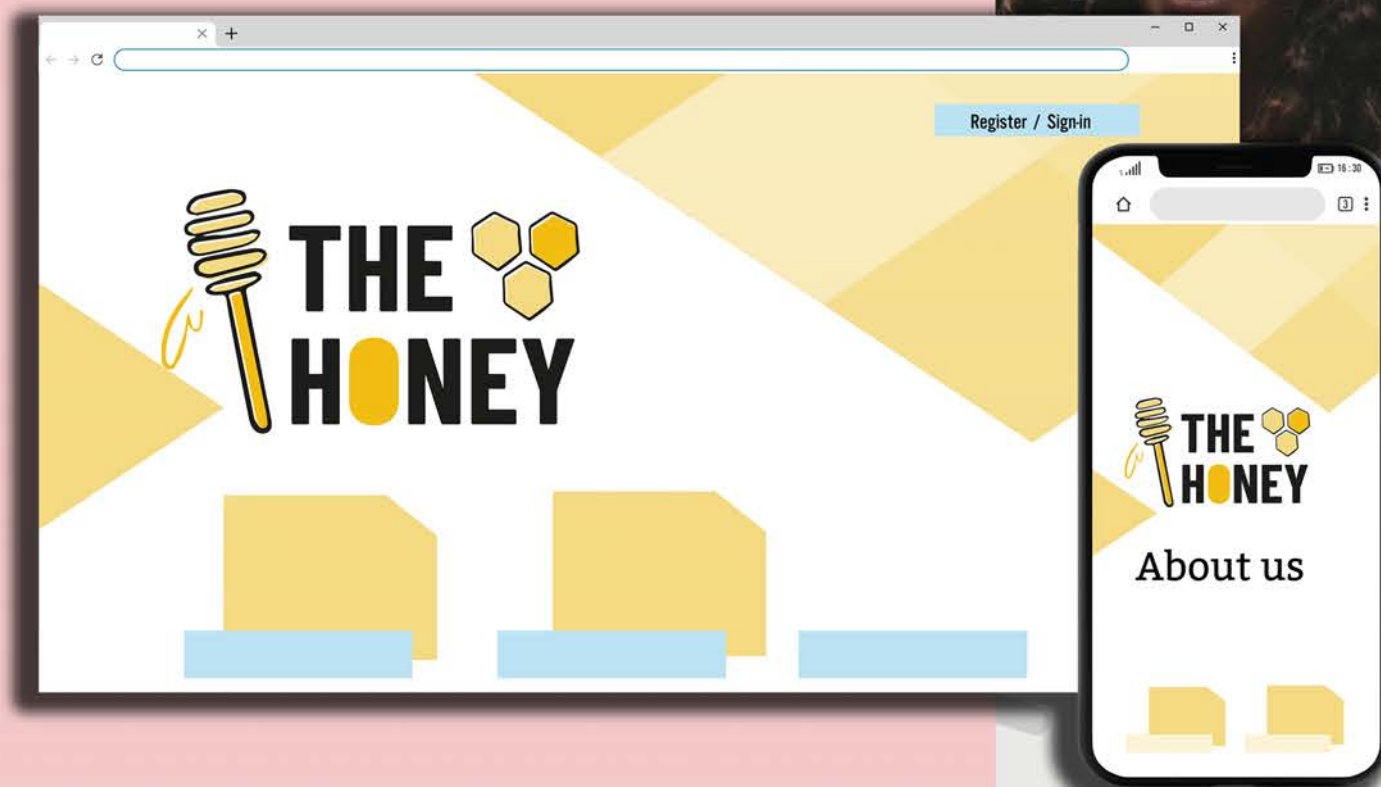
- Facilitation and community engagement teams
- Research and artistic collaborators
- Editors, multimedia producers, and translators
- Digital infrastructure for co-creation and dissemination

Key partners

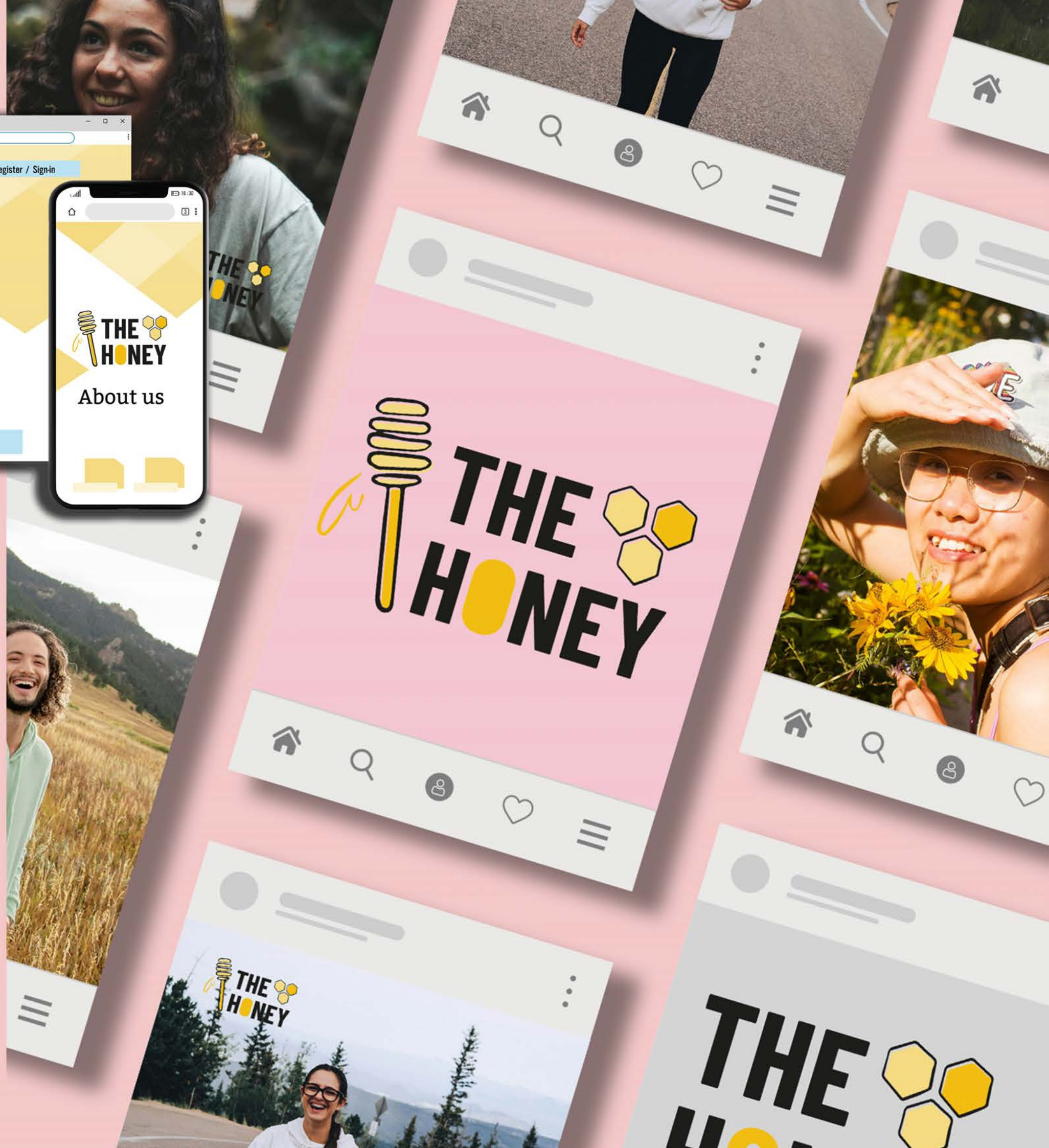
- Universities and research centres
- Youth and civil society organisations
- Journalism networks and independent media
- Cultural institutions and storytelling platforms

Distribution channels

- Investigative journalism and feature outlets
- Podcasts, exhibitions, and digital storytelling microsites
- Science and arts festivals
- Academic publications and open-access research platforms
- Newsletters and social media campaigns from project partners



The Honey is a community-powered platform where people surface and support local climate issues, which journalists then investigate and report in partnership with newsrooms, fostering ongoing dialogue and impact.





Climate journalism for the people, by the people

Statement of need: How media organisations might understand what tangible problems people face in their daily lives so we tell relevant and engaging stories.

Mainstream media continues to overlook the everyday climate concerns of people across Europe, particularly those in underrepresented regions and marginalised groups. Local voices are often filtered out by slow newsroom cycles, top-down editorial agendas, and funding models that reward scale over relevance. As a result, communities feel unheard, and journalists struggle to identify the stories people actually care about. The Honey offers a decentralised solution: a participatory platform where communities surface climate issues, journalists investigate them, and media outlets amplify them.



The Idea

The Honey is a community-driven story commissioning platform built to reshape climate journalism from the ground up. At its core, it functions like a hybrid of Product Hunt, Reddit, and Patreon, for climate stories. People post about issues affecting them or their communities. Others can upvote or comment to show support and deepen the conversation. The most resonant and engaged with stories rise to the top and are flagged for reporting. Journalists registered on the platform can then select and pitch to investigate the stories, with editorial or financial backing from The Honey or media partners. The final stories are published in collaboration with newsrooms and shared back to the community for continued dialogue and impact.



Value Proposition

Unlike conventional newsroom models, The Honey is demand-led. It doesn't guess what matters; it asks. It gives community members a central role in surfacing stories, while enabling journalists to respond to real concerns with credibility and rigour. The platform serves as both a commissioning engine and a community builder, helping newsrooms discover more relevant angles, helping journalists connect directly with sources, and helping the public see themselves in the climate story. It also acts as a bridge between user-driven content and professionally-reported journalism.





Target audience

Primary audiences include individuals and communities facing local climate impacts, particularly those underrepresented in mainstream coverage. Freelance journalists and newsroom editors are also key audience groups, as are public-interest media outlets seeking participatory approaches. Secondary audiences include civic organisations, campaigners, and researchers looking for qualitative climate insights from the ground.



Societal benefits and risks

The Honey strengthens democracy by giving communities a say in what gets covered and how. It encourages civic dialogue, surfaces overlooked concerns, and empowers people to take ownership of local climate narratives. It also supports journalists in producing high-quality, socially relevant stories.

Risks include misinformation, trolling, or polarisation if the platform isn't carefully moderated. There's also a risk of extractive reporting if journalists don't build trust with contributors. Strong verification processes, ethical guidelines, and community support structures will be key.



Environmental benefits and risks

By prioritising local voices, The Honey elevates hyperlocal climate stories that often go untold, ranging from environmental injustice to adaptation innovations. It supports the broader climate movement by turning individual observations into shared public knowledge.

However, the platform's tech infrastructure must be energy-efficient and responsibly scaled. It should also avoid reinforcing digital divides by ensuring accessibility for low-bandwidth users and non-digital communities.

Key partners	Distribution channels	Key resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Independent newsrooms and journalism networksCommunity organisers and local civic groupsCivic tech platforms and open-source developersPublic broadcasters or nonprofit media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Online platform with user-generated storyboards and voting interfacePartner newsrooms and investigative mediaThe Honey newsletters featuring trending issues and stories in developmentSocial media integrations for visibility and cross-platform engagementOffline storytelling events or screenings (linked to high-impact stories)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Digital infrastructure (platform development, hosting, voting systems)Community managers and moderatorsJournalists and editorsOutreach and partnerships team
Key activities		Revenue / funding Stream
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Community onboarding and training in story submission and platform useEditorial moderation and story verificationJournalist-community matchmaking and editorial supportContent packaging and media syndicationFeedback loops and public engagement on published stories		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reader - membershipTransactional - eventsContent syndicationPhilanthropy (incl. CSR)Crowdfunding



What's Next?

Interested in developing any of the news product prototypes presented in this report?

Get in touch to discuss European funding collaborations and opportunities. Contact details can be found on the next page.

Have questions about monetising your climate products or need further insights into revenue strategies?

Our team is here to provide insights and assistance. Feel free to contact us for guidance on implementing revenue strategies or accessing our proprietary strategy tools for climate news product development.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere gratitude to Report for the World (RFW) and journalists across Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom, for their invaluable contributions. Their dedication and the time and energy invested have been pivotal in crafting the rich discourse that formed the backbone of this report.

Huidenvettersplein 10, Bruges, Belgium / Unsplash / despinagalani

About us

About Syli

Syli is a CIC non-profit organisation, founded in London by Tom Trewinnard and Fergus Bell. Syli supports mission-driven journalism in service of informed audiences around the world by fostering new and forward-looking concepts, identifying sustainable financial models for journalism, and creating a healthier, more sustainable media ecosystem.

More information can be found [here](#).

About climateXchange

climateXchange (cXc) is Syli's groundbreaking new global initiative aimed at increasing the impact, reach and sustainability of climate journalism. cXc are reframing the climate conversation as a culture-first narrative is not just a media challenge, it's an opportunity. It's a chance to redefine how we, as a society, relate to the environment and world around us. cXc stands on three pillars of complementary activities:

- **contentXchange** — Upskilling and capacity building that offers co-creation of culture-first climate content and best practice in culture-first climate narrative story kits including our IMSECS editorial methodology.
- **regionalXchange** — Facilitation of cross-regional thought leadership and storytelling. Where we are conduits in cross-regional community meet-ups and networks, host think tanks, and support local market training sharing between regions.
- **knowledgeXchange** — Impact, research and business development. Home of kXc for sustainable business models. Access to Theory of Change Consultancy, and assistance in securing financial support.

About cXc Evaluation and Research

We are dedicated to evaluating and advancing climate journalism's impact. We value the stories behind the numbers and the numbers behind the stories, embracing mixed-methods research with a deep appreciation for both qualitative and quantitative data. Our aim is to lend an ear to the local storytellers, understand their struggles in reaching people's hearts and minds, and measure the change they're driving.

Our Theory of Change defines desired changes, measurable steps, and methodologies for impact measurement. We're excited to build a global network of research partnerships with a core goal to amplify the effects of local, climate-conscious journalism.

Our findings reach our community via *cXc Digest*, research-driven thought-leadership pieces that underpin partnerships and steer dialogues in global forums; *cXc Global Climate Journalism Insights*, detailed post-event reports that distil discussions from our events; and the *cXc Annual Impact Report*, an in-depth yearly review spotlighting the efficacy and reach of climate-conscious reporting.

About the Authors

This report was authored by Dr. Carmen Nicoara, cXc Evaluation & Research Lead, and Shereen Daver, cXc Programme Director. Simon Ingram, cXc Editor-at-Large, contributed editorial oversight. All three are based in cXc's London office. The research was conducted in close collaboration with cXc partner hubs: WAN-IFRA (Southeast Asia), Wits Centre for Journalism (Africa), and Report for the World (Europe).

Contact Us

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If you are interested in your organisation becoming a climateXchange member gaining access to unique climate reporting tools, sessions and events, please contact our Partnerships Team at: info@climatexc.org

