



# Transitions

## Solutions Journalism Workshop

Just EU and Me

16-17 May, 2023

### What is Solutions Journalism



Transitions

Rigorous, evidence-based reporting on existing responses to social problems

1

Features not just a person, but a **response** to a problem and how it happened

2

Provides **evidence** of impact, looking at effectiveness — not just intentions

3

Seeks to provide **insights** (replicable models) that can help others respond, too — not just inspiration

4

Discusses **limitations** or caveats of the response — there is no perfect solution

During the 2-day Solutions Journalism Workshop organized as part of the Just EU and Me Project, trainers from Transitions trained the participants in the principles of solutions journalism. The trainers shared a [video](#) (an example of climate focused solutions-journalism) and the participants were sent to different breakout rooms and were asked to identify the 4 elements of solutions journalism (mentioned on the page above). Once the participants had a grasp over the concept and methodology, on the second day of the workshop the participants were then introduced to some practical exercises where they were asked to use these principles and pitch potential solutions-oriented story ideas. The groups came up with 6 ideas, and then chose 5 and worked on those pitches. Each of the groups was monitored by a facilitator trained in solutions journalism and the facilitators guided the group in developing the story outlines which can be found below.

**Exercise Instructions:** Identify some solutions in your communities that work well and think about how you would report it as a solutions-oriented piece. The group can choose one topic and work on it together or work on an idea individually. Once a topic has been chosen, fill in the boxes in terms of: what problem is being addressed, what response/solutions is being implemented, what are the insights that help us understand how the solution works, what is the evidence of impact, what are the limitations and lastly which actors/characters will need to be approached to make the reporting in-depth and reflect the views of the people involved in the response.

**Story Idea 1:** Responding to the housing crisis for students

**Story Idea 2 :** Banning animal cruelty in the form of bullfighting in Portugal

**Story Idea 3:** Countering online hate speech and comments

**Story Idea 4:** Protecting Mar Menor Lagoon in Spain's Murcia region

**Story Idea 5:** A driving school for people with disabilities

**Story Idea 6:** Waste management in Nepal's urban centers

## Solutions Story Outline 1

### **Problem:**

Animal (bulls) cruelty:  
This can cause violence and affect children who see it;  
It's a sensitive topic to be addressed (a very old tradition) and needs to be explained to people that this is a problem.

### **Response:**

Change in legislation and push from the local municipality to end bullfighting:  
In this case – since bullfights are legal in Portugal – the local municipality in Póvoa de Varzim demolished the bullfighting arena –and a solution was found.

### **How the response works/Insights:**

When you have a municipality against bullfights (because many residents are in favour of this practice...) then push it to end bullfights in the legislation and make them illegal.

### **Evidence:**

A whole new space is being built in place of the bullfighting arena. This space will serve the community: cultural exhibitions, city's events, ceremonies, etc. and show others how the public space can be used more effectively.

### **Limitations/Caveats:**

The sense of losing a community's own culture will be a big factor in banning this practice, especially resistance from the elderly.  
People might give the argument of tradition and not want to go ahead with the ban.

## Solutions Story Outline 2

### **Problem:**

Hateful comments in online discussions and people being offensive to each other:

This can affect the mental health of the people who are abused, endanger their digital safety and can lead to offline violence as well.

### **Response:**

Artificial Intelligence solution to train a programme that filters hateful comments and deletes those thus creating safer online spaces.

### **How the response works/Insights:**

How to use the software/AI programme?

Creating a set of rules for people who use the software or engage in the comments so it is used ethically.

How is the AI programme being used by news organizations other companies with a social media presence

Cooperation with lawyers, especially those working on legislation and user rights in online spaces

What is the funding model?

Media innovation companies involved in enabling the media page owners to use the AI

**Evidence:**

Analysis of media, influencer posts etc. before and after the software was used to filter hate comments and online abuse.  
Comments of those who are already using the solution (media outlets, influencers, companies)  
Survey with people if the environment online changed and how  
Talk to civil activists, women rights activist, LGBTQI+ and young activists to see how safe these communities feel online

**Limitations/Caveats:**

Limitations of the AI (disagreeing is not being hateful)  
Concerns about how AI can be a tool for propaganda  
AI bias if not trained well or depends on the programming  
Resources of the company that created the solution - may be problematic to scale

**Characters/sources:**

Researchers studying online hate and abuse and its effects  
Users/people who have experienced online abuse  
Psychologists  
People leaving comments online  
Companies who use the solution  
Company that created the solution  
The rival company, if any (outside source)  
AI experts /related companies

### Solutions Story Outline 3

#### **Problem:**

Interior lagoon in Spain in the Mar Menor in Murcia region which is very polluted and has dead fish and is harmful for the people as well as the environment

#### **Response:**

A group of activists got the lagoon a legal person status to protect it. Success of the response is it being protected and becoming a person. Once it gets the status of a 'nature element' and can be given legal personality.

#### **How the response works/Insights:**

Mobilizing locals and creating awareness so people sign the petition and there is conversation about this topic in the public and among policy makers. (Need to check- Is it local, national or European legislation? That will help report on the replicability of the response.)

#### **Evidence:**

The impact on other bodies of water that gained personhood- Could this suggest what may happen in Murcia?

Getting statistics / examples of similar incidents globally? To provide some examples how it was solved / not elsewhere? Just to provide more

descriptions?

Talk about how the water pollution has become better and the public space can be used.

A testimony of an involved person can be also regarded as evidence- especially those involved in creating the petition.

We can also coordinate with the Spain's ecology ministry and wildlife police to monitor the progress of investigation and know the next step and if they have already implemented solutions.

#### **Limitations/Caveats:**

Did it have an impact on local governing bodies in building new infrastructure in/around the lake?

Is there actual work cleaning the lagoon regularly? Is there follow-up?

#### **Characters/sources:**

Campaign group

Local residents who are impacted- especially health implications

Tourist service providers, business owners- are they impacted?

Who signed the bill/petition who could direct us to others

Urban planners

Local authorities

Academics and researchers on urban planning and urban spaces

Characters from other countries- was there any cooperation/consultation?

## **Solutions Story Outline 4**

### **Problem:**

Waste management issue in Nepal - people are not recycling waste which causes environmental challenges.

### **Response:**

Young people educate the rest of the community on the importance and benefits of recycling and also showing them how it is done by running awareness campaigns.

### **How the response works/Insights:**

Taking action to make a change  
What are the strategies used by youth for sparking this change  
What are the incentives for those who are adopting this as a practice  
What steps have been taken by the municipality to facilitate this change?

### **Evidence:**

Reduction in waste on streets  
More people use waste segregation and recycling facilities and more of such facilities are made available by the municipality.

### **Limitations/Caveats:**

Infrastructure issues- is there a facility to recycle waste? Does the lack of it incentivize people from recycling?



Rigid mindsets of people and doing things the old way  
Where does the waste go after collection? Does the municipality have a provision?

**Characters/sources:**

The group of young people who started the initiative;  
the local community who is adopting this practice  
other students  
Urban planners  
Local government  
Waste pickers

**Solutions Story Outline 5**

**Problem:**

There are enough driving schools/ trained professionals which cater to people with disabilities or public transport availability for this group

**Response:**

A Local driving school (in Southern Spain) that organizes driving lessons for people with disabilities

**How the response works/Insights:**

Who are the trainers? How have they been trained? How many lessons, what is the cost, and what are the things to keep in mind while teaching people with disabilities.

**Evidence:**

People with disabilities will be more independent and can drive their own cars.  
More parking facilities for disabled people

**Limitations/Caveats:**

Costs of attending such classes, is this affordable?  
Is the demand being met?  
Perhaps not very environmentally friendly and better to have more accessible public transport?

**Characters/sources:**

Driving school instructors  
Disabled people who went to these schools and who could not  
Family members of disabled people  
Experts/researchers  
Local authorities