

Tell your Climate Story

Across Europe, people are experiencing the effects of climate change in deeply personal ways. Some are affected by changes in their gardens, while others experience more intense weather phenomena, such as hotter summers. Yet most of these experiences remain unspoken. We are collecting these stories.

The Book of Climate Stories is a transnational collection of real voices from real people in Croatia, France, Germany and Slovenia. It is part of the Erasmus+ co-funded European project, Head-Heart-Hands, which uses storytelling to make climate change more relatable by bringing it out of the realm of statistics and into lived human experience.

We are looking for stories of all kinds, whether they are about moments of wonder, loss, change, action or hope. Your story does not need to be dramatic. It does not need a happy ending. It just needs to be honest.

This guide will walk you through the entire process, from finding your story to writing it down. The time it takes will depend partly on you, but it should take around 30–45 minutes to complete.

1. What is Storytelling - and Why does it matter?

Humans have told stories for thousands of years. Long before books, science, or the internet existed, stories were how communities passed on knowledge, warned each other of danger, and made sense of a changing world. This is not a coincidence. Our brains are wired for stories. When we hear a compelling narrative, something remarkable happens: we stop being passive listeners and start experiencing the story ourselves. We feel what the protagonist feels. We worry when they worry. We breathe easier when they find a way forward.

This is what makes storytelling one of the most powerful communication tools available to us and why we are using it in this project.

When it comes to climate change, most of us have been overwhelmed by facts, graphs, and alarming headlines. We know the statistics. And yet, for many people, it still feels distant, abstract, or simply too big to engage with. **Personal stories change that.** A single person describing how the winters of their childhood have disappeared, or how the river behind their house has shrunk to a trickle, can do more to make climate change real than a hundred scientific reports. Stories connect the global to the personal, the abstract to the lived, and the knowledge in our heads to the feelings in our hearts.

Why are we collecting stories in this project?

Your personal experience is valuable. It is evidence. It is history. It is motivation for others. The stories collected through this project will become part of the Book of Climate Stories, a transnational collection of real voices from real people across Europe. These stories could be used in workshops, exhibitions, and community radio broadcasts to inspire others to reflect, communicate, and act on climate change. Your story matters, and it belongs in this book.

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2. What Kinds of Stories are There?

Not every story looks the same, and there is no single right way to tell yours. Climate stories are not only about dramatic floods or wildfire evacuations – they are often found in quiet, everyday moments that stayed with you, even if you did not know why. Your story can be your own lived experience, something you witnessed in someone else's life, or even a fictional narrative inspired by real feelings and observations. Here are four story types that work especially well for climate storytelling. Have a read and see which one feels closest to your own experience:

THE WITNESS

Focus: Change over Time

You have lived long enough to see the difference. You remember how things used to be, the thick snow of winters past, the wild mushrooms that used to fill the forest floor in autumn, the river that your children used to swim in. You are a living document of environmental change, and your memory is irreplaceable.

This could be a story about:

- A moment when you were struck by the beauty or wonder of nature
- Something from your childhood in the natural world that can barely be found today
- Changes in seasons, landscapes, or biodiversity you have observed over time
- A time when weather conditions had a significant impact on your daily life

THE PROBLEM-SOLVER

Focus: Action and Creativity

You faced a challenge brought on by a changing climate and you found a way to respond. Your story is not just about the problem, but about the ingenuity and determination it took to adapt. Problem-solver stories are inspiring because they show that ordinary people can respond meaningfully, even when the big picture feels overwhelming.

This could be a story about:

- How you adapted to a climate-related challenge in your daily life
- An environmentally friendly habit you adopted – and what motivated it
- Something you changed in your routines, and the moment that made change feel possible
- A solution you witnessed in someone else that inspired you

THE TURNING POINT

Focus: A Moment of Realisation

There was a specific moment, perhaps a sudden extreme weather event, a conversation with a grandchild, a walk through a dying forest, when the reality of climate change hit you personally. Before that moment, perhaps you were aware of the issue intellectually. Afterwards, something shifted.

This could be a story about:

- A moment when climate change suddenly felt personal and real
- A conversation or encounter that changed your perspective
- Something you used to do routinely that you now consider wasteful or harmful
- A place you love that looks or feels different than it once did

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THE VISIONARY

Focus: Imagining a Better Future

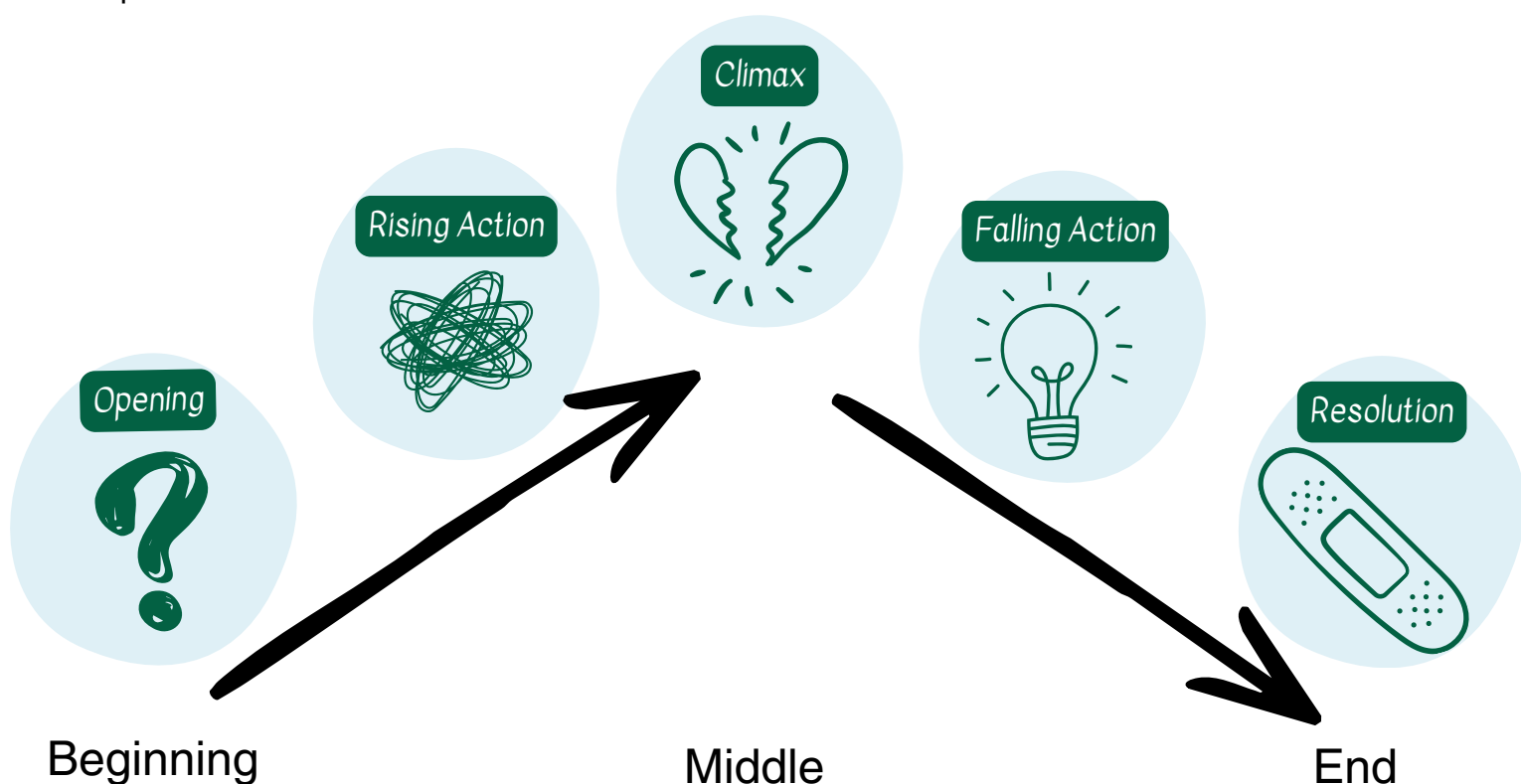
Not all climate stories look backwards. Some look forward. A visionary story imagines what a more sustainable, connected, or resilient future might feel like – in your home, your community, your relationship to nature. It can be realistic or poetic, grounded or imaginative.

This could be a story about:

- A future you genuinely hope for and what it looks like in everyday life
- A fictional character navigating a world that has found its way forward
- A dream, vision, or image of nature restored that stays with you
- A community, initiative, or way of living that gives you hope

3. The Shape of a Good Story

Every compelling story follows a natural arc – a shape that builds tension, reaches an emotional peak, and then brings the listener gently back down to solid ground. Understanding this pattern can help you tell your own climate story with greater clarity and impact. Think of it like this:



Let us walk you through each phase. In Section 6, we present two examples of what not to do and what does work. The protagonist of these stories is a woman named Johanna. We refer to her throughout the following pages to give you an idea of what the different sections could look like when creating a story.

Tell your Climate Story

Phase 1

The Opening: Setting the Scene



Every story begins by establishing a world. You introduce yourself or your and your world or your character and their world. Where are you? What does your everyday life look like? This is the "before." The more specific and concrete you are here, the more invested your listener will become.

What to include: Your name, where you live, a brief sense of your daily life OR your relationship to nature and the seasons. The background relevant to the story you are telling.

What to avoid: Starting with the problem immediately.
Let us first know who you are.

In Johanna's story:

She is 71, lives in Lower Saxony, has tended the same garden for forty years.

Phase 2

Rising Action: The Tension Builds



Something changes or builds (in a positive or negative way). A problem appears, a concern grows or just something unexpected or exciting is starting to happen. Maybe you read something or meet somebody, something that will leave impact on you. The tension increases.

What to include: A specific observation or change that you could not ignore.

What to avoid: Rushing to the conclusion. Let the tension breathe.

In Johanna's story:

The plum tree blossoms in late February. Beautiful, but wrong.

Phase 3

The Climax: The Moment Everything Shifts



This is the emotional peak of your story. Something happens that cannot be undone or unseen. If you are writing "the problem-solver" story, describe specific "lightbulb moment" or breaking point that forced you to say, "I have to change this right now!" What happened that made inaction impossible? It does not have to be dramatic – it can be quiet. But it must be felt.

What to include: The most emotionally significant moment of your experience, in full sensory detail.

What to avoid: Summarising this moment.
Do not tell us you were sad – show us the frost-killed blossoms.

In Johanna's story:

She walks through the garden in silence. Every blossom is dead. "It sounds like a small thing. It didn't feel small."

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Phase 4

Falling Action: The Inner Response



After the peak, you (or the main character) respond. Maybe you make a decision. If you are writing “the problem-solver” story you can write about what inner or outer hurdles did you face when trying to adapt, was it hard to break old habits, or did you face scepticism from others when trying to implement your solution? In other types of story it doesn't have to be an action. Maybe just something shifts inside you. This is where emotional processing happens, the grief, the anger, the questions you cannot answer, the excitement, proud or wonder. Do not skip this phase. If you jump immediately to a solution, your resolution will feel unearned.

What to include: Your honest emotional response. People you thought about, you talked to. Questions without answers. Your struggle to make things different, to look at the thing in different way.

*In Johanna's story:
She thinks about her granddaughter.
She wonders about the future. She
discovers her neighbours are carrying
it quietly too.*

Phase 5

The Resolution: Finding a Way Forward



Where are you now? What have you done or decided? What were positive consequences of your new actions? What personal conclusion, lesson learned or reflection did you come up with? This is your quiet invitation to the reader. You do not need to have solved the climate crisis. You need a small, honest, human step forward: in action, reflection or emotion. If the experience is about witnessing a disaster it can be simply something that shows your reader that it is possible to move from grief or fear into agency or into a point, where you can see also something good in the situation, some hope; however modestly.

What to include: A concrete action or change, however small. Optionally, a final image that stays with the reader.

What to avoid: Forced optimism, absolute despair, or leaving the story hanging without a proper “full stop.” Wrapping your story up too perfectly undermines the raw honesty of everything before it. You don't need to solve the climate crisis, just show a realistic human step. Conversely, do not leave your reader completely paralysed by hopelessness; a powerful story always leaves a small crack open for action, connection, or resilience. Finally, avoid ending so abruptly that there is no closure. Give your reader a clear landing place, a final thought, or a quiet realisation that brings your personal journey to a meaningful close.

*In Johanna's story:
Rainwater barrels. Replanting.
Conversations with neighbours.
Plum cake made with awareness.*

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The different phases at a glance

	Phase	Question	Johannas Story
	Opening	Who are you and what is your world or your character and his/her world?	71 years old, Lower Saxony, forty years tending a garden
	Rising Action	What begins to feel different? OR What begins to happen?	February blossoms – beautiful but too early
	Climax	What is the peak moment?	The frost. Every blossom dead. Walking in silence.
	Falling Action	What do you feel or do in the aftermath?	Grief. Thoughts about her granddaughter.
	Resolution	What is the conclusion of the story? Does it lay in your way of thinking, feeling or doing? What small step forward?	Rainwater, replanting, conversations, plum cake with awareness

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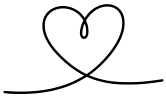
4. Our Framework: The Head-Heart-Hands Model

Within this project we use the **Head-Heart-Hands** framework as a storytelling compass. Think of Head, Heart and Hands not as a fixed sequence, but as three dimensions that together make a story complete:



Head – What did you observe or think?

A concrete observation, fact, or personal reflection. This can be something you noticed in the world around you or something you came to understand about your own habits, choices, or relationship to nature. Grounding your story in something specific and real helps your listener understand your world.



Heart – What did you feel?

The emotional dimension of your story. Fear, grief, anger, wonder, hope, guilt, love, whatever came with your experience. You do not need to wait for the "right moment" to bring in emotion. Feelings can appear anywhere: at the beginning, in the middle, or even in how you reflect on things now.



Hands – What did you do?

The action dimension. This can be something you did in response to a challenge, something you changed in your habits, or something you simply decided to notice differently. Your "Hands" moment does not have to come at the end – in a wonder-of-nature story, for example, it might be the very thing that opens the story.

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5. Do's and Dont's

Do this	Avoid this
Make yourself or someone else the main character. Say "I noticed...", "I felt...", "I decided..."	Avoid generalisations. "Everyone knows" or "people should" creates distance.
Be specific and local. Your garden, your street, your river.	Avoid abstract global framing. Melting ice caps are real, but they are far away.
Show emotion honestly. Fear, grief, anger, hope, excitement or wonder are all valid.	Avoid lecturing. You are sharing an experience, not prescribing behaviour.
Keep a narrative arc. Something changes, in the world, and in you.	Avoid endless context. You do not need to explain all of climate science first.
End with agency. Even the smallest action counts.	Avoid leaving people in despair. A story without an exit point can feel paralysing.
Write as you would speak. Dialect and personal quirks are welcome.	Avoid jargon. CO2 budgets and emission targets create walls, not bridges.

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6. Two Examples: What Works and What Doesn't

What to Avoid

"My name is Johanna. I am 71 years old and I live in Lower Saxony. I have a garden with fruit trees and vegetables. Two years ago my plum tree blossomed too early and then there was a frost. The blossoms died and there were no plums that summer. This kind of thing is happening more and more because of climate change. I was not happy about it. I have now started to collect rainwater and I replanted some things. I think it is important that people pay more attention to nature and do something about climate change."

Why this does not work: Johanna is there, but we cannot feel her. The frost is mentioned, but we do not experience it. There is no moment that lands, no silence in the garden, no granddaughter, no grief. The resolution feels like a to-do list rather than a human decision. And the final sentence steps out of the story entirely and starts lecturing. The ingredients are all present. The story is not.

A Story That Works

"My name is Johanna. I am 71 years old and I have lived in the same village in Lower Saxony my whole life. I have a small garden that I have been tending for forty years, fruit trees, vegetables, herbs. It has always felt like the most honest thing I do."

Two years ago, in late February, my plum tree was already full of blossoms. I remember standing under it thinking: this is beautiful, but it is wrong. It was far too early. Three weeks later, there was a hard frost overnight. By morning, every single blossom had turned brown and died. I walked through the garden in silence. There would be no plums that summer. It sounds like a small thing. It didn't feel small.

I kept thinking about my granddaughter, who was six at the time. She loves plum cake. I found myself wondering, how many more of these seasons am I going to watch go wrong? How many things will she simply never know?

I won't pretend I found an answer to those questions. But I did start doing things differently. I began collecting rainwater in big barrels. I replanted parts of the garden with older, more heat-resistant varieties. I started talking to my neighbours about it, not to alarm them, just to say: have you noticed this too? It turns out, most of them had. That surprised me. We were all carrying it quietly.

I still make plum cake when I can. But now I make it differently, with a little more awareness of what it took to get there."

Why this works: Johanna is specific, present, and honest. We can picture her garden. We feel the frost. Her grief is quiet and real. Her resolution is modest and genuine. That is what good stories do.

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7. Your Story: Step by Step

This section is divided into two parts: **Part A** helps you to find and prepare your story, while **Part B** helps you to write it as a whole. There are no right or wrong answers.

Aim for around **200–300 words**, roughly what you could read aloud in two minutes. If you prefer to tell your story out loud rather than write it down, simply use these questions as a spoken guide.

PART A – Preparation (Your Story in Five Phases)

Work through the following phases one by one. Short notes are enough here, this is your scaffolding, not your final text.

Phase 1

The Opening: Setting the Scene



Opening: Who are you and what is your world?

Every story begins by establishing a world. Introduce yourself or the person or character your story is about. The more specific and concrete you are here, the more your reader will feel at home before the story unfolds.

Impulse questions:

- If you are writing a **Witness story**: What is your relationship to a particular place, landscape, or season? What have you watched over years or decades and what has that relationship meant to you?
- If you are writing a **Problem-Solver story**: Who are you in everyday life, and what was your starting point before things changed? What did your routines, habits, or surroundings look like?
- If you are writing a **Turning Point story**: Where do you live, and what does your daily life look like? What is the backdrop, the world that existed before the moment that changed things?
- If you are writing a **Visionary story**: Who are you, and what drives your imagination? What is the world you are starting from and what feels possible to you that others might not yet see?
- If you are writing **about someone else or a fictional character**: Who are they? What do we need to know about them before the story begins, what place, habit, or relationship defines their world?

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Phase 2

Rising Action:
The Tension Builds



Rising Action: What begins to feel different? What begins to happen?

Something changes or builds, in the world around you, or inside you. It does not have to be a crisis. It can be something small that you could not stop noticing.

Impulse questions:

- If you are writing a **Witness** story: What did you first notice that seemed unusual or different from how things used to be? Was it a gradual shift, or a moment when something familiar suddenly looked wrong?
- If you are writing a **Problem-Solver** story: What was the situation that made you realise something had to change, in your habits, your surroundings, or your daily life? When did the problem become impossible to ignore?
- If you are writing a **Turning Point** story: Was there a moment when a concern began to grow, quietly at first, then harder to push aside? Did you read something, meet someone, or witness something that planted a seed of change in you?
- If you are writing a **Visionary** story: What made you start imagining things differently? What felt possible that others were not yet seeing and when did that feeling first arrive?
- If you are writing **about someone else or a fictional character**: What is the tension that begins to build in their world? What do they notice, feel, or encounter that sets the story in motion?

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Phase 3

The Climax:
The Moment
Everything Shifts



Climax: What is the peak moment?

Describe the single most significant moment of your experience. What did it look, sound, or feel like? Try to paint a picture with your words.

Impulse questions:

- If you are writing a **Witness** story: What is the single image or moment that captures the change most powerfully, something you saw, touched, or stood in front of that made the loss or shift undeniable?
- If you are writing a **Problem-Solver** story: What was the breaking point that made inaction impossible? What was the moment you said, “something has to change now!”?
- If you are writing a **Turning Point** story: What was the specific day, conversation, or image you cannot forget? What exactly did you see, hear, or feel in that moment?
- If you are writing a **Visionary** story: What is the most vivid, concrete moment in the future you are imagining? What does it look like, who is there, what has changed?
- If you are writing about **someone else or a fictional character**: What is the moment that defines their experience, the one the reader needs to feel alongside them?

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Phase 4

Falling Action: The Inner Response



Falling Action: What did you feel or do afterwards?

After the peak, something shifts, inside you, or around you. This is where emotional processing happens. It does not have to be dramatic. It can be quiet.

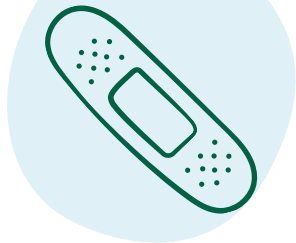
Impulse questions:

- If you are writing a **Witness** story: What did it feel like to sit with what you had seen or remembered? Did grief, wonder, or a quiet sense of loss come up? Who did you think about?
- If you are writing a **Problem-Solver** story: What inner or outer hurdles did you face when trying to change or adapt? Was it hard to break old habits, or did you face scepticism from others?
- If you are writing a **Turning Point** story: What shifted inside you after the moment of realisation? Did fear, anger, or unexpected hope come up? Did you share the experience with someone, and what happened when you did?
- If you are writing a **Visionary** story: What questions, doubts, or excitements came with your vision? What did you feel when you tried to share it with others?
- If you are writing **about someone else or a fictional character**: What does your character feel or do in the aftermath? What questions are they left with, and what do they struggle to answer?

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Phase 5

The Resolution:
Finding a Way Forward



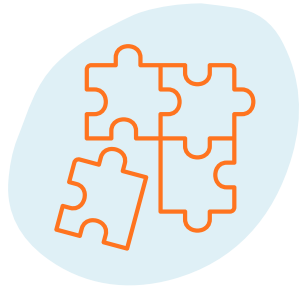
Resolution: What is the conclusion of the story? Is it in your way of thinking, feeling, doing?

Where are you now, in your thinking, your feeling, or your actions? Your resolution does not need to be a solution. It just needs to be honest.

Impulse questions:

- If you are writing a **Witness** story: Is there something you want to preserve in memory, or pass on to others, before it disappears? What would you want someone younger to know about what you have seen?
- If you are writing a **Problem-Solver** story: What changed in your daily life, your habits, or your relationship to your surroundings? What was that first small step, and where did it lead?
- If you are writing a **Turning Point** story: Did you arrive at a new question, a reflection, or an image that stays with you, even without a clear answer? What do you carry with you now that you did not carry before?
- If you are writing a **Visionary** story: What does the future you imagine feel like? What makes it worth striving for, and what would need to change to get there?
- If you are writing **about someone else or a fictional character**: Where does your character land at the end? What have they learned, decided, or quietly accepted – and what do they leave the reader with?

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PART B

Now bring it all together in your own words. Use your notes from the previous pages as a guide, but write freely. Aim for around 200 - 300 words.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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HOW TO UPLOAD YOUR STORY ON THE CLIMATE STORIES MAP

1. Create your story

Using the guidelines provided, shape the story you would like to share with the world.

2. Convert your story into a digital format

You can submit your story in one of the following formats:

- PDF document (+ your photo – optional) – if you have written your story in text form
- Audio recording (+ your photo – optional) – if you would like to tell your story using your voice
- Video recording – if you would like to present your story through video

Choose the format that suits you best. The most important thing is that your story clearly conveys your experience and message.

3. Send us your story

Please send the digital version of your story to the appropriate email address:

- For stories in Slovenian: info@iat.si
- For stories in German: info@wisamar.de
- For stories in French: info.m3cube@gmail.com
- For stories in Croatian, English and any other language: eko.brezna.info@gmail.com

Once we have reviewed your submission, your story will be published on the Climate Stories Map and become part of a shared collection of local stories, experiences and memories related to climate change.

Important

To ensure consistency, readability and the overall quality of the content displayed on the map, the 3H-project team reserves the right to make minor linguistic and technical edits to submitted materials. These edits will not alter the meaning, message or authenticity of your story.



Explore the 3H storytelling map!

Tell your Climate Story

PART C - Practical Details

Your name or nickname: _____

Your age: _____

Your location (town / region): _____

One sentence about yourself (optional): _____

About your story

Is it:

- ☐ your personal story
- ☐ story from someone else's real life
- ☐ fictional story

It goes under category of:

- ☐ the witness
- ☐ the problem-solver
- ☐ the turning point
- ☐ future scenario

Title of the story: _____

Publication Consent

I consent to my story being used in the Book of Climate Stories and related project materials:

- ☐ Under my full name
- ☐ First name only
- ☐ Anonymously / under a pseudonym: _____

Tell your Climate Story

Editorial Consent

We deeply value every story shared with the Book of Climate Stories. While we may not be able to include every submission in the final publication, each story will be carefully read and considered by the editorial team. Our aim is to ensure that the final collection reflects the full diversity of voices and experiences that give this project its meaning.

To ensure readability and narrative flow, stories in the *Book of Climate Stories* may be lightly edited.

Please indicate what you are comfortable with:

- ☐ My story may be lightly edited for grammar, spelling, and readability, without changing its meaning or voice.
- ☐ My story may be restructured editorially to improve its narrative flow, the content and meaning will remain fully intact.
- ☐ I would like my story to be published exactly as I have written it, without any changes.

In all cases, you will be contacted before any edits are made and will have the opportunity to review the final version.

Signature (optional): _____

Date: _____

Project Partners:

Udruga Eko Brezna, Croatia (coordinator)
Inštitut Antona Trstenjaka za gerontologijo in
medgeneracijsko sožitje, Slovenia
Association M3-MCube, France
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Germany

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