

# CLIMATE COVERAGE IS RISING - WHAT ABOUT THE TRAINING OF JOURNALISM STUDENTS IN CLIMATE JOURNALISM?

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF FEE ECOCAMPUS

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# A need for Climate literacy

In the current climate crisis, there's an urgent need for education to enable individuals, as agents of change, to acquire **knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes** that lead to green transition of our societies, as set out in the 2030 Agenda.

**Journalists play a vital role** in raising awareness about the impacts of climate change, informing public opinion, scrutinizing policy decisions and covering sustainable solutions to the climate crisis.



# A need for Climate literacy

While climate coverage in newsrooms is rising globally, there is still a **lack of integration of climate literacy into the curricula of Journalism and Communication Universities**, namely in Portugal.





# TODAY

- Why newsrooms, journalism students and society need climate literacy
  - The role of Higher Education Institutions
  - ESCS new Climate Journalism course
- 





**“You need more general climate literacy in newsrooms, just like news organizations at some point realized that they couldn’t just depend on a few digital specialists but needed to increase everyone’s digital literacy in order to stay relevant as an organization”**

**”**

*Wolfgang Blau, expert in climate communication and co-founder of the Oxford Climate Journalism Network*

# Climate literacy: a challenge for newsrooms

## Most journalists

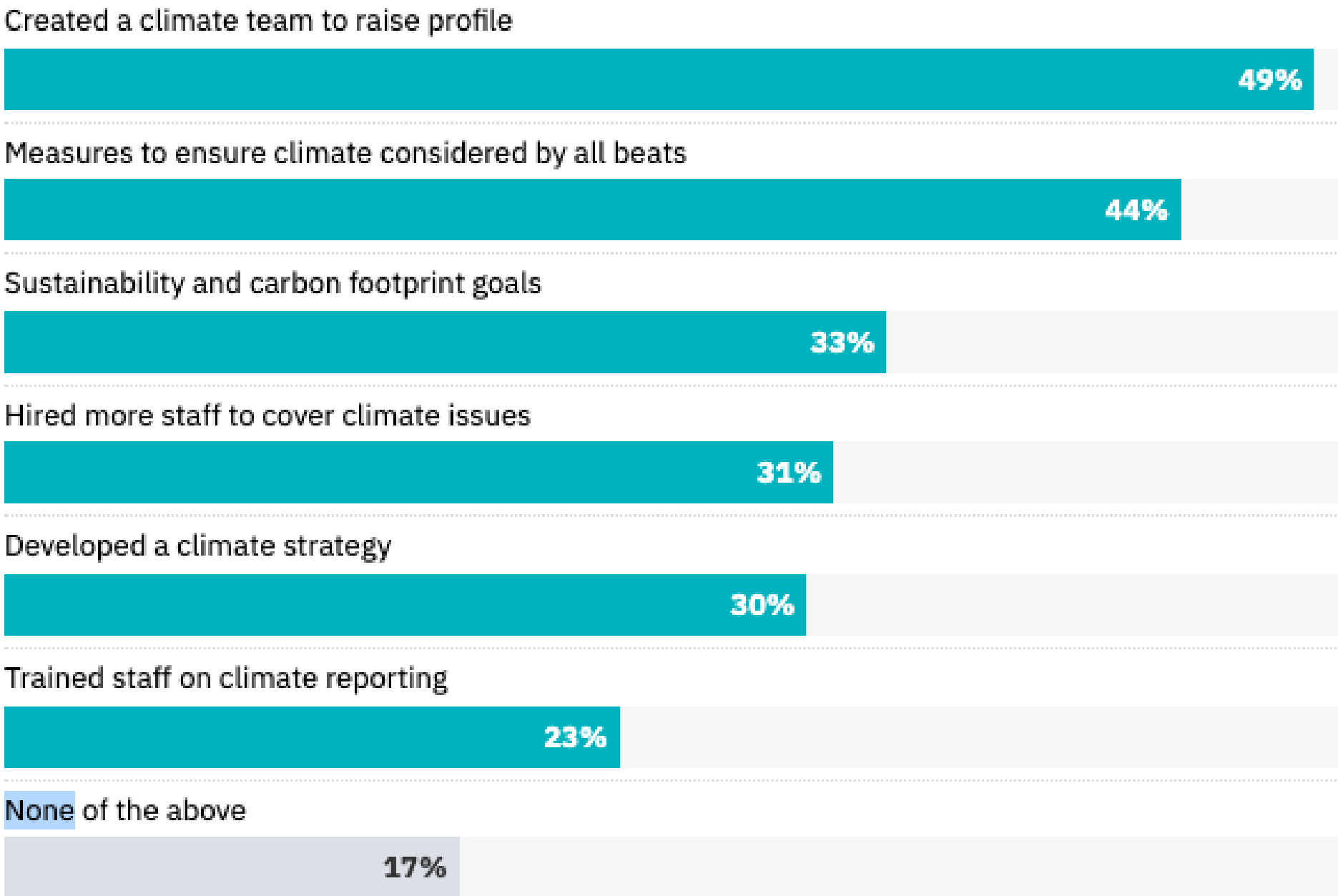
- Don't feel confident explaining the details of climate change
- Fail to see the connection with climate change in everyday stories
- Have a hard time spotting misinformation and *greenwashing*

## Media outlets face constraints

- Majority of journalists doesn't have a background in science
- Climate change is a complex topic and addresses all areas (politics, economics, sport, culture...)
- Newsrooms lack time and financial resources for training

# Changes that news organisations are making to improve coverage further

Data from a survey of 303 media leaders in 53 countries for 'Journalism, media and technology trends and predictions 2023'.



**Q12.** Which of the following, if any, have you done recently to improve your climate journalism? N=275.

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

*Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2023*

(survey in 53 countries)



# A need for Climate literacy

Portuguese media landscape  
challenges and opportunities

- Portuguese journalists have limited access to training opportunities throughout their careers

## 2.1.10 Teve formação complementar (nos últimos cinco anos)?

Respostas em branco: 11.

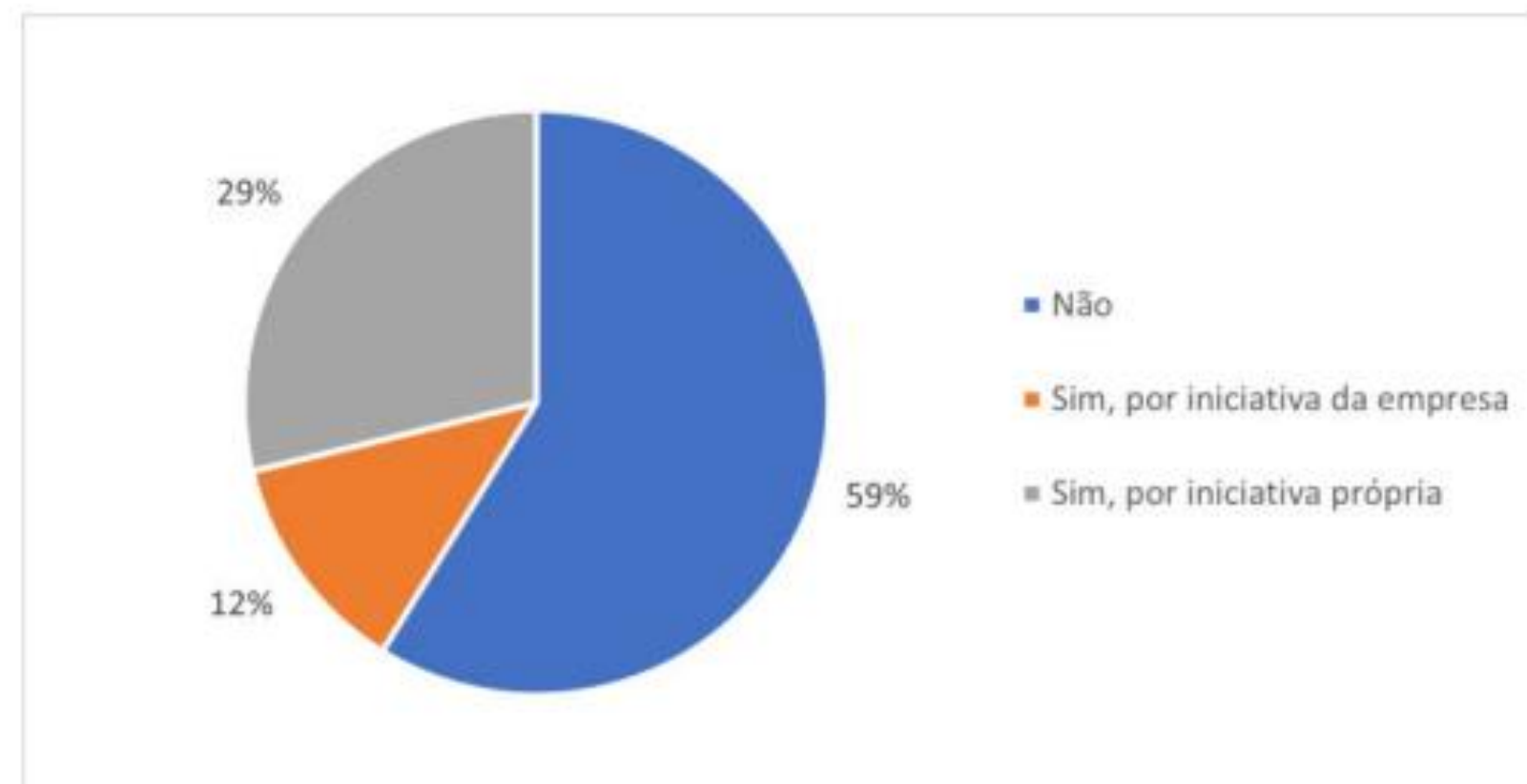


Figura 10: Teve formação complementar (nos últimos cinco anos)?

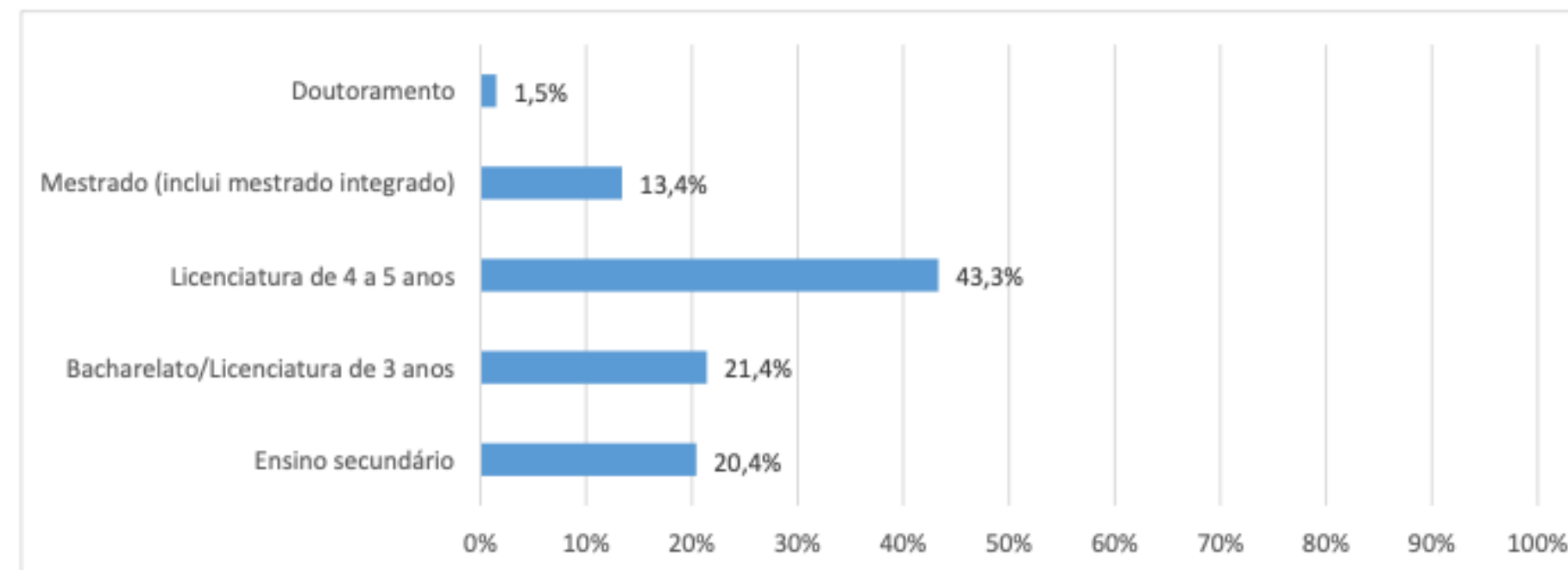


# A need for Climate literacy

Portuguese media landscape challenges and opportunities

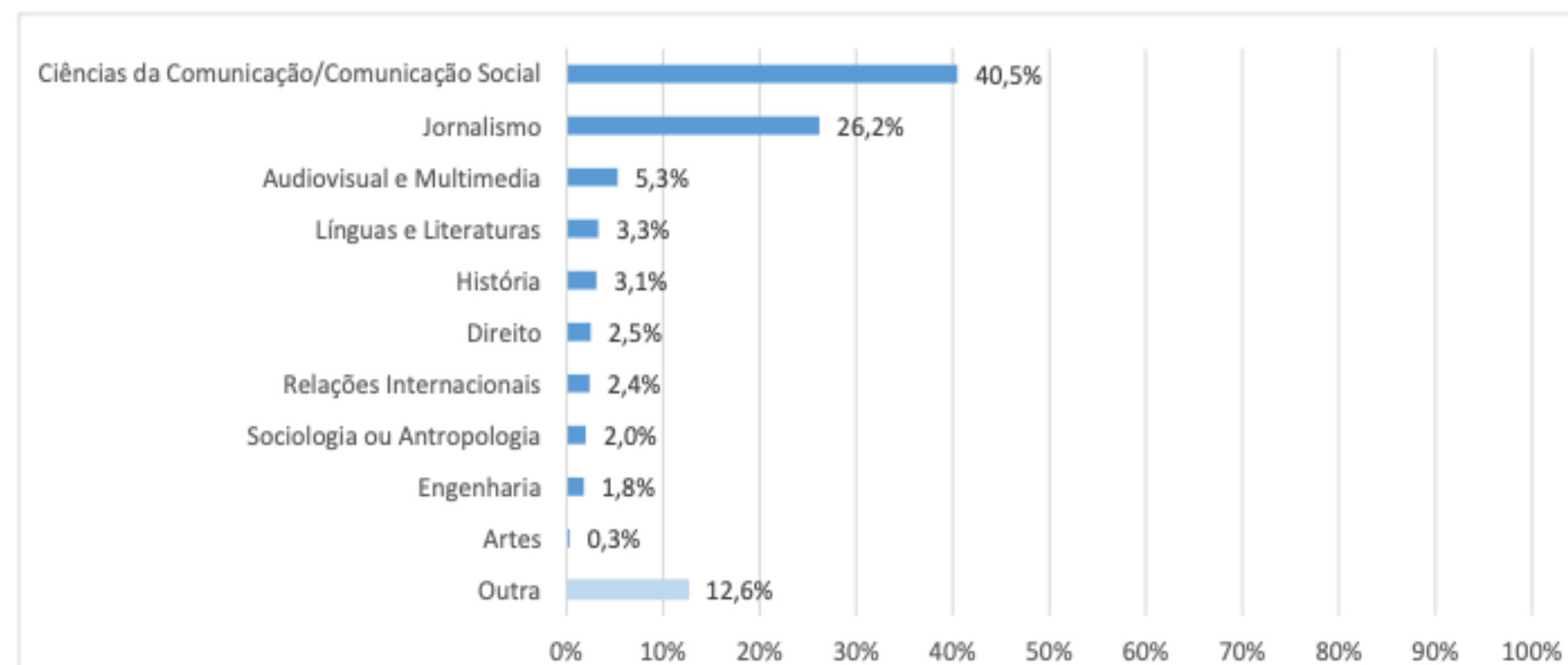
- 80% of journalists have a university degree
- Over 40% hold a degree in journalism

**Figura 4 – Habilitações académicas**



Fonte: Inquérito aos Jornalistas CIES-IUL/SJ 2016 (n=1491). Edição: OberCom

**Figura 5 – Área de formação**



Fonte: Inquérito aos Jornalistas CIES-IUL/SJ 2016 (n=1441). Edição: OberCom

# An opportunity for Higher Education Schools in Journalism and Communication

Provide knowledge, guidance and  
support to young journalists at the  
pivotal point in their career



The transition from student to  
professional journalist



# A global call for Climate Education

- UNESCO reviewed the profiles of 20 countries on climate change communication and education and found that efforts are mainly focused at the primary and secondary education levels (90%).
- **Fewer countries have frameworks to support climate change education in higher education and teacher training education**



Fonte: "Getting every school climate-ready: how countries are integrating climate change issues in education, UNESCO, 2021

# A special call for climate literacy in Portugal

- The Climate Basic Law (2021) requires the government to promote the development of teaching material on climate change in higher education, respecting the autonomy of each institution





# If journalists play a vital role in:

- Informing citizens
- Exploring and understanding local impact of climate change
- Exposing misinformation
- Holding power to account
- Foster public debate

# **Journalism/ Communication Higher Education Institutions must take a leading role:**

- Provide newsrooms with young journalists who have climate literacy as part of their basic training
- Foster collaboration between universities, media outlets, and environmental organizations
- Contribute to a broader culture of climate literacy

# As the traditional function of education expands to include climate literacy...

... It can also enhance Higher Education Institutions' role in today's society.

- HIE are crucial in fostering critical thinking

Catalysts for raising awareness and empowering future generations

- University students empowered by Climate Literacy drive innovative extracurricular initiatives



# The case for a Climate Journalism course in PT

## WHY?

- Portuguese HEI had no dedicated course on Climate Journalism within Journalism or Communication Schools and Universities
- Climate change is more frequently included in the curricula of courses in the areas of health, architecture or engineering, than in journalism ones





# New Climate Journalism course

## Similar offers in Communication

- Masters in Science Communication, Universidade Nova de Lisboa (1984)
- PHD in Climate Change and Sustainable Development Policies, Universidade de Lisboa/Universidade Nova de Lisboa (2009/2010)
- Communication, Science and Environment, Universidade do Minho (2011)

# ESCS new Climate Journalism course

## WHY ESCS?

- Solid foundation in journalism principles and practices, with a focus on hands-on learning and real-world applications
- Journalism is an evolving field
- As newsrooms prioritize climate coverage, universities must also adapt to enhance climate literacy



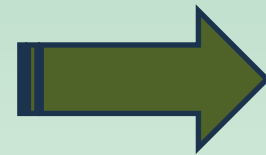
# ESCS new Climate Journalism course

## Problems to solve

Rise in climate coverage

Most journalist don't have a background in science

Limited access to training (time and resources) in newsrooms



## What have we done

Launched a Climate Journalism course in 2024

Cross-border exchange project with OsloMet in Norway

One day Seminar on Climate Journalism



# ESCS new Climate Journalism course

## WHAT?

- An elective course on the Master's degree in Journalism
- The basics of climate change, science and social
- How to tell climate stories, as climate reporting calls for new skills of assessing, explaining and linking everyday news events to the deeper, structural changes





# ESCS new Climate Journalism course

## WHAT?

- Address misconceptions about climate change
  - Identify reporting topics and credible sources
  - Journalistic techniques to enhance the practice of climate journalism
- 
- Access to lectures from experts in the field to share their experience with students.



**Marco Silva, “Climate Misinformation and Disinformation”**  
Senior journalist for BBC News on Climate disinformation

# Academic institutions and teachers new to climate journalism education need support



## **CLIMATE JOURNALISM GOES TO THE UNIVERSITY A CROSS-BORDER PROJECT**

- Partnership with Oslo Metropolitan University, draw inspiration from Norway's more advanced work on climate journalism education
- Supported by the EEA Grants Portugal
- Field trips, lectures and a one day seminar on climate journalism
- Reduce disparities in climate journalism education at the European level









“

Through meticulous training in contextualized reporting on climate issues, we endeavor to instill in our students an unwavering commitment to delivering accurate and insightful narratives, ensuring the dissemination of authentic stories

”

Fernanda Bonacho, coordinator of the master's degree in Journalism at ESCS

“

This course helped me to stop looking at climate change as something that is too complex to understand. With reliable sources and access to experts, I feel empowered to write stories with a 'climate lens'

”

Maria Maia, student from the master's degree in Journalism at ESCS



**“ Climate change is  
one of the defining  
issues  
of our time ”**

**UNESCO**

**“ How we cover the  
impact of human  
activity on our  
environment will form  
the basis for how  
history judges this  
generation of  
journalists ”**

**CLIMATE JOURNALISM THAT WORKS**  
**European Broadcasting Union**



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