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Using climate stories to bridge the valley of death

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Much of the scientific insights and information on climate change and adaptation do not reach decision-makers, companies, and citizens. In literature, this gap between science and society has been referred to as a 'valley of death'. One of the reasons for the gap is that scientists and societal actors have different understandings and perceptions of what is usable. Climate services should shift from being science-driven, to services that are user-driven and science-informed. In line with this thought, practices such as co-creation and tailoring climate information to user contexts are suggested and described to increase the success of climate services.

Within the EU funded REACHOUT project, we applied 'storytelling' techniques to create climate stories for six cities across Europe. This is a novel way to transform climate data (hazard maps and datasets) into information that is appealing to local users and citizens. The climate stories combine a narrative structure with visualizations to communicate scientific knowledge to an audience.

Climate stories are currently being developed within REACHOUT to advance user-oriented climate services to support the implementation of the Green Deal. The initial results are promising as the climate stories are welcomed by the cities as an innovative means to communicate results from the project to the wider audience. For instance, the city of Athens, Milan and Logroño use climate stories about heat to increase awareness and initiate action.

Climate stories have also been used within the Dutch Climate Impact Atlas to explain climate hazards and impacts to users. In our presentation, we will elaborate on our experiences with the development of climate stories, and discuss the best practices.