

BEAT THE HEAT

The KlimaSeniorinnen European Tour

Press Dossier



Overview

BEAT THE HEAT is the documentary about the KlimaSeniorinnen - the association of Swiss senior women who took their country to court over climate inaction and won. In April 2024, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Switzerland had violated their right to climate protection, a judgment now recognised as a landmark for climate and human rights worldwide.

This autumn, the KlimaSeniorinnen are bringing their story and the film on tour across Europe. The European Tour uses screenings of BEAT THE HEAT as an entry point for encounters between the KlimaSeniorinnen, the Greenpeace network and the wider climate movement, turning their legal victory into momentum for political change.

BEAT THE HEAT is a courtroom thriller and underdog story. At its core, it is a hopeful and, at times, funny film. It follows a group of women who refuse to be defined by the crisis they face - women who, by their own account, have never lost their sense of humour along the way. At a moment when the world is dominated by bad news, their story is a rare and welcome one: proof that ordinary people, organised and persistent, can win.

The film is dedicated to the youth climate activists who brought the case *Duarte Agostinho and Others v. Portugal and Others* before the European Court of Human Rights, highlighting the deeply intergenerational nature of the KlimaSeniorinnen's journey.

The KlimaSeniorinnen and the young Portuguese plaintiffs shared a journey at the European Court of Human Rights, each challenging governments' failure to adequately address the climate crisis and protect human rights. Both cases became powerful examples of how people of different generations can use the law, collective action and solidarity to demand climate justice.

The relationship between the KlimaSeniorinnen and the young plaintiffs also reflects a broader movement of intergenerational solidarity: standing together across generations, sharing experiences and strategies, and recognising that the climate crisis, and the struggle for a safe and healthy environment, connects us all.

Film Facts

- **English Title:** BEAT THE HEAT - KlimaSeniorinnen vs. Switzerland
- **Original Title (German/French/Italian):** TROP CHAUD - KlimaSeniorinnen vs. Switzerland
- **Director:** Benjamin Weiss
- **Producers/Writers:** Daniel Hitzig and Benjamin Weiss
- **Production:** MattoGrosso Films and danielhitzig.com
- **Narrators:** Miriam Margolyes, English; Susanne Zahnd, German; Sophie Gardaz, French; Graziella Rossi, Italian
- **Language Versions available:** English, German, French, Italian with respective subtitles.
- **Subtitles available:** English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Romanian, Swedish
- **Running time:** 77 minutes
- **World premiere:** 9. April 2025, Bern -the 1st anniversary of the ECtHR judgement on the KlimaSeniorinnen case
- **Website:** beat-the-heat.com



About the KlimaSeniorinnen European Tour 2026

Organised by Greenpeace and partner organisations, the KlimaSeniorinnen European Tour brings the documentary *Beat the Heat (Trop Chaud)* to cities across Europe to transform the herstoric¹ legal victory into collective momentum and enable people power. Building on the landmark European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruling that established climate protection as a fundamental right, the tour uses the film as a catalyst to connect the Swiss senior women activists with national and local movements, building collective power across borders to demand systemic change and a just future for everyone.

Why the Tour and why now?

Switzerland has yet to fully implement the ECtHR ruling, and Council of Europe member states are under increasing pressure to review and strengthen their national climate policies. Following a summer of intense heatwaves that underscored the immediacy of the crisis - and, among other things, its huge health-impacts - this tour harnesses collective power ahead of upcoming implementation reviews at the Committee of EU-Ministers. By bringing the story of the KlimaSeniorinnen directly to key European capitals, the campaign unites civil society and local activists to demand that governments turn legal precedent into real-world protection.

What audiences can expect?

Each tour stop features a screening of *Beat the Heat*, followed by engaging live dialogues with a delegation of the KlimaSeniorinnen, legal experts, academics, scientists, and filmmakers. These events create an interactive space to bridge the Swiss precedent with local climate struggles, demonstrating the strength of people power across generations and affirming that ambitious climate action is a fundamental human right. Grounded in the courage and determination of the Swiss senior activists, every gathering serves to motivate and inspire action, energising audiences to pursue climate justice and government accountability.

Countries involved so far

UK, Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania.

¹ 'Herstoric' is a feminist twist on 'historic', celebrating those whose courage, solidarity and collective action made this landmark victory possible. The term reflects the KlimaSeniorinnen's intersectional feminist approaches to climate justice, and recognises older women as powerful agents of change.

Why this matters now

The ECtHR judgment fundamentally reshaped the global climate accountability landscape, despite being largely dismissed by Swiss politics and media two years ago. During the summer of 2026, Europe experienced a series of record-breaking heatwaves, with preliminary estimates indicating at least 35,000 excess deaths across the continent^{2, 3}, making the need for immediate climate action starker than ever.

The KlimaSeniorinnen knew the landmark judgment was only the beginning. Its implementation is now before the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to oversee the execution and implementation of judgments from the European Court of Human Rights. The next review is scheduled for December 2026. The countries on the tour's itinerary will play a decisive role in the decision expected next December.

At stake is not just the enforcement of this one judgment, but whether States can disregard human rights rulings whenever it suits them - a question that touches the credibility of the entire European human rights system in the climate crisis.

While big polluters continue to profit from destroying our future, those most affected have turned to the courts for protection. The KlimaSeniorinnen's win at the ECtHR established that climate protection is a legal obligation, not a political choice - and proved that collective action can force real change.

The European KlimaSeniorinnen tour centres their stories and journey and seeks to transform climate activism into political power. Drawing on the resistance, courage and legal victory of the KlimaSeniorinnen, it calls for societal change to put our right to a healthy environment into policies and practices and build just and safer presents and futures for everyone.

Bringing the judgment home means fair implementation: real emissions cuts, protection for people during extreme weather, and accountability for those responsible for the harm. Those with the greatest responsibility, governments, polluters, and their financial backers, must act first and fastest. The tour invites audiences to join in turning this legal victory into lived, everyday protection.

² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/aug/25/at-least-35000-excess-deaths-europe-back-to-back-heatwaves>

³ Regarding the late-June heatwave: Reuters reported more than 10,000 excess deaths across European countries during that single event, with more than 9,000 among people aged 65 and over, source: <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/europe-recorded-10000-excess-deaths-during-late-june-heatwave-data-show-2026-07-12/>

Who Are the KlimaSeniorinnen

The KlimaSeniorinnen are not just deeply affected by the climate emergency -they are courageously challenging those responsible for it. Ten years ago, they formed an association and took legal action "because everything we hold dear is at stake." In April 2024, they made history when the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Switzerland had violated their right to climate protection, particularly Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.



Their historic victory has since become a crucial reference point for confronting the climate crisis - not only in courts, but in movement, political and advocacy spaces across Europe and beyond. Celebrated worldwide, the judgment continues to inspire other climate cases and civil society actors, strengthening their demands for accountability. A majority of Swiss politicians fiercely oppose it, arguing that Swiss climate efforts are already sufficient - or pretend they are negligible given the country's size - while questioning whether the climate crisis constitutes a human rights violation at all. At stake is not just enforcing this one judgment, but whether states can disregard human rights rulings whenever it suits them - a question that touches the credibility of the entire European human rights system in times of a heating climate at alarming speed.

In demanding times, the KlimaSeniorinnen practise courage every day, grounded in community, care and collectivity. Their activism has become a source of hope for people and movements committed to safer, more peaceful and just futures. Together with a global coalition of changemakers, they demand climate justice for all generations, and insist that ambitious climate action is not a request - it is a human right.

The European Tour centres their stories and their journey, seeking to transform climate activism into political power - turning their resistance, courage and legal victory into a call for the policies and practices that a healthy environment requires.

BEAT THE HEAT -Film Synopsis

BEAT THE HEAT tells the story of the legal case brought by an association of senior women from across Switzerland against their own country, arguing that Switzerland's inaction on climate change fails to protect their health during increasingly frequent heatwaves.

- After three Swiss courts dismissed it, the case reached the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg.
- On 9 April 2024, the ECtHR's Grand Chamber ruled 16 to 1 that Switzerland had violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to private and family life) by failing to act on climate change.
- The ruling established that climate protection is a human right in Europe, enforceable through the courts -including by associations.
- Swiss politicians, including the Federal Council, have so far declined to fully comply with the ruling, arguing it oversteps the separation of powers.
- The film centres on the testimonies of the KlimaSeniorinnen and features their legal team, alongside international climate law and science experts.
- Despite the gravity of the subject, the film is carried by the wit and warmth of its protagonists -remarkably, none of the women has ever lost her sense of humour, making BEAT THE HEAT as much a hopeful, human story as a legal one.



Production Notes -Key Points

- BEAT THE HEAT is the first feature documentary for both director Benjamin Weiss and producer/writer Daniel Hitzig.
- Both attended the ECtHR hearing in Strasbourg on 28 March 2023 independently, before joining forces later that year to make the film.
- Civil society financed the film entirely, without support from Switzerland's three major public film funding bodies.
- Budget: just over CHF 300,000, raised through individual donations from KlimaSeniorinnen members (CHF 20 to 10,000), Greenpeace, several foundations, and private donors.
- The producers maintained full editorial independence throughout.



Cast -The KlimaSeniorinnen

(in alphabetical order)

Norma Bargetzi -Former psychoanalyst, based in Cassina d'Agno (TI). Co-founder of AvaEva, a movement connecting women of the grandmothers' generation.

Stefanie Brander -Graduate in French literature and philosophy; former equality officer at the Universities of Bern and Lausanne. "There is still a lot of work to be done."

Pia Hollenstein -Former nurse and vocational healthcare teacher; former Green Party parliamentarian. "There is an urgent need for action in parliaments and governments!"

Elisabeth Joris -Historian; helped bring women activists together to form the KlimaSeniorinnen. Co-initiator of the 1991 Swiss women's strike; honorary doctorate, University of Zurich (2020).

Anne Mahrer -Co-president of the KlimaSeniorinnen. Former librarian and Geneva parliamentarian; former Green Party National Councillor; politicised in the 1970s anti-nuclear movement.

Véronique Mermoud -Actress with a long career in French-Swiss theatre, film and TV; founder of the first permanent professional theatre company in canton Fribourg.

Oda U. Müller -Fights for the future of her children and grandchildren; has given up her car and no longer flies.

Bruna Molinari -Former tenants' representative in Ticino; speaks from personal experience of health impacts linked to climate change.

Rita Schirmer-Braun -Handles the KlimaSeniorinnen's accounting. A mountain lover who has observed glacier loss and landslide risk firsthand.

Elisabeth Stern -Ethnologist, active in peace and environmental work for nearly 40 years; became aware of the climate crisis during a research stay in Zimbabwe.

Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti -Co-president of the KlimaSeniorinnen. Adult educator and counsellor from Basel; nine grandchildren; campaigner against nuclear power and for environmental, women's and peace issues since the 1970s.

Cast -Legal Team & Climate Experts

Cordelia Bähr -Lawyer, head of the KlimaSeniorinnen's legal team. Named by the scientific journal *Nature* among the ten people who helped shape science in 2024, and featured by *Time* magazine on its 2025 list of the 100 most influential people, in the "Pioneers" category -recognised for having "not only fought for justice, but redefined it."

Jessica Simor -Lead barrister who pleaded the KlimaSeniorinnen's case at the ECtHR. A leading specialist in public law and human rights with over thirty years' experience, including numerous appearances before the UK Supreme Court and the Strasbourg and Luxembourg courts.

Mark Willers -Second barrister on the case in Strasbourg. Widely recognised for his work in environmental law, climate justice, civil liberties and discrimination law.

Louise Fournier -Lead legal counsel on the case from Greenpeace International, supported the case since its domestic proceedings and has been working on a wide range of climate cases supported by Greenpeace organisations.

Richard Harvey -Legal adviser to Greenpeace International, focused on international crime, human rights, environmental law and climate justice; previously worked on war crimes cases at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Martin Looser -Member of the KlimaSeniorinnen's legal team; lawyer and partner at a Zurich law firm, and a close collaborator of leading Swiss academic on environmental law Ursula Brunner, who continued her work on the case after her death.

Raphael Maheim -Member of the KlimaSeniorinnen's legal team; lawyer and partner at a Lausanne law firm; currently a member of the Swiss National Council for the Green Party, having previously served in the Vaud cantonal parliament.

Dennis van Berkel -Dutch lawyer, legal counsel to the Urgenda Foundation, which won the world's first case compelling a government to raise its climate ambitions on human rights grounds. Co-founder and co-director of the Climate Litigation Network.

Georg Klingler -Environmental scientist, organic farmer and climate campaigner at Greenpeace Switzerland, who initiated the KlimaSeniorinnen campaign in 2016.

Joeri Rogelj -Belgian climate scientist; professor of Climate Science and Policy and Director of Research at the Grantham Institute, Imperial College London. Author of multiple International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UN Environment Program (UNEP) climate reports.

Roda Verheyen -German lawyer specialising in climate litigation; represents individuals in legal proceedings against major private emitters. In 2021, secured a landmark ruling from Germany's Federal Constitutional Court obliging the government to protect future generations' rights.

In memoriam: Ursula Brunner (1950–2019) -Pioneering Swiss environmental lawyer whose firm drafted the original complaint. She died in July 2019, before the case reached Strasbourg.

Contact

The KlimaSeniorinnen European Tour 2026 is organised in close collaboration between the KlimaSeniorinnen, Greenpeace Switzerland, Greenpeace International and the Producers of BEAT THE HEAT / TROP CHAUD.

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Websites beat-the-heat.com klimaseniorinnen.ch

Social Media: [@trop_chaud_film](https://www.instagram.com/trop_chaud_film)

[Link to Photos](#)

[Link to Poster](#)

[Link to Trailer](#)

Appendix: Extended Production Notes & Full Crew

The Making of BEAT THE HEAT

BEAT THE HEAT has an extraordinary production history. The film is the result of close collaboration between Benjamin Weiss and Daniel Hitzig, both bringing their first feature-length documentary to the big screen. Independently of one another, both were present at the KlimaSeniorinnen's hearing before the ECtHR in Strasbourg on 28 March 2023.

A few weeks earlier, Weiss -as director of commissioned films -had interviewed the KlimaSeniorinnen's board members and recognised the potential for a major documentary narrative. Hitzig, a former journalist working in communications for Swiss civil society NGOs since 2013, had assisted Greenpeace Switzerland with media relations around the case in February/March 2023. Only in autumn 2023 did Weiss and Hitzig team up to make the film -at a time when the KlimaSeniorinnen's eventual win in Strasbourg was far from certain, and the scale of the Swiss political backlash to come was impossible to foresee.

What fascinated the producers from the outset was how the KlimaSeniorinnen had brought the climate crisis into public discourse as both a public health issue and a contemporary human rights question.

The film's budget of just over CHF 300,000 was raised entirely without support from Switzerland's three major public film funding bodies (the Federal Office of Culture, a cantonal film funding foundation, and public-service television). The result is a film financed by civil society: the KlimaSeniorinnen's own association -now over 3,000 members across Switzerland -contributed significantly through individual donations ranging from CHF 20 to CHF 10,000, alongside support from Greenpeace and other foundations and private donors. Throughout, the producers maintained full editorial independence as authors, guided by journalistic accuracy and integrity.

Director, Producers & Narrator

Benjamin Weiss (director, producer, co-writer, b. 1982) grew up in Zurich and Ticino. After leaving a history degree at the University of Zurich, he worked as a film distributor, assisted on Swiss feature films, and directed music videos before training as a director at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California (BFA cum laude, 2014). Since 2015, he has worked as a director in Zurich, primarily on commissioned documentaries for a variety of Swiss clients and institutions. He has run his own production company, MattoGrosso Films, since 2019.

Daniel Hitzig (producer, co-writer, b. 1959) grew up in Zurich. After organising rock concerts and leaving a history degree in the 1980s, he trained at the MAZ media school and worked as a radio moderator, an ICRC delegate in Palestine and Iraq, a journalist and presenter at Swiss public broadcaster SRG, and later as media officer for Alliance Sud, Switzerland's centre for international cooperation and development policy. He has run his own business since 2020.

Full Crew

- **Director:** Benjamin Weiss
- **Writers:** Daniel Hitzig, Benjamin Weiss
- **Producers:** Daniel Hitzig, Benjamin Weiss
- **Cinematography:** Ramón Königshausen (lead); Sandeep Abraham, Marc Bachmann, Tom Gibbons, Lukas Gut, Carlotta Holy-Steinmann, Pascal Reinmann
- **Editing:** Annika Fausch (lead); Benjamin Weiss, Laura Rodriguez Perez
- **Cake and Documents (Animations):** Marc Bachmann
- **Location Sound:** Ramón Königshausen, Dieter Meyer; Marc Bachmann, Tom Gibbons, Lukas Gut, Carlotta Holy-Steinmann, Pascal Reinmann, Benjamin Weiss
- **Music:** Bálint Dobozi with Evelinn Trouble
- **Musicians:** Evelinn Trouble (baritone guitar), Domi Chansorn (drums)
- **Audio Post-Production:** Tonverein
- **Supervising Sound Editor and Sound Mixing:** Julian Joseph
- **Dialogue Editors:** Arian Frank, Julian Joseph, Roland Frei
- **Sound Effects:** Kurt Human, Márton Dobozi
- **Narrators:** Miriam Margolyes, English, Susanne Zahnd, German, Sophie Gardaz, French, Graziella Rossi, Italian
- **Voice Over Recordist:** Paul Clark
- **Colorist:** Ramón Königshausen
- **Colour Services:** Nordhang Film

This film is an independent documentary production created to highlight the stories, legal journey and climate justice activism of the Swiss Senior Women for Climate Protection (KlimaSeniorinnen). The personal statements, external actions, or views of individual voice contributors, narrators, or non-featured cast members belong solely to those individuals. They do not represent the values or positions of the film's producers, the featured activists, or affiliated partner organisations. The production remains unequivocally committed to dignity, equity, and human rights for all.