Presentation Stay Grounded Hungary October 8 2026

Folie 1

Hello everyone!
Welcome to our workshop on aviation and climate justice. I am Michaela from Stay Grounded…
We will dive into the question why the reduction of aviation is necessary: from a health perspective, a climate perspective and a climate JUSTICE perspective. All these reasons are interlinked, so if we reduce aviation, we reduce negative health effects and also climate harming effects, generally. And we will look at a successful example of hindering an airport expansion – that of Vienna Airport.

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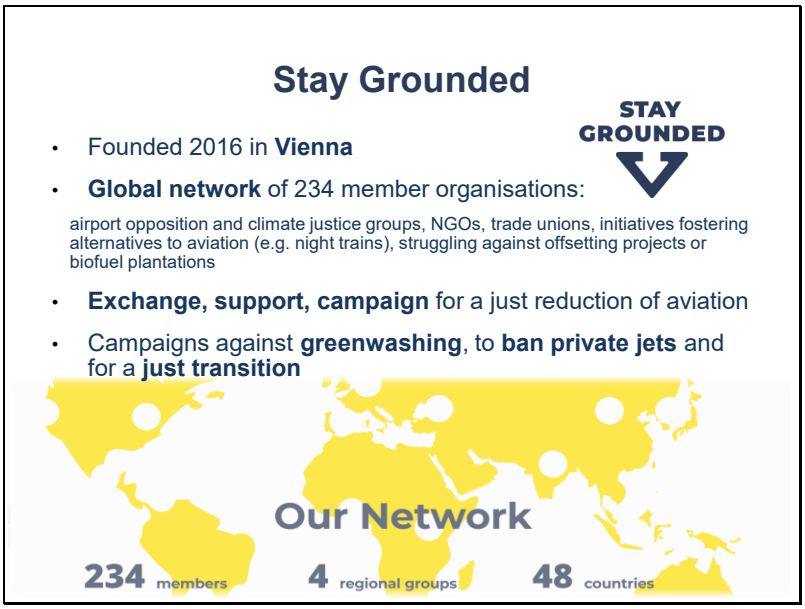

- Founded 2016 in **Vienna, evolved from the struggle against the planned 3rd runway at Vienna airport.**
- **Global network** of 232 member organisations:

- airport opposition and climate justice groups, NGOs, trade unions, initiatives fostering alternatives to aviation (e.g. night trains), struggling against offsetting projects or biofuel plantations
- **Exchange, support, campaign** for a just reduction of aviation.
- Campaigns against **greenwashing**, to **ban private jets** and for a **just transition**
- Stay Grounded Position paper: 13 Steps for a Just Transport System and for Rapidly Reducing Aviation https://stay-grounded.org/position-paper/

Folie 4

Let‘s get to know each other!

Everyone who can answer the question with YES, please STAND UP:

- Who is part of a civil initiative opposing Budapest Airport?
- Who is living near (20 km or less) Budapest Airport?
- Who is affected by noise from Budapest Airport?
- How many people do you know in this crowd? Stand up if it is more than 3 people.
- Turn to person BEHIND you: Tell name, organization, why you are here and ONE word you connect with aviation.
- Everyone says their FIRST NAME at the SAME time!

STAY GROUNDED

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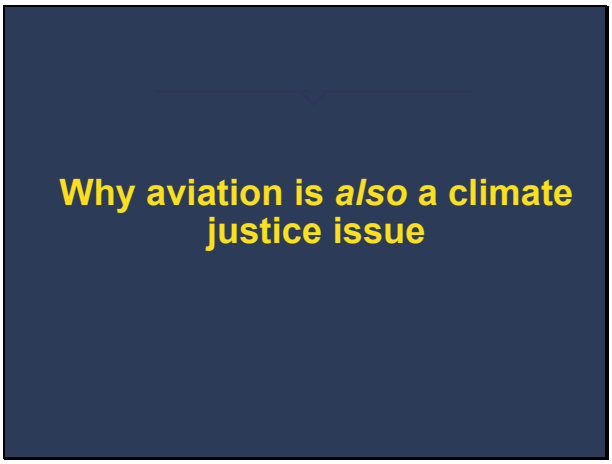
Folie 6



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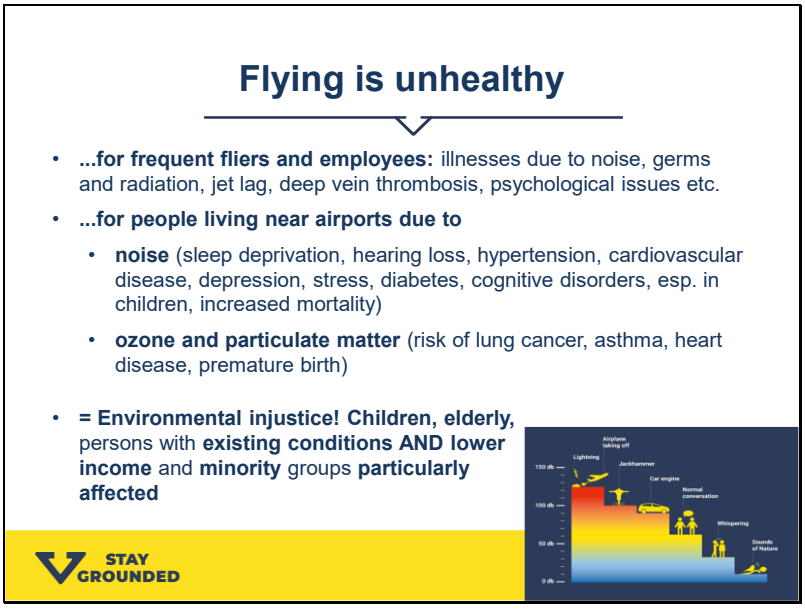

It is widely unknown that flying has many negative health effects - primarily for people living near airports, but also for frequent fliers or employees of airlines.
Flying is unhealthy…
...for frequent fliers and employees: illnesses due to exposure to noise, germs and radiation, jet lag, deep vein thrombosis, psychological issues etc.
...for people living near airports due to
noise (sleep deprivation, hearing loss, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, depression, stress, diabetes, cognitive disorders, esp. in children, increased mortality)
In the graphic you can see that jet engine noise when taking off is even louder than a jackhammer.
ozone and particulate matter (risk of lung cancer, asthma, heart disease, premature birth)

Relation to environmental/climate justice:
On one hand, **children, elderly people and those with existing conditions** are the most vulnerable to effects of noise and air pollution.
But these groups are disproportionately from **low-income communities**, often including a significant number of people of colour and marginalised populations.
Why? Houses are cheaper in areas flown over at low altitude. When airports announce expansions or new flight paths, property values decrease due to expected increases in noise. This suggests a higher likelihood of lower-income populations living under these flight paths or in the vicinity of airports undergoing expansions. (Moller 2014, Sobotta 2007, Ray 2023)

This is means it is also environmental injustice, as lower income groups fly considerably less than wealthier ones, but are much more affected.

Sources:
See more in-depth info and a lot of studies in the Stay Grounded paper Aviation is a Health Issue. https://stay-grounded.org/aviation-is-a-health-issue/

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- Popular Science (2023): Small planes are still spewing toxic lead across the US, EPA says. https://www.popsci.com/technology/epa-small-plane-leaded-fuel/
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- **But aviation is not only an issue of environmental injustice, but also of CLIMATE injustice. On the following slides I will try to explain why.**
- **Definition: Communities** that have contributed the **least** to the climate crisis are already suffering the **most** from its consequences
- The **big polluters of the Global North** should be the **first to stop** pollution and **support** the Global South to transition away from fossil fuels and adapt to climate impacts

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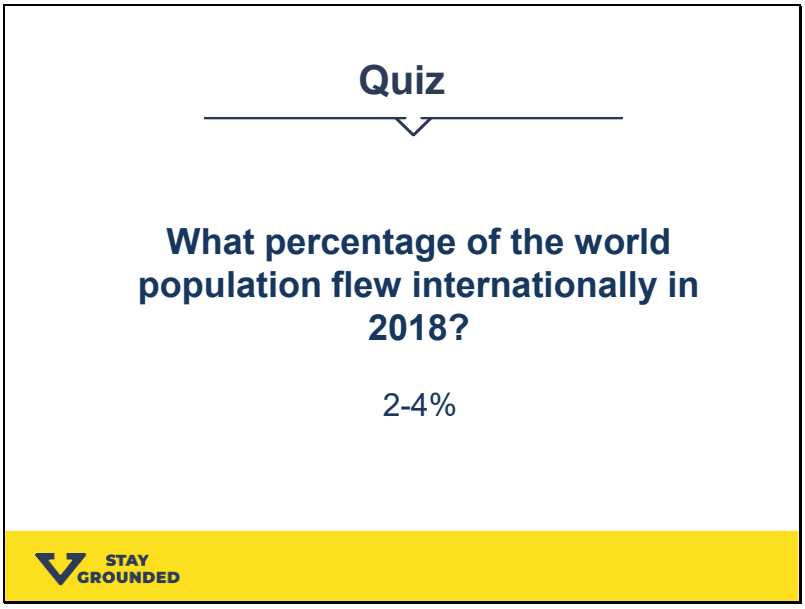

And how is this now related to aviation? Flying is one of the gravest examples of climate injustice. Let's have a quiz to find out why.

Only a small minority of the world's population flies - a study found that in 2018 only **2-4% of the world's population flew** at all internationally (Gössling/Humpe 2020).

Stefan Gössling, Andreas Humpe, The global scale, distribution and growth of aviation: Implications for climate change,Global Environmental Change,Volume 65,2020, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2020.102194.

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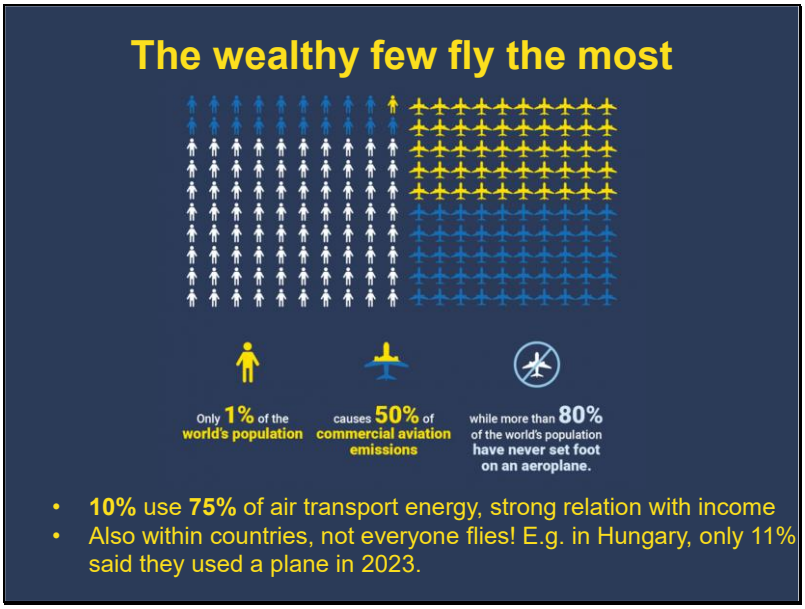

- Only **1% of the world's population is responsible for half of all aviation emissions, while 80%** have **never flown at all** (Gössling/Humpe 2020).
- Only **10% use 75%** of air transport energy. This small minority is also the **wealthiest** one – there is a clear relationship between personal income and the amount of flights taken.
- The **higher the income**, the more flights are taken, according to several studies (e.g. Schubert, Sohre et al. 2020, Kim & Mokhtarian 2021, Banister 2018, Gössling & Humpe 2020, Büchs & Mattioli 2021, Possible 2021).
- This is also true on a global scale: **90% of aviation emissions were generated in high-income or upper middle-income countries** (Graver et al 2018). Swedish citizens, for example, account for seven times the average per capita global aviation emissions (Larrson et al. 2018).
- Also within countries, not everyone flies: In the year 2023, only 11% of Hungary's population used a plane, which is also below the European average of 23% (Eurobarometer 2024).

Sources:

- Gössling, S., & Humpe, A. (2020). The global scale, distribution and growth of aviation: Implications for climate change. Global Environmental Change, 65, 102194. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2020.102194
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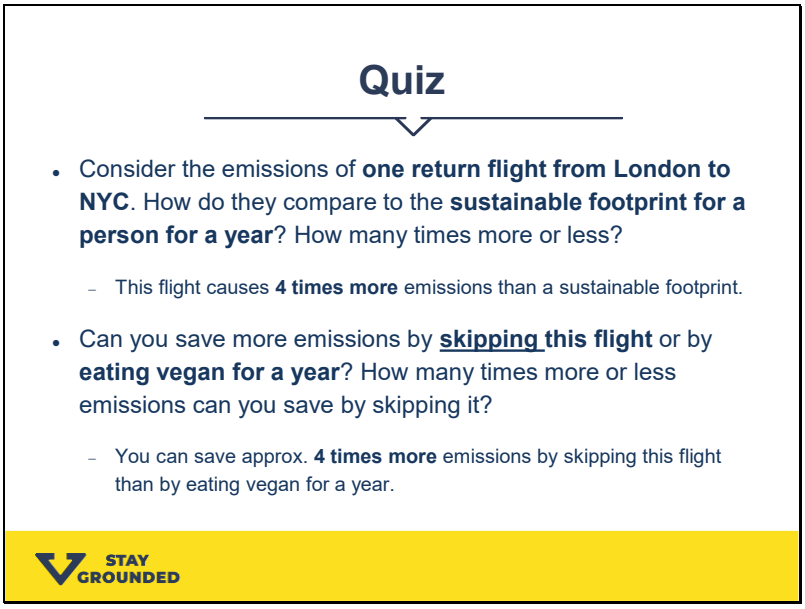

The inequality becomes especially visible on an **individual level.**

- There is a **global carbon budget** we should not use up so we can stay within the 1.5 degree limit. You can **assign each person** on earth an equal share of this budget. This budget is the TOTAL emissions budget each person has for all activities, like eating, heating, mobility, etc.

- **If you take the emissions of one return flight from London to NYC: Are these emissions within, more or less than the sustainable footprint for a year? How many times more or less?**
  - The emissions of one return flight from London to NYC are **4 times more than the emissions of a yearly sustainable footprint.**

- **How many times** more or less are the **emissions that you can save by eating vegan** for a year compared to ***skipping*** **such a flight**?
  - Skipping a flight **saves 4 times more emissions** than eating vegan for a year.
- This does not mean that stopping flying is enough to counter the climate crisis, we **also have to change our food consumption** substantially (especially in the Global North). On a global level, food consumption contributes much more to climate change than aviation, since eating meat takes place much more often and is done by many more people than flying. Nevertheless, the comparison on the individual level shows the absurd luxury that taking a flight is.

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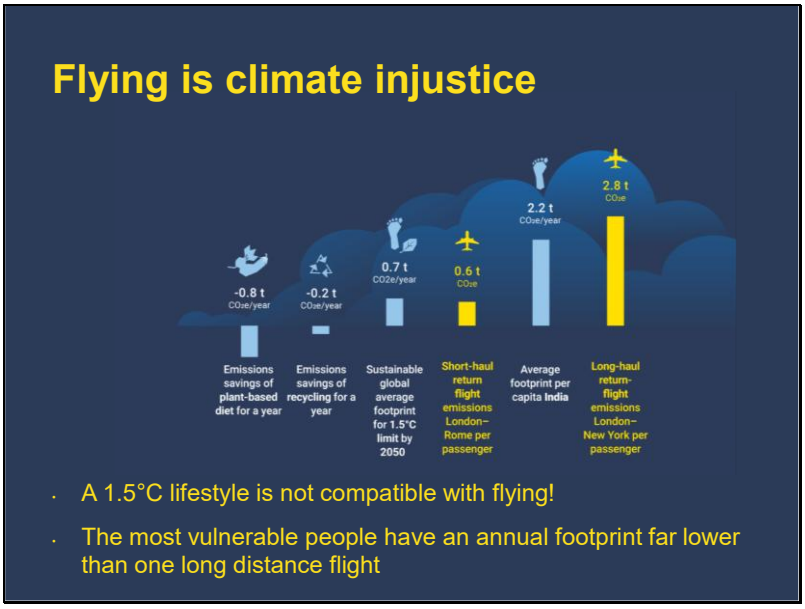

- **Emissions from *one* return flight, e.g. from London to New York** (2,9t CO_2e – this is INCLUDING Non-CO_2 emissions), are **more than...**
  - the average **sustainable footprint** of a person per year (0.7 t CO_2e) by 2050 in order to stay within the ***1.5°C*** limit
  - the **emissions saved by eating vegan** (-0,8t CO_2e) or **recycling** (-0,2t CO_2e) ***for a whole year***
  - the average footprint of a person living in **India** (2,2t CO_2e). We chose India as a country to compare to, but there are many countries in the Global South with even smaller per capita CO_2 emissions, e.g. many African countries like Burundi or Ethiopia with only 0,1 metric tons per capita.
- On the individual level, the disproportionate amount of emissions caused by aviation becomes even more visible. **Deciding not to fly has a huge impact on your personal** CO_2 **budget.** Even a short haul flight (e.g. London-Rome 0,6t) takes up a disproportionate share of emissions and is, furthermore, entirely unnecessary, especially within Europe with strong rail infrastructure. **This means that you can't live a 1.5 degree lifestyle and fly.**
- These numbers also show the grave climate injustice flying constitutes: **People living in regions most severely affected by climate heating and that are most vulnerable** to its effects due to lack of resources (in this example: India) have, on average, a **yearly carbon footprint that is far lower than the carbon footprint of one long distance flight** (Guardian 2019).

Background info and sources

- CO_2e: CO_2 equivalent, so, for example, non-CO_2 effects are included in the aviation emissions
- Often, a sustainable footprint of 2t per person per year based on the Paris Agreement is mentioned as a sustainable one. We chose, based on the study from Akenji et al (2021) 0,7t/y as a sustainable carbon footprint, because of following reasons:
  - The 2t footprint is compatible with the 2°C target but not the 1,5°C target.
  - We already lost a big part of our carbon budget since 2015 and the Paris Agreement.
  - The 2t footprint assumes a massiv
  - e sequestration of carbon, technologies that don't exist or are not scalable globally.

Not to forget: from a climate justice perspective, the Global North countries are more responsible and therefore should do most of the reduction: 2t is not taking into account this and just calculating a global reduction target.

Sources:

- Emissions savings plant-based diet, recycling: Wynes & Nicholas (2017): bit.ly/IndivAct
- Akenji et al. (2021): 1.5-Degree Lifestyles, https://bit.ly/4dVQPgI
- Flight emissions (2026): Atmosfair: atmosfair.de
- Carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions excluding LULUCF per capita (t CO2e/capita) (**2023**):**https://bit.ly/worldbank-co2-per-capita**

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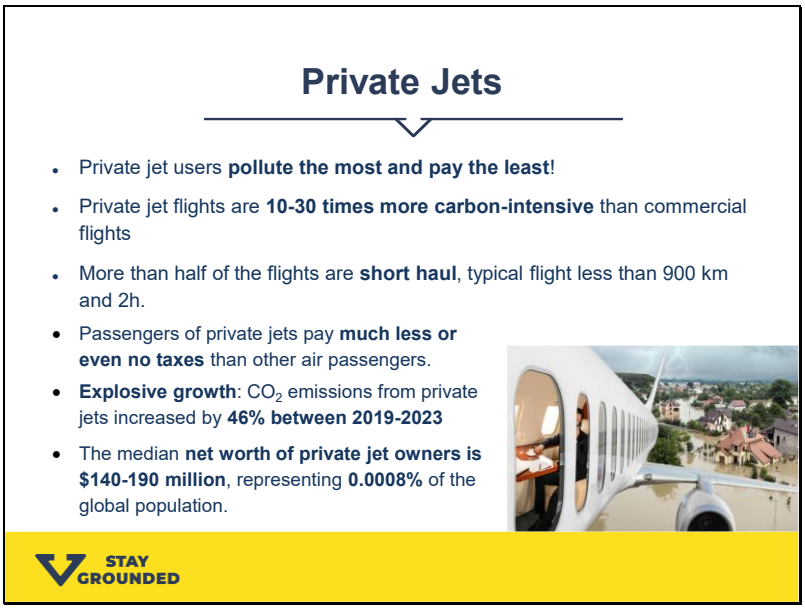

An especially grave example of injustice are private jets.

- The average private jet flight is 10 time more carbon-intensive than a regular airliner passenger!
- **Private jets fly at very low occupancy rates**. The fact that even large aircraft are being operated at such low average load factors points to flights on larger private jets being as much as 20 or even 30 times more carbon-intensive than economy class airline flights (Possible 2023).
- **Short haul non-sense**: In 2022, **55%** of all private jets flights in Europe were short **(less than 500km**), could have been replaced by train journeys.
- **Typical flight less than 900km and 2h** (ICCT).
- **Tax**: Passengers of private jets pay **3 to 7 times less** than passengers of commercial flights **or even no taxes**
- **Growth of the sector**: The private jet market has seen explosive post-pandemic growth. **Emissions increased by 46% between 2019-2023**, with industry expectations of continued strong growth (Gössling et al 2024).
- The size of the global fleet has increased 133 percent in the last two decades from 9,895 in 2000 to 23,133 in mid-2022. This bonanza was accompanied by an unprecedented number of business jet operations, 5.3 million in 2022 (IPS 2023).
- E.g. **one in ten flights departing UK airports** are now private jet flights. During the early months of the pandemic this proportion increased to nearly one in four flights (Possible 2023)
- The **median net worth** of private jet owners is $190 million (full owners) and $140 million (fractional owners), representing 0.0008% of the global population. There were only 63,610 people in the world with a net worth of $100 million or more. (IPS 2023)

Sources:

- Gössling, S., Humpe, A. & Leitão, J.C. Private aviation is making a growing contribution to climate change. *Commun Earth Environ* **5**, 666 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-024-01775-z
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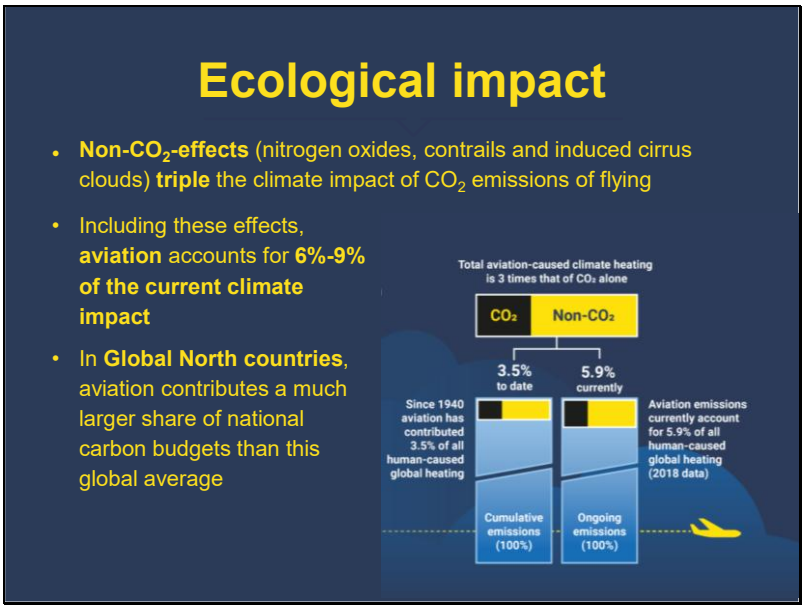
- ICCT (2025): Air and greenhouse gas pollution from private jets, 2023. https://theicct.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ID-349-%E2%80%93-Private-jets_report_final.pdf
- Possible (2023): Jetting away with it. https://www.wearepossible.org/our-reports/jetting-away-with-it-how-private-jets-pollute-the-most-and-pay-the-least

Folie 14



The aviation industry is often repeating that aviation is **only responsible for 2 %** of global warming.
But aviation is actually responsible for *much* more than that: In 2018, air traffic accounted for **6%-9% (there is a range in studies)** of all human-caused global heating. In European countries, home to many frequent flyers, the share is even bigger. This is because aircraft also produce condensation trails and NOx, that lead to induced cloudiness and NOx derivatives. Those increase the total climate impact to 3 times the effect of the emitted CO2 alone (Stay Grounded 2022). Including those effects, aviation accounts for **4% of all human induced climate heating to date.** In **2018**, aviation's contribution even reached **5.9% of the heating effect of all the human-caused greenhouse gas emissions of that year**
These numbers are immense when considering that this impact is caused by **a tiny part of the world population** and for an activity that only takes place **occasionally** and with **less necessity** than e.g. heating a home every day in winter.
-> **Non-CO_2 effects** are often not accounted for in official emission calculations. Also carbon calculators use very different so-called radiative forcing indeces
We have to keep in mind that these numbers are a **global average.** By country, the proportion of emissions caused by aviation varies a lot and is unequally distributed in the world. In Global North countries, aviation contributes a much larger share of national carbon budgets than this global average.
For example, in **France**, aviation accounts for 7% of national CO_2 emissions and 15% of all CO_2 + non-CO_2 emissions. (Stay Grounded 2024)
Aviation's share of the emissions will become even bigger as other sectors decarbonize. E.g. **aviation's share** of UK emissions is set to increase to **27% by 2040**, making it the UK's highest-emitting sector (the second being agriculture - but we all need to eat!) (Climate Change Committee 2025).

Background info:
Calculation of flights for France; non-CO2 emissions calculated by Stay Grounded; for international flights, both outcoming and incoming flights are accounted for, but for half of the distance.

Sources:

- Stay Grounded (2022): It's about more than just CO2. Aviation must reduce its total impact on climate. https://stay-grounded.org/fact-sheet-climate-impact/
- Calculations for France: Stay Grounded (2024) based on https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/politiques-publiques/emissions-gazeuses-liees-trafic-aerien,
- Climate Change Committee (2025): The Seventh Carbon Budget. Advice for the UK Government. https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/The-Seventh-Carbon-Budget.pdf

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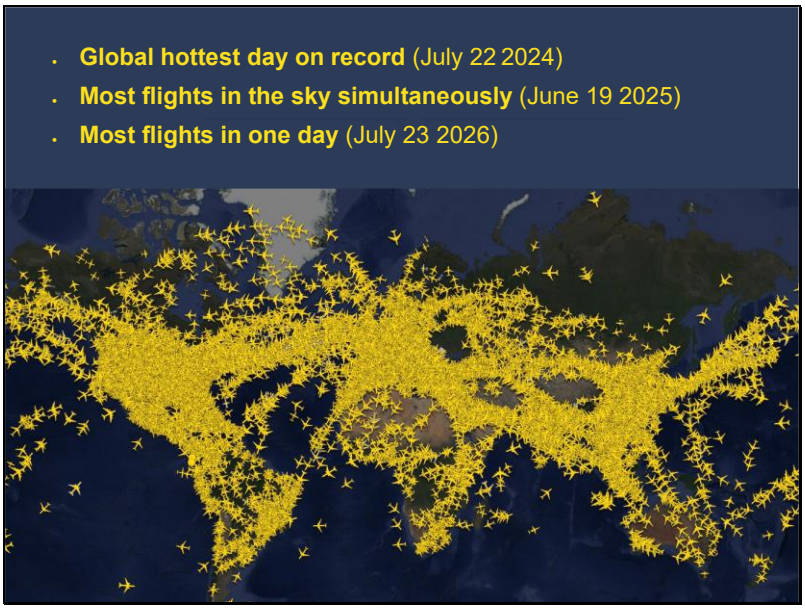

Which three records were broken in the last 2 years?

- **July 22 2024**: Hottest day globally, **17,16 °C** average temperature. But temperatures in 2026 are VERY close; the *month* August 2026 was the hottest on record.
- **June 19, 2025**: more than **24.000** planes in the air at the same time. This equates to roughly 1.5 million people being airborne at the same time, essentially a "city in the sky."
- **July 23 2026:** Highest number of commercial flights on a day: 153.359. https://www.flightradar24.com/data/statistics
- **This is how it looked on July 23rd 2026**

Our commercial flights count includes commercial passenger, cargo and charter flights, along with some business jet operations. The total flight figure also incorporates the remainder of business aviation, private flights, gliders, most helicopter and air ambulance flights, government flights, some military flights and drones.
Image from: https://www.flightradar24.com/blog/inside-flightradar24/july-2026-a-record-setting-month-for-flight-tracking/

Sources:

- Planes in the air at the same time: https://www.airnavradar.com/blog/record-day-in-the-skies-over-24000-flights-tracked-simultaneously
- Hottest day and month: https://pulse.climate.copernicus.eu/, https://climate.copernicus.eu/copernicus-august-was-worlds-joint-hottest-month-record-pushing-global-temperatures-back-above
- Highest number of commercial flights on a day: https://www.flightradar24.com/data/statistics

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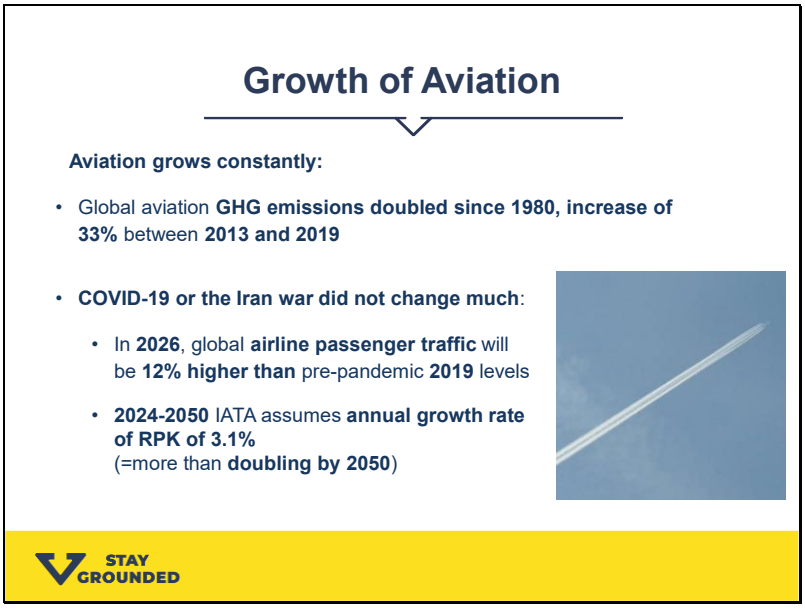


Aviation is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the past decades. To make matters worse, the pollution from aviation is accelerating. Since **1980**, global aviation emissions have **doubled** (Lee et al. 2020**)**. **Between 2013 and 2019 emissions from passenger aircraft increased by 33%** (ICCT 2020**).**

COVID-19 and the Iran war did not change much:

- Despite the Iran war, **forecasted global airline passenger traffic in 2026** of more than **5 bill. passengers** is **12% higher than pre-COVID (2019) levels**. This represents a full recovery and even **structural growth** in demand for air travel, with 2024 already surpassing pre-pandemic levels and 2026 setting new records (IATA 2026).
- **Iran war made air passenger growth slow down a bit**, to „only“ **2%** growth in 2026.
- IATA assumes **annual growth rate of RPK of 3.1% 2024-2050** (middle scenario). This means **more than a doubling by 2050**.
- **Revenue Passenger Kilometers (RPK)** = number of revenue (=paying) passengers multiplied by the total distance traveled.

Sources:

- IATA (2026): Air Travel Demand Will More Than Double by 2050. https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/2026-releases/2026-03-17-01/
- IATA (2026): Global Outlook for Air Transport. Energy in Crisis. June 2026. https://www.iata.org/en/iata-repository/publications/economic-reports/global-outlook-for-air-transport-june-2026/. Calculations of passenger growth based on table on page 38.
- D.S. Lee, et al (2021): ‚The contribution of global aviation to anthropogenic climate forcing for 2000 to 2018, Atmospheric Environment, Volume 244, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.atmosenv.2020.117834.
- ICCT (2020): CO2 EMISSIONS FROM COMMERCIAL AVIATION 2013, 2018, AND 2019. https://theicct.org/sites/default/files/publications/CO2-commercial-aviation-oct2020.pdf

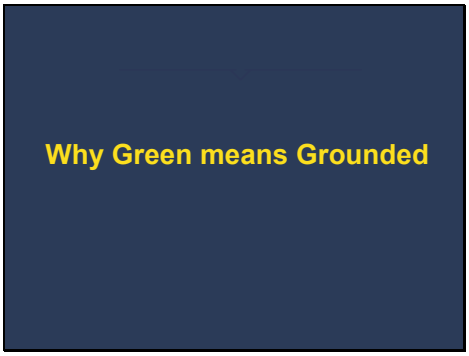
- Aviation Business News (2024): IATA declares the airline industry has ‘fully recovered’ from the COVID pandemic. https://www.aviationbusinessnews.com/industry-news/iata-declares-the-airline-industry-has-fully-recovered-from-the-covid-pandemic/
- Transport and Environment (2023): Aviation Tax Gap Report. https://www.transportenvironment.org/uploads/files/tax_gap_report_July_2023-1.pdf

Folie 17

Hundreds of airports are planned or already under construction right now around the world.

- Many **conflicts** arise around such projects, which often cause severe ecological and social damage.
- **Poorer people** often live in the vicinity of airports and are therefore seen as mere obstacles that stand in the way of industry profits.
- New and expanding airports mean danger to their **health** (we will talk about that later) and often their **local livelihoods** such as soil and water (e.g. farmers losing their fields).
- This is a picture of the EJ Atlas, in which airport expansion conflicts around the world are collected and regularly updated: https://ejatlas.org/featured/airport-conflict-around-the-world

Folie 18



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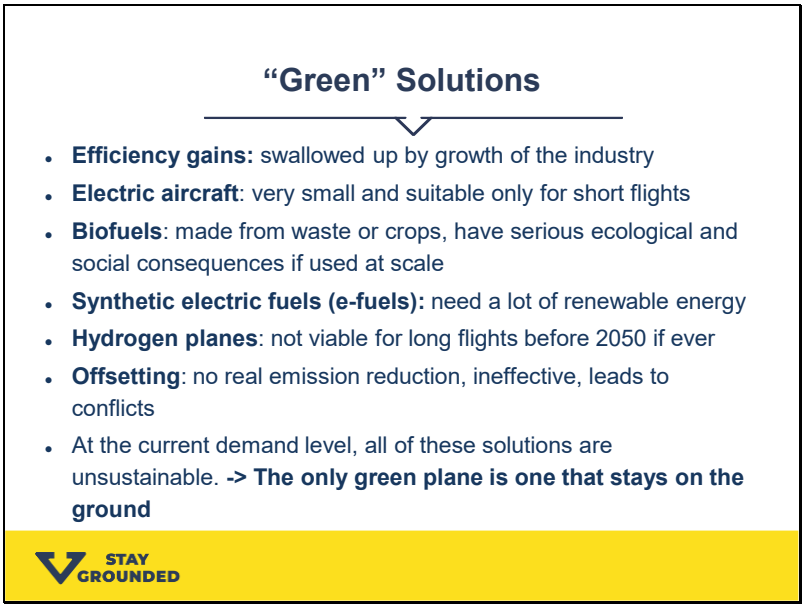
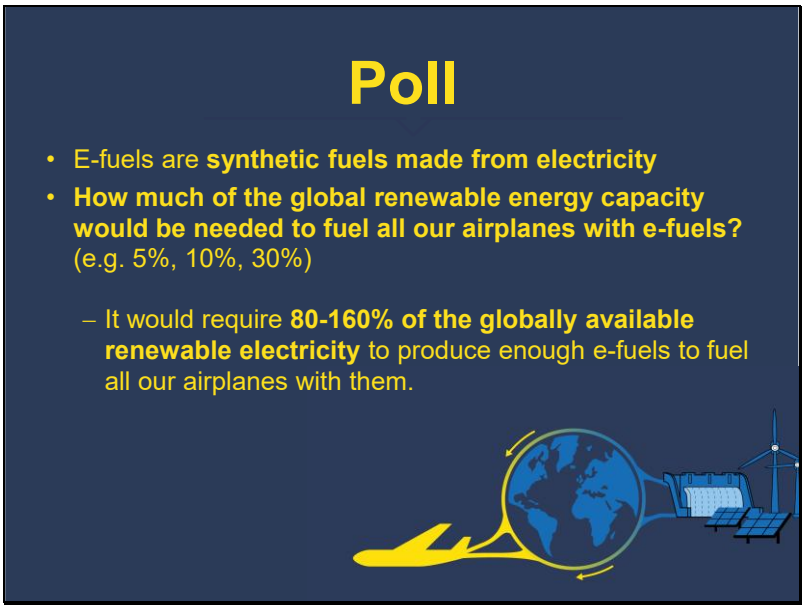


See more info on this in the Greenwashing Factsheets: www.stay-grounded.org/greenwashing

Folie 20



In a fair mobility system the priority will be for grounded transport that benefits the majority. Having only a small part of the population fly, **using a lot of renewable energy** to make flying "greener" and fueling the luxury lifestyle of a few, is like **stealing those resources from the majority**, and **slows down the transition to greener mobility for everyone.**

Sources for Poll: Stay Grounded (2020), calculations based on IEA data of oil and electricity production in 2019 (https://bit.ly/3UNYyB7) and Clean Sky 2 JU and FCH 2 JU 2020 (bit.ly/3GFsL19)

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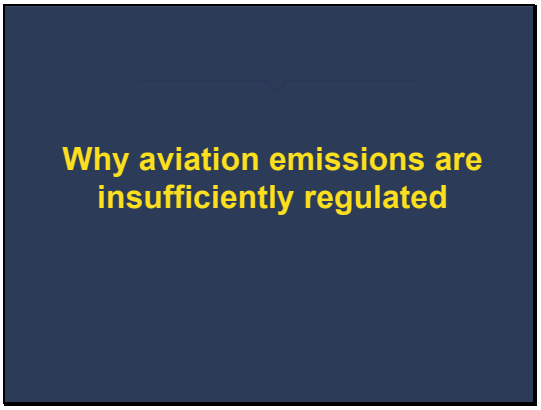

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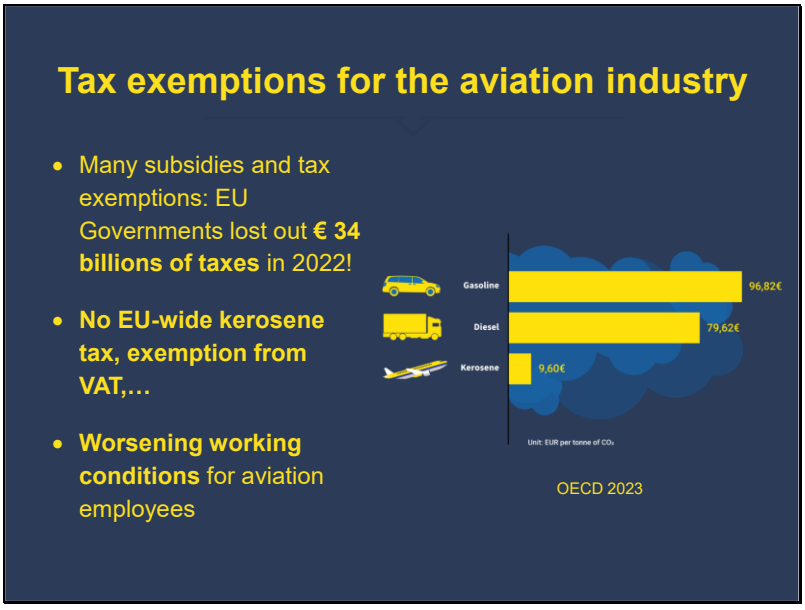
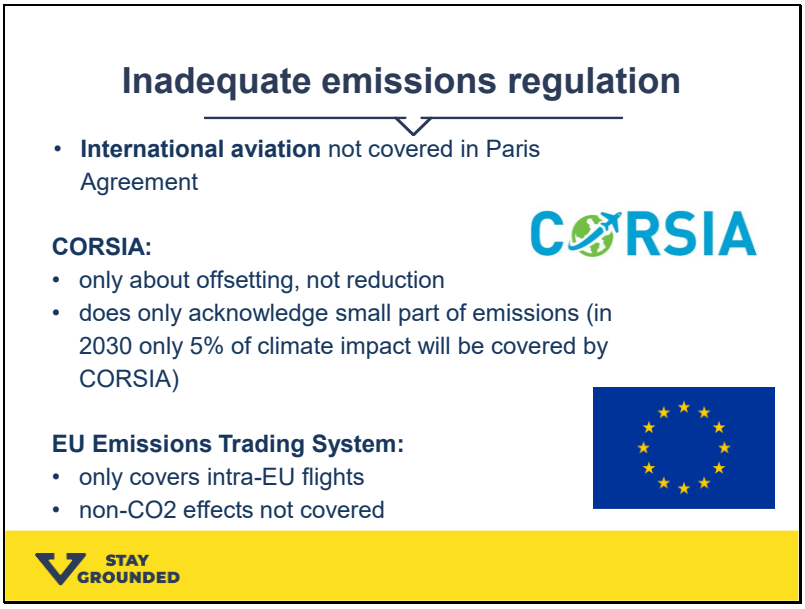


- There are **reasons** why train travel is often not competing in terms of price and infrastructure with air travel. Train travel infrastructure has been neglected for decades, while air travel got cheaper and more accessible. This happened because of tax exemptions and other indirect subsidies for the aviation industry.
- **Low ticket prices are financed by tax money.** Everyone – including those who don't fly – pays for an incomprehensible tangle of subsidies, tax exemptions and public investments in order for the most polluting mode of transport to remain cheap.
- A 2023 study from Transport and Environment shows that governments are losing € 34,2 billion due to this tax gap.
- The data in the graph (related to 2023) covers 71 countries, which together account for approximately 80% of global GHG emissions and energy use. The data indicated is the sum of the cost of allowances in emissions trading systems, carbon taxes and fuel excise taxes, minus fossil fuel subsidies that decrease pre-tax fossil fuel prices (OECD 2023).
- **No European countries tax jet fuel, outside also only for domestic aviation (**Norway, the US, Switzerland).
- It's not only kerosene which is not taxed: In most countries, flight tickets are also exempt from **value added tax** and international flights are exempt from VAT at all – while we do pay it for essential products like food and medicine.
- At the same time, the **pressure on employees is mounting**. Quality and safety are decreasing, stress and burnout are on the rise.

Sources:

- OECD (2023): Net Effective Carbon Rates. https://data-viewer.oecd.org/?chartId=18fb378e-bba1-4372-b4fc-4a3167af092c
- Transport and Environment (2023): Aviation Tax Gap Report. https://www.transportenvironment.org/uploads/files/tax_gap_report_July_2023-1.pdf

Folie 23



CORSIA is the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, the International Civil Aviation Organization's climate plan for aviation.

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Besides investing in train infrastructure and moving things online, there are many other options to degrow aviation. There is no single measure that will tackle all the problems, so a package of different measures is needed.
See some possibilities on the slide, like....

- **Taxes on aviation: VAT, Kerosene, ticket tax**: **Pollution taxes**, like a carbon tax, are necessary and long overdue. And because we all indirectly subsidise cheap flights and frivolous frequent flying by the rich, **taxes on jet fuel and airline tickets** would be a socially just measure. However, the tax system must also directly target the status of flying as a luxury activity.
- **Frequent flying levy and air miles levy:** Frequent flyers can be charged a progressive levy, instead of being subsidised at the taxpayers' expense as they currently are. Another step is ending the numerous **frequent flyer programmes** that encourage unnecessary flying.
- **Caps or bans on flights:** But changing the price of flights alone is not enough to reduce them sufficiently nor cut pollution; the rich can always buy their way out of responsibility. We need limits of flights. Limits are a normal part of everyday life that we accept for our collective safety – speed limits on roads, alcohol limits for drivers, etc. Along these lines, the most effective way to reduce air traffic is to **directly cap the number of flights**. E.g. ending short-haul routes, where alternative transport could easily be used or built, or limiting the number of departures per day on specific routes. Certain flights should be generally **banned**. E.g. short-haul flights, unhealthy night flights and private jet flights. There is no justification for allowing a few rich individuals to pollute the atmosphere we all share, at the cost of our collective future.
- **No new airport infrastructure**
- **Promote alternatives to flying:** As described above, **train** journeys emit only a fraction of CO_2 per passenger km than a flight. Also, bus rides are much more energy-efficient than flights. Insufficient funding and artificially cheapened air transport have resulted in a neglect of public transport infrastructure. In poorer, rural areas and especially in the Global South, even basic transport systems are lacking. We need smoother booking systems and fair prices, and the development or better use of public transport infrastructures. For Europe, our member Back on Track developed political demands to promote night trains. Another alternative to flights is **online meetings**, especially as a substitute for business travel. Virtual meetings can be more inclusive than physical ones, allowing people with time constraints, caring responsibilities, financial limitations or those in remote locations to join the event, too.
- **Ban the aviation industry's lobbying**: There is massive lobbying for the aviation industry's interests, e.g. on the European level. A study found that Europe's biggest airlines and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), have been lobbying decision-makers to weaken the environmental ambition of the EU's climate plans for aviation.
- **Change organisations' travel policies:** Business trips account for a huge proportion of flights and aviation emissions. At the same time, they are often easily replaced by virtual meetings or train travel. There are many different ways to reduce organisations' carbon footprints and to initiate changes in travel policies.
- **Behavioural change:** Changing one's travel behaviour is an important step in fighting the climate crisis. By telling exciting stories about "grounded" travel experiences, you can inspire your family and friends to do the same. If we all build political pressure, we can change the system so that grounded travel becomes accessible for all.
- **Support a "just transition"**: With looming climate breakdown, automation, digitalisation, and potential climate-induced pandemics, we need to be realistic: aviation and tourism will change – and they will do so either by design or by disaster. See more information on this issue here.
- **Realistic accounting of aviation's climate impact:** Aviation's real climate impact is far more than just CO_2. We need to get political institutions to finally acknowledge the real climate impact of aviation.
- **Limiting air travel advertising:** The advertising industry plays an active role in driving demand for aviation. Just as we ended tobacco advertising when we realised the harm caused by smoking, many municipal governments are now taking action to ban high-carbon

advertising. There are many creative ways to address the issue of airline advertising and to build public pressure.

- **Ban state funding/subsidies for aviation**
- **Divestment from the aviation industry**

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These are the measures we currently promote within our "Red Lines for Airports" project. See more info and support the measures here: https://stay-grounded.org/red-lines-for-airports/

Stop aviation expansion:

- **No airport expansion**: We cannot allow any further airport expansion! The number of flights should be reduced, not increased.
- **No false solutions of offsets and distraction by so-called "sustainable" aviation fuels (SAF):** we oppose all forms of greenwashing in achieving aviation emissions reductions. We aim at real cuts in air traffic.
- **Ban Frequent Flyer Programmes and aviation advertising:** These practices promote growth and are contrary to fairness.

Rapidly reduce air traffic:

- **Shift short-haul to rail or boat:** Short-haul flights with a rail or boat alternative of 10 hour duration or less must be banned. Regional and night trains must be improved and rail fares made affordable if not free.
- **Steep cuts in long and medium-haul flights:** These flights – for business, tourism or freight – should be drastically reduced in favour of more regional travel and supply of goods.
- **Ban night flights at airports:** takeoffs and landings between 10pm and 7am must be stopped immediately, because they represent a completely unacceptable health hazard for residents. Night flights also have a disproportionate climate impact, since the warming effect of contrails is stronger at night.
- **Ban private jets:** Ban the most unjust and climate-wrecking form of transport.
- **Shut down regional airports:** Small regional airports, swallowing enormous amounts of taxpayer's money for a small number of flights, should be shut down immediately. In remote areas, where no other transport alternative is available, air traffic should be drastically reduced and progressively replaced by other clean forms of transport.

A transformation grounded on justice and planetary boundaries:

- **Ensure a just transition and public ownership**: Airports and airlines should guarantee a rapid and just transition and pay reparations for their role in climate breakdown. Remaining parts of the aviation sector should not serve private interests and profit but should instead be transferred to public ownership.
- **Set binding carbon limits and distribute flights fairly:** Establish a strict carbon cap on airports, fully included in national emission budgets (i.e. the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC's)). Each airport would then be allocated a fair share of the overall, steadily declining, aviation emission budget. Within this limit, the remaining flights must be distributed through democratic processes based on need, to decide what counts as an essential flight and a justifiable flight – e.g. flights for emergencies, life-saving research or for securing refuge.

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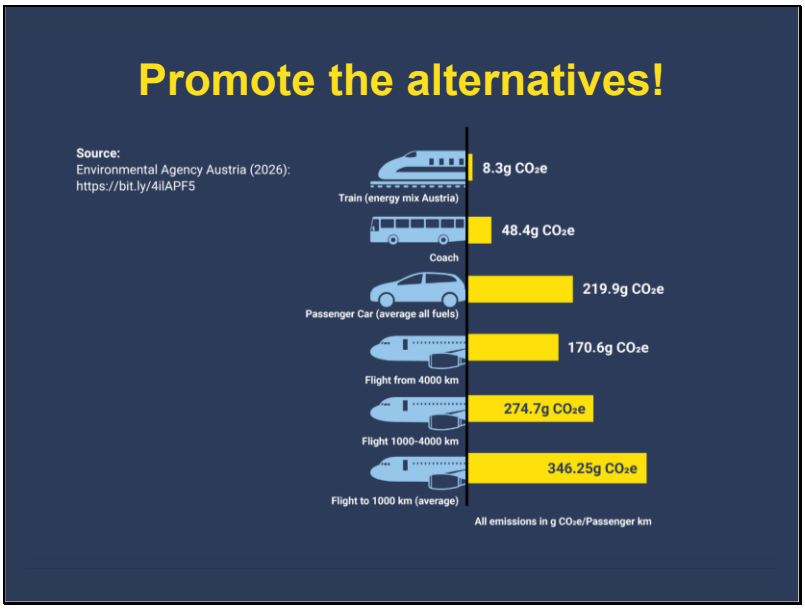

- **In order to reduce aviation, sustainable alternatives have to exist.** Right now, the possibility to take the train of course varies a lot according to the train infrastructure available and the distances that need to be covered.
- But especially within Europe it is very easy to replace flights with train rides. Doing so makes a huge difference - see the diagram depicting Austrian data (where trains are fuelled predominantly by renewable energy), which shows that a **train journey emits staggering 21** (compared to a long haul flight > 4000 km) **to 42** (compared to a flight to 1000 km) **times less CO_2e per passenger km** than a flight! (Environmental Agency Austria 2026).
- Of course this data would look a bit differently if the comparison was made with trains powered by fossil fuels. So this is kind of an **ideal scenario**, which globally we have to strive to, since the train infrastructure also has to be decarbonised.

Source:

- Environmental Agency (2026): Emissionsfaktoren für Verkehrsmittel. https://www.umweltbundesamt.at/umweltthemen/mobilitaet/mobilitaetsdaten/emissionsfaktoren-verkehrsmittel

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Folie 29

The fight against Vienna International Airport’s third runway (“Dritte Piste”) is a textbook example of how persistent, creative, and legally savvy resistance **can delay—and ultimately defeat**—a mega-project. The struggle began in the **mid-1990s**, when rumours of the airport’s expansion plans first surfaced. By **1998, the official Masterplan** was published, sparking shock and outrage among local communities. What followed was a decades long campaign marked by grassroots organising, legal battles, and relentless public pressure.

Key Phases and Milestones
1. Listening & Investigating (1995–1998): The first step was **understanding the project's scope and its potential impact on local lives**—from noise pollution to land loss and climate damage**. Citizen initiatives** ("Bürgerinitiativen" or BIs) formed in nearly every affected town, collecting signatures and building opposition.

2. Organising & Building Pressure (1998–2005):

- Activists **specialised** in different areas: health, agriculture, legal aspects, media work, and the technical details of aviation.
- In 2001, the **mediation process** started, which involved the airport, neighbouring municipalities and citizens' initiatives. It discussed e.g. the location of the 3rd runway, noise limits and abatement measures. This then led to the Mediation Agreement. After that the Dialogue Forum was established to ensure the continuation of this negotiation process on a permanent basis. This process was closely interlinked with the EIA. The Dialogue Forum had the task of assessing whether a runway project submitted to the EIA authority complies with the provisions of the mediation agreement. So, from 2005 on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the third runway was taken forward in consultation with the Dialogue Forum, although the mediation agreement was not legally binding for the EIA.
- Process was financed by the airport.
- The mediation process lasted four years and was incredibly **time-consuming**. In this mediation, the citizen initiatives were **required not to question the construction of the third runway** and the **process was financed by the airport itself**. In this process the different **Cis were played off against one another**: by guaranteeing better flight routes over their villages or by financing abatement measures.
- Ultimately, **only a few citizens' initiatives decided to sign the mediation agreement**, whilst **most chose not to sign, thereby being barred from the dialogue forum** and denied access to information regarding the EIA.
- In 2005, the non-signatories merged into the "**Umbrella organisation of independent citizen initiatives against the construction of the third runway**", committing to resist despite political and legal setbacks.

More info in German: Critique regarding the „Dialogforum": https://aviationreset.at/dialogforum-flughafen-wien-ein-intransparentes-system-der-selbstlegitimation-unter-pseudobeteiligung-von-burgern-das-den-rechtsstaat-und-den-gesundheitsschutz-unterwandert/

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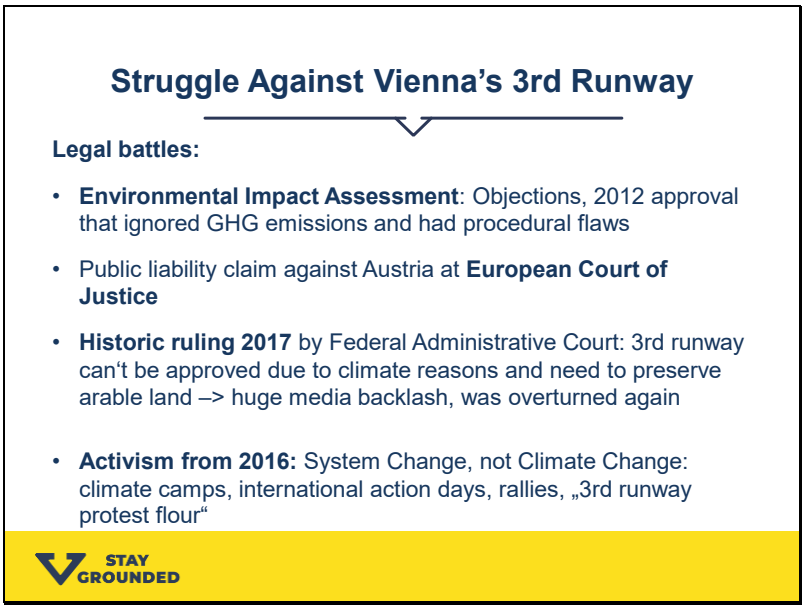

Legal battles

- The **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** became a central battleground. Activists, including environmental lawyers and medical experts, submitted detailed objections. In 2012, the first EIA approval was issued—ignoring greenhouse gas emissions and containing procedural flaws.
- **Europeanisation**: In an attempt to remove the issue from the sphere of influence of political parties (which are owning the airport), a number of public liability claims against the Austrian state were brought before the European Court of Justice (injunction and compensation for property losses caused by air traffic)
- The fight **culminated in a historic 2017 ruling by the Federal Administrative Court**: the third runway could not be approved due to its climate impact and the need to preserve arable land for future food security. Despite the 2017 victory, the airport appealed the decision. The ConstitutionalCourt overturned the ruling in 2019,

Activism

- The movement refused to back down, stating that even if the legal decision was taken the political decision could still be changed. Activists from **System Change** started to focus on the third runway from 2016 on, organising climate camps and (bike) rallies by the airport and co-coordinating the international action days, out of which the Stay Grounded Network originated. The exchange with other groups worldwide was a continued source of inspiration for blockades, and interventions at high-profile events, such as the European Aviation Summit in 2018.
- In 2020, a coalition of local farmers whose land was threatened by the third runway, citizens' initiatives, and climate activists from System Change launched the "3rd Runway Protest Flour". As symbol that the land around the airport should be used to grow food, not profits!

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Video of collaboration of citizen initiatives, farmers and climate activists:
https://youtu.be/fK2gNL0Q7hE?si=qsjWRbuG2AGL2AmA

Folie 32

Struggle Against Vienna's 3rd Runway

Sussanne Heger

Jutta Leth

STAY GROUNDED

The activist and creative part of the climate justice movement was just a small one compared to the relentless, decades long fight of the civil initiatives. I want to point out especially to these two women: Susanne Heger of Aviation Reset and Jutta Leth from SOS Ostregion.

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Struggle Against Vienna's 3rd Runway

- **Covid 19**
- **EIA construction approval ran out** without construction having started, 10y extension challenged in court, reduced again
- **November 2025: 3rd runway officially cancelled!**
- **BUT**: increase of **passenger numbers/year to 50 million** planned (2025: 32,6 million), **740 take offs/landings per day** in summer 2026
- **Future challenges:**
  - Ban night flights at airport
  - Reduce numbers of flights
  - Stricter emission controls

STAY GROUNDED

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 grounded flights, offering a glimpse of a quieter, cleaner future—and a chance to argue that the runway was unnecessary. The decade-long resistance had been successful in delaying the project long enough.

5. Final Victory and Ongoing Vigilance (2021–2026):
In 2023, the **EIA construction approval ran out** without any steps having been taken towards the construction. The airport was granted a 10 year extension in a very quick procedure, which was only noticed thanks to the continued vigilance of citizens initiatives and Aviation Reset and then challenged in court. Those challenges were successful in reducing the granted extension, in the first instance, leaving the feasibility of the runway project up in the air.
In **November 2025, the airport officially canceled the third runway project.**

Yet, the movement's work isn't over: the **airport still plans to increase passenger numbers to 50 million**/year (harder to mobilise without new infrastructure being built). In 2025, pre-pandemic levels (31,7 million passengers/year) were surpassed (**32,6 million** passengers), this year projections are slightly less.
At Vienna-Schwechat, there is still an **average of around 740 take-offs and landings per day in the summer months**, which means a huge burden for surrounding communities. Any increase will make it worse. Right now, the airport struggles a bit: From Jan-July, there was an increase in flight movements of 4,6%, but a decrease in passengers of -3.5%. -> Right now there is a LOT of lobbying to get the ticket tax in Austria scratched (12 € per passenger, very short flights: 30 €). They scratched a ultra short haul flight (2-3h train ride) between Vienna and Graz, point out to oil crisis.

So, there are future challenges for activists for sure: push for night flight bans, decrease of flight numbers and stricter emissions controls.

Sources:
Data on flight numbers in Austria/at Airport Vienna:

- https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000338627/rekord-sommer-in-schwechat-es-gab-noch-nie-so-viele-fluege-in-der-urlaubszeit
- https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/EQS_20260819_EQS0006/eqs-news-flughafen-wien-ag-in-the-first-half-of-2026-earnings-improvement-of-70-thanks-to-international-growth-and-cost-discipline-despite-difficult-market-conditions-and-stagnating-revenue-09
- Ticket tax Austria: https://www.fccaviation.com/regulation/austria/air-transport-levy

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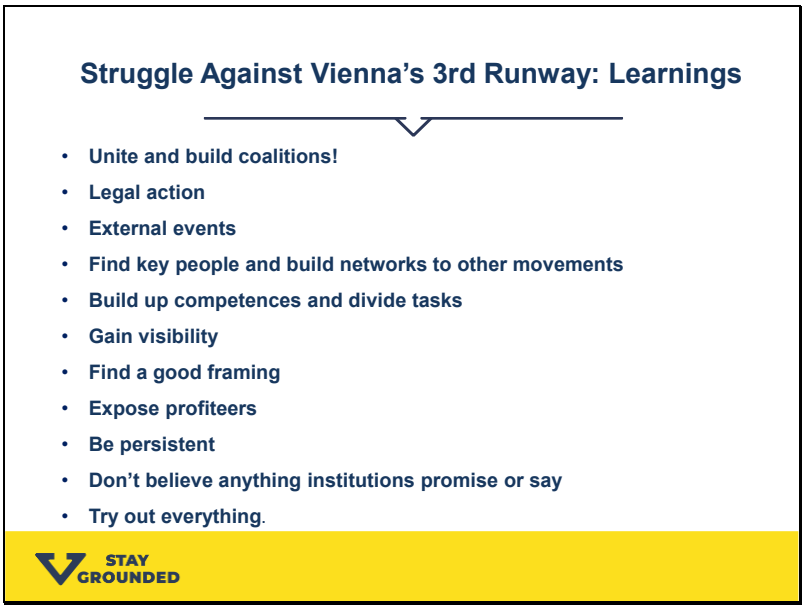

When analysing the struggle together with people from the movement, we identified six critical success factors:

- **Unite!** One of the greatest learnings was that it was essential that the civil initiatives did not let the airport cause divisions amongst them so they could hold on to the common goal of limiting flights in general.
- **Legal action** – Buying time, exploiting legal loopholes, trying all avenues possible and staying alert.
- **External events** – Leveraging crises like COVID-19 and the rise of the climate movement.

- **Key people and networks** – Engagement of impacted airport neighbours was key across all phases, organic leaders were key to reach others, the international network provided inspiration and knowledge. -> cross-movement solidarity!
- **Building up competences and dividing tasks** – Everyone contributes their skills and specialises in certain topics (good division of labour is necessary).
- **Gain visibility** – e.g. by organising press conferences.
- **Finding good framing** – Framing the struggle in terms of public health and food security and climate crisis worked.
- **Exposing profiteers** – Investigating and publicising the airport's ownership and financial structures was important. -> Susanne Heger from Aviation Reset was charged with defamation for exposing that 40% of the shares of the airport are owned by a trust on the Cayman Islands (and not an Austrialian pension fund), and nobody knows who is behind that trust. The claim was dismissed with final effect.
- **Persistence** – Never give up, stick together, even when facing setbacks or intimidation.
- **Don't believe anything** institutions promise or say
- **Try out everything**.

Resistance is a marathon, not a sprint.

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Bond Beter Leefmilieu (Association for a Better Environment) is the Flemish federation for a better environment. Their member network consists of more than 135 organizations in Belgium.
They launched a campaign in 2022 called "We are awake", a coalition around Brussels airport with 18 groups.
This campaign had four main requirements:

- a ban of night flights
- a cap on number of 220.000 flight movements / year
- strict noise and co2 emission standards for aircrafts landing in brussels (co2 cap for the airport)
- noise and flight frequency standards

They have a campaign website, **uniting 18 different resident groups, speaking with one voice – a united front instead of a NIMBY approach.**

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On our website we also collect other inspiring aviation-related struggles, from the USA, Spain, the Carribean, the Netherlands, Mexico and Uganda.

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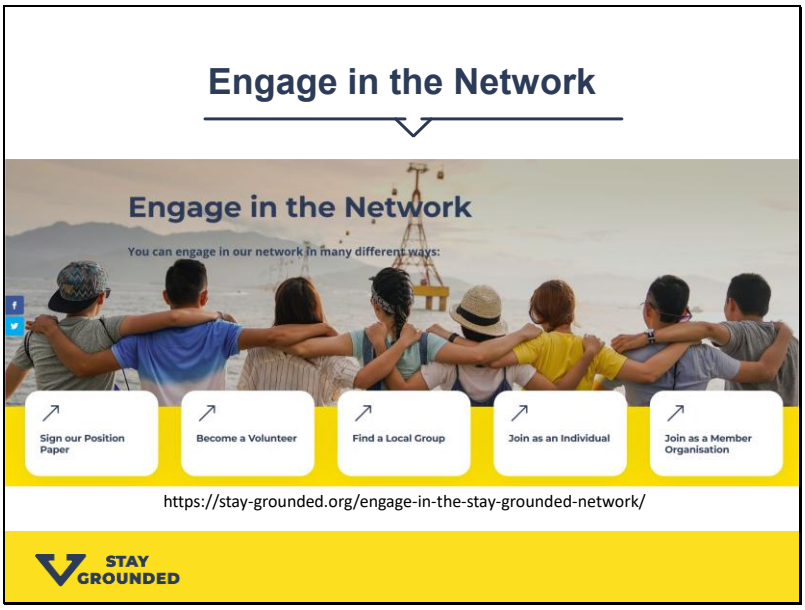
You can also look at our website to find out about our members, many of them citizen initiatives like the ones you are involved in. You find their webpages etc there, too, in case you want to get in contact.

Folie 39



And of course you are more than welcome to join our network, where we have regular exchanges and campaigns – with the aim to support another and not have to battle alone.

Folie 40

A resource we want to encourage you to look at is our publication "**Legal avenues to challenge airport expansion".** It was compiled by Opportunity Green and us. We can't go into details here now, but it is a resource that outlines legal and campaigning routes to achieving capacity caps and limits at airports in the EU. It shows that, unfortunately, due to the so-called „Balanced Approach Procedure" it is currently very hard to challenge airports based on noise, but there are new avenues to challenge them based on air pollution, climate and biodiversity. So it is worth taking a look at those other potential routes, too.
It is advised to consult an environmental lawyer, to find out if the legal or campaign route is feasible for you.

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See more in-depth info and a lot of studies in the Stay Grounded paper Aviation is a Health Issue.: https://stay-grounded.org/aviation-is-a-health-issue/

Folie 42

We will also have a workshop on the legal toolkit on December 8, along with many other online workshops on communication, narratives, community organising and actions.

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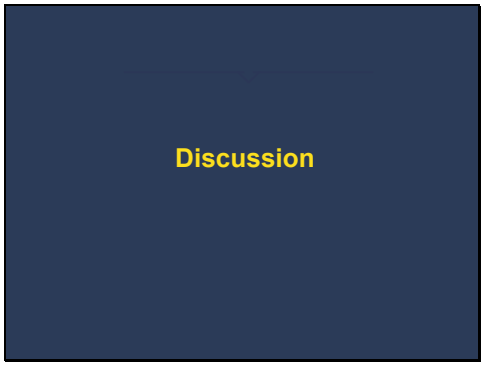
Folie 44



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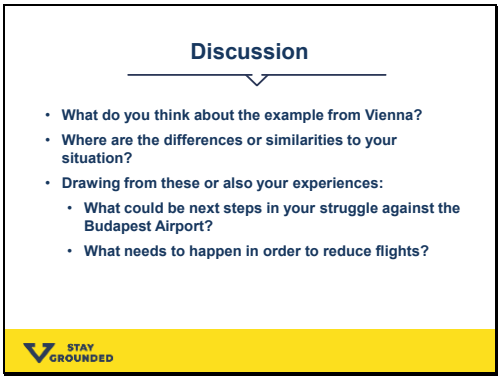
Discussion
What do you think about the example from Vienna?
Where are the differences or similarities to your situation?
Drawing from these or also your experiences:
What could be next steps in your struggle against the Budapest Airport?
What needs to happen in order to reduce flights?
STAY GROUNDED

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STAY GROUNDED
THANK YOU!