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First Speakers Announced: Sunny Side of the Doc 2026 Defines the Right Move in a Shifting Industry

La Rochelle, France – 10 April 2026 – [Sunny Side of the Doc](#) announces the first wave of keynote and session speakers for its 2026 edition, as the international documentary industry enters a decisive phase.

Financing is tightening. Commissioning is shifting. Distribution is being reshaped by global platforms. For producers, distributors and broadcasters, the question is no longer whether the market is changing, but how to respond. Sunny Side of the Doc 2026 is built for *the right move*: a focused, three-day market designed to bring clarity, enable informed decisions, and create the conditions for meaningful business.

Among the first confirmed speakers is **Ben Zand**, Founder and CEO of Zandland, who is building a new model by creating, funding, and distributing documentaries entirely in-house. His keynote will confront what actually resonates with audiences today beyond clicks, and what it takes to build lasting engagement in an ecosystem where audiences are increasingly elusive. **Helle Faber**, Oscar-winning producer (*Mr Nobody Against Putin*) at Made in Copenhagen, will deliver a keynote on international co-production in a time of unprecedented change. As traditional financing narrows and the balance of power shifts, her session will give a clear-eyed view of what is changing, what remains essential, and how producers can navigate this moment to decisively make the right move.

"International co-production has always been about ambition and telling stories beyond borders," said Helle Faber. "Today the model is under pressure, but collaboration is more important than ever. I'm looking forward to speaking at Sunny Side of the Doc and breaking down the challenges around adapting and building partnerships that let bold, global stories reach audiences."

Other confirmed speakers include **Jen Topping**, who will assess **YouTube's** real value for documentary producers, and how to use it strategically. High-profile keynotes and "straight talk" sessions tackle the toughest challenges: closing financing gaps, forging viable international alliances, and navigating an ecosystem reshaped by exclusivity and platform power. Broadcasters including **France Télévisions, NHK, China Media Group, ARTE, Canal+ Group, and Global Doc** pubcasters alliance will share transparent insights on budgets, co-production priorities, and partnership expectations for the next 12 to 24 months. Further sessions and debates will examine the narrative role of AI, the potential of archives as a content engine, and the distribution strategies emerging from a digital-first market.

"The documentary and factual landscape is shifting faster than the professionals can absorb. The right collective move is to be part of a marketplace built to make international co-productions and global sales happen," said Aurélie Reman, Managing Director of Sunny Side of the Doc. "In La Rochelle this June, the voices reshaping business models and partnerships will speak plainly about what it takes to get projects across the finish lines on TV, streaming and digital platforms. Ours is an industry that runs on in-person relationships and that urgent conversation, held openly and with real stakes, is a strategic choice."

Donata von Perfall, Managing Director of Documentary Campus, adds: "We have designed this year's to directly address the urgent challenges facing producers, revealing the most promising opportunities across the TV, digital and streaming markets. The focus is on practical insight and open,



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solution-driven exchange – and that can only happen in the room. This edition is the product of a unique, strategic partnership between Documentary Campus and Sunny Side of the Doc, shaping every element to create a space where the industry can engage, align, and move projects forward, making it essential for the industry to be in La Rochelle and part of these conversations.”

Further speakers and programme details will be announced in the coming weeks. As the industry navigates a period of profound transformation, **Sunny Side of the Doc, taking place 22–24 June 2026 in La Rochelle**, positions itself as the place to make the right move; where the industry comes together to not only understand change, but act on it. Registration is currently open.

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For more information, visit:

<https://www.sunnysideofthedoc.com/>

<https://www.documentary-campus.com/>

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About Sunny Side of the Doc

Sunny Side of the Doc is the international community and marketplace dedicated to linear and non-linear documentary. Every June, a specific event brings together decision makers, producers, filmmakers, sales agents and funders to support the international financing of documentary projects and the circulation of completed programs. The market offers unique creative, business and networking opportunities for the 2,100+ participants from 60 countries through a mix of high-level pitch sessions, panels on the latest industry trends and an exhibition hall.

The 37th Sunny Side of the Doc will take place in La Rochelle from June 22-24 June, 2026.

Doc Services, the organiser of Sunny side of the Doc, is a member of 1% for the Planet as well as of the SDG Media Compact.

About Documentary Campus

For 25 years, Documentary Campus has been a global leader in professional training, networking, and market development for documentary and factual storytelling. What sets Documentary Campus apart is its powerful international network of creators, commissioners, funders, and broadcasters, which fuels unparalleled opportunities for collaboration and growth. The organization is renowned for its high-quality, award-winning implementation of training programmes, conferences, and festivals, including its flagship training initiatives, the SILBERSALZ Science & Media Festival, and the management of World Congress of Science & Factual Producers. Through these programmes and international partnerships, Documentary Campus equips both linear and digital-first filmmakers with the skills, expertise, and industry connections to innovate, thrive, and reach audiences worldwide.