

Annual Report 2025

English Version



Richtungswechsel Annual Report 2025

Founder's Statement – Tamara Höfer, MSc BSc (Hons)

“Richtungswechsel (German: ‘Change of direction’) signifies a paradigm shift in societal perceptions regarding incarceration, detention, and accountability. The name reflects a conscious shift in perspective towards the future. A future guided by social responsibility and human relationships, fostering a society where individuals can progress towards a life free of crime. I am proud of the progress we achieved together in 2025 as a small non-profit organisation, and deeply grateful for the trust placed in us by our partners across Europe. Particularly formative was the growing national and international attention to small-scale, community-integrated detention houses within the youth justice system.



Tamara Höfer

Founder and Managing Director

*Together, we are transforming perspectives, strengthening individuals and teams, and creating new possibilities for a justice system that recognises shared responsibility not as an abstract ideal but as a humane practice. **Our work has only just begun, but we are moving in the right direction.***

A shift in direction within justice systems

Recidivism rates across Europe remain consistently high. This phenomenon is also attributable to the inadequacy of current judicial and social frameworks to facilitate sustainable (re-)integration. Individuals released from custody encounter a multitude of challenges, including adverse living conditions, stigmatisation, difficulties regarding employment and housing, and systemic obstacles that, among other factors, significantly hinder their transition to a crime-free life, notwithstanding the formal availability of support services.

These challenges are compounded by the strain on the justice system itself. Staff shortages, limited resources, and the institutional separation between custody and other social systems hinder flexibility, individualised approaches, and ongoing support pathways. Simultaneously, personnel operating within detention facilities frequently lack the opportunity for relevant training and for utilising support mechanisms to sustainably implement (re-)integration-oriented approaches. In the absence of well-defined strategies and long-term collaboration, numerous initiatives remain fragmented, thereby constraining their overall effectiveness and long-term impact.

Our Approach and Theory of Change

Richtungswechsel was established to address these developments and respond to current challenges through a holistic, practice-oriented approach. We promote (re-)integration and humane practices by taking responsibility for the contexts in which societal participation is renegotiated, including detention environments. Our approach is based on the conviction that (re-)integration into society should be an essential component of daily detention practices from the very beginning to sustainably reduce crime and strengthen safety within our communities. To this end, we enhance professional practices within detention facilities, support the development of professional competencies, and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders from the justice system, civil society, academia, and policymaking through enduring partnerships. Our objective is to promote shared responsibility and long-term cooperation using well-defined structures and collaborative procedures.

To ensure transparency and traceability of these interconnections, our work is guided by a well-defined theory of change. We employ an impact pathway as a conceptual framework to demonstrate how our inputs and activities result in specific outputs, short-term and long-term outcomes, and ultimately contribute to the broader societal impact we aim to accomplish.



Impact in Practice: Key Developments in 2025

The practical application of our theory of change became particularly evident in 2025, most notably through the 2025 Youth Custody Conference. Organised by Richtungswechsel in May 2025, in collaboration with RESCALED and kija Salzburg, the conference marked a significant milestone in our efforts. For the first time at this scale, the conference brought together national and international stakeholders from the justice system, policymaking, academia and civil society to focus on youth detention. Significantly, the event extended beyond the mere exchange of professional expertise. It facilitated new opportunities for dialogue, reinforced the connections among key stakeholders, and initiated development processes aimed at fostering more sustainable and community-integrated approaches to youth detention. It became evident that the conference highlighted the themes of individualisation and community integration within youth detention in Austria, positioning Richtungswechsel as a trusted and dependable entity within the European context.

Furthermore, in 2025, additional projects enhanced the professional development and national, as well as international, visibility of Richtungswechsel. These initiatives further reinforced and expanded our European network and deepened existing partnerships. A comprehensive overview of our projects, partners, and activities is accessible on our [website](#).

This annual report, therefore, concentrates on the key developments of the past year and subsequently shifts focus to the priorities that will guide our work in 2026.

Looking ahead, our focus in the forthcoming year will be on continuing dialogue regarding detention practices and further enhancing national and international cooperation, with a particular emphasis on partnerships with universities and higher education institutions. Additionally, we will place particular emphasis on expanding the Champions Community as a platform for leadership, collaboration, and learning in everyday professional practice.

In this regard, we shall persist in advancing a common strategic direction in 2026 towards enhanced cooperation, accountability, and sustainability within justice systems.

Funding and Financial Overview

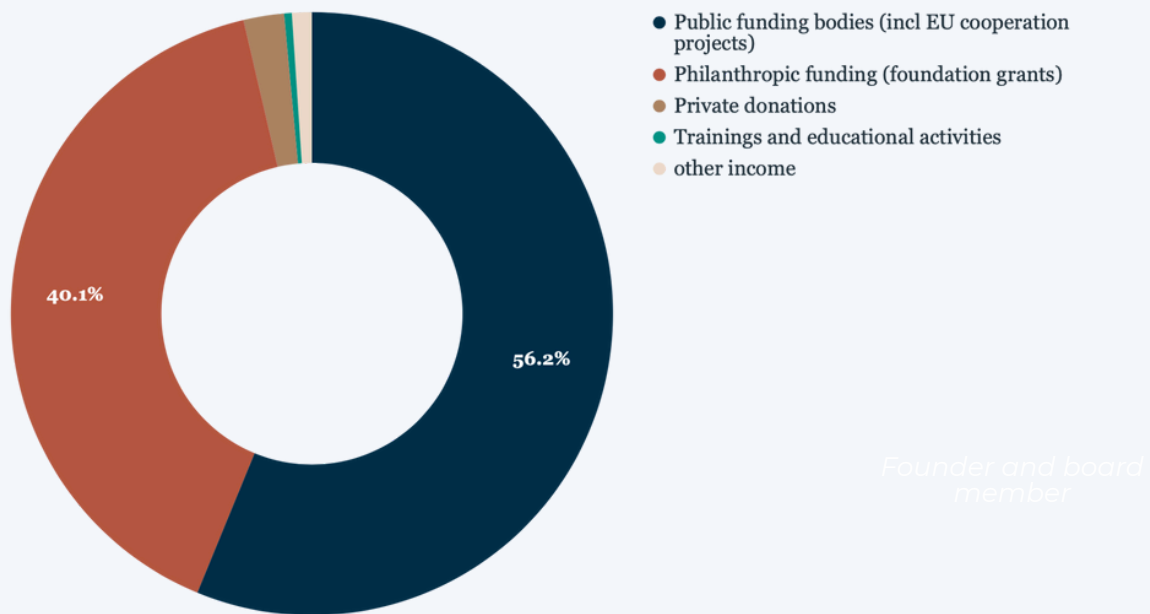
Reporting period: January - December 2025

Richtungswechsel operates independently of political influence.

This independence ensures that we are consistently guided by our core values, evidence-based practices, and our collective dedication to fostering positive societal impact.

We are committed to financial transparency and openly acknowledge the funding sources that enable our work. The funding model of Richtungswechsel is built on five core pillars:

- Public funding bodies (incl. European cooperation projects)
- Philanthropic funding (foundation grants)
- Private donations
- Training and educational activities
- Other income

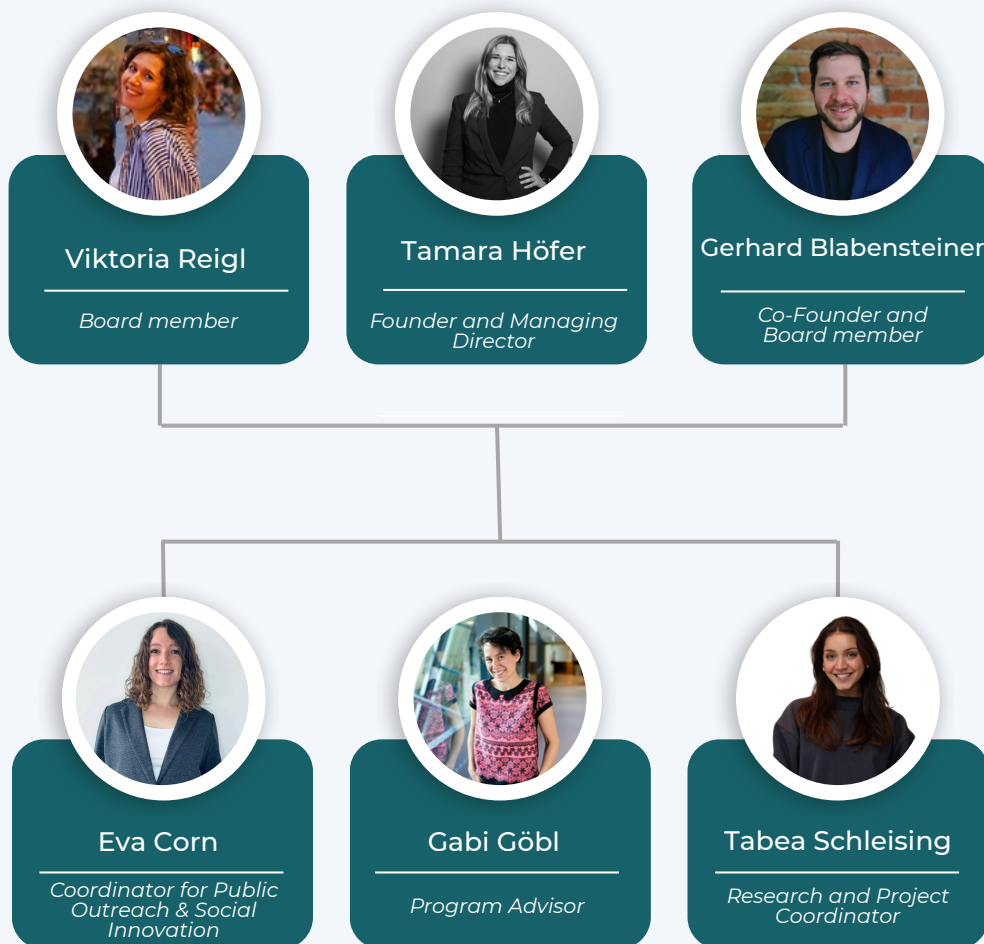


To pursue our mission sustainably, we not only rely on institutional support but also on private donations. Donations to Richtungswechsel are tax-deductible (Registration number: SO27109). Not all of our initiatives are fully covered by public funding or contractual resources. Thus, donations play a crucial role in enabling projects that directly contribute to improving detention practices and (re-)integration processes.

Team und Organisation

Richtungswechsel is a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the (re-)integration of individuals in custody through evidence-based innovation. The initiative was founded by Tamara Höfer (Founder and Managing Director). Together with Viktoria Reigl (Chief Financial Officer) and Gerhard Blabensteiner (Co-Founder and Board member), she is jointly responsible for the strategic and organisational direction of the organisation. The latter is guided by shared values, professional expertise, and a strong belief in the potential for reform and a sense for possibility within the justice system and society at large.

Richtungswechsel's interdisciplinary team comprises Eva Corn, Gabi Göbl, and Tabea Schleising, integrating expertise from a variety of professional disciplines, such as justice practices, criminology, psychology, and social and economic sciences. The shared belief among the team members is a mutual dedication to enhancing the justice system through collaborative, research-based methodologies and valuable partnerships.



Richtungswechsel operates within an extensive and continually expanding network of national and international partner organisations. These partnerships are central to our work, enabling joint knowledge exchange, cross-border innovation, and the development of effective, scalable solutions across Europe.

Our Community

The work of Richtungswechsel is conducted in collaboration with an expanding international community of participants from the justice system, civil society, academia, and other policymaking sectors. In 2025, we collaborated with over 63 partner organisations across more than 20 European countries, establishing a broad and diverse network of expertise and practices. In conjunction with this community, we conducted 46 events, knowledge exchange formats, and training activities during the reporting period, engaging several hundred professionals and decision-makers across Europe.

Our primary concern is not only the breadth of this network, but also the quality of these relationships. We place particular emphasis on building long-term partnerships, sharing responsibility, and maintaining a shared commitment to shape meaningful and sustainable change within justice systems.