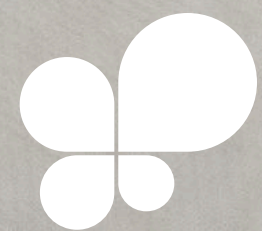


# Building a better future.



Global Impact Report 2025



Co-funded by  
the European Union



ERSTE

Stiftung



“Social Impact Award (SIA) was built on a simple belief: a better world is coming, and young people must have the chance to shape it.”

Jonas Dinger

Managing Director of Social Impact Award

Today, that belief is under threat. In the 15+ years of SIA, we have never seen the narrative of progress give way to nostalgia, fear, and resignation quite like it has in 2025. What was once a challenge in some of the countries we work in has become a global phenomenon, a collaborative feeling shared around the world that future possibilities are shrinking.

For the young people we serve, this is not abstract. It is deeply personal. They are trying to build their lives in a moment marked by rising living costs, environmental breakdown, social fragmentation, and loneliness. In 2025 alone, we have seen major public funding cuts, climate commitments weakened, and companies stepping back from promises of inclusion. These are not abstract shifts. They shape whether young people feel invited into the future, or locked out of it.

And yet, this report tells a different story. Young people have shown time and time again that they are willing and able to actively reclaim their future. They are not passive observers of decline. When given the opportunity, they turn ideas into action and actions into solutions that can improve lives, communities, and systems. But they cannot go at it alone. They need organizations like SIA.

We do not simply encourage young people to dream bigger. From Discovery Journey sessions where

vague intentions take shape, to the Incubation's mentorship turning an idea into a venture, to our Alumni community ensuring no one leads in isolation, we provide the conditions that help ideas turn into societal change.

The stories in the following slides illustrate the power of the SIA community. They show founders like Sogol Kordi transforming personal experience into support for survivors of domestic violence. They show participants growing in confidence, skills, and leadership. They show mentors, hosts, alumni, and partners making youth-led change stronger, more visible, and more resilient.

Not all of our efforts are successful. We have a responsibility to look at our failures, our shortcomings, and the unfortunate effects our program has on participants, from burnout to the stress of competition. We do this because trust requires transparency, and because meaningful impact demands that we keep learning.

Even with the record impact numbers we saw in 2025, the current climate does not allow us to lean back. We have to double down, and we cannot go at it alone. Thank you for standing with us. Together, we can continue shaping the future.



Jonas Dinger

Managing Director of Social Impact Award

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## Impact Model

Our framework for action.

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## Impact Measurement

Our scientific system for assessing success and failure.

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## Progress on Ambition 2030

Advancing our Theory of Change, one year at a time.

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## Network Development

Shifting towards a multi-node, decentralized network.

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# Impact Model

Our framework for action.



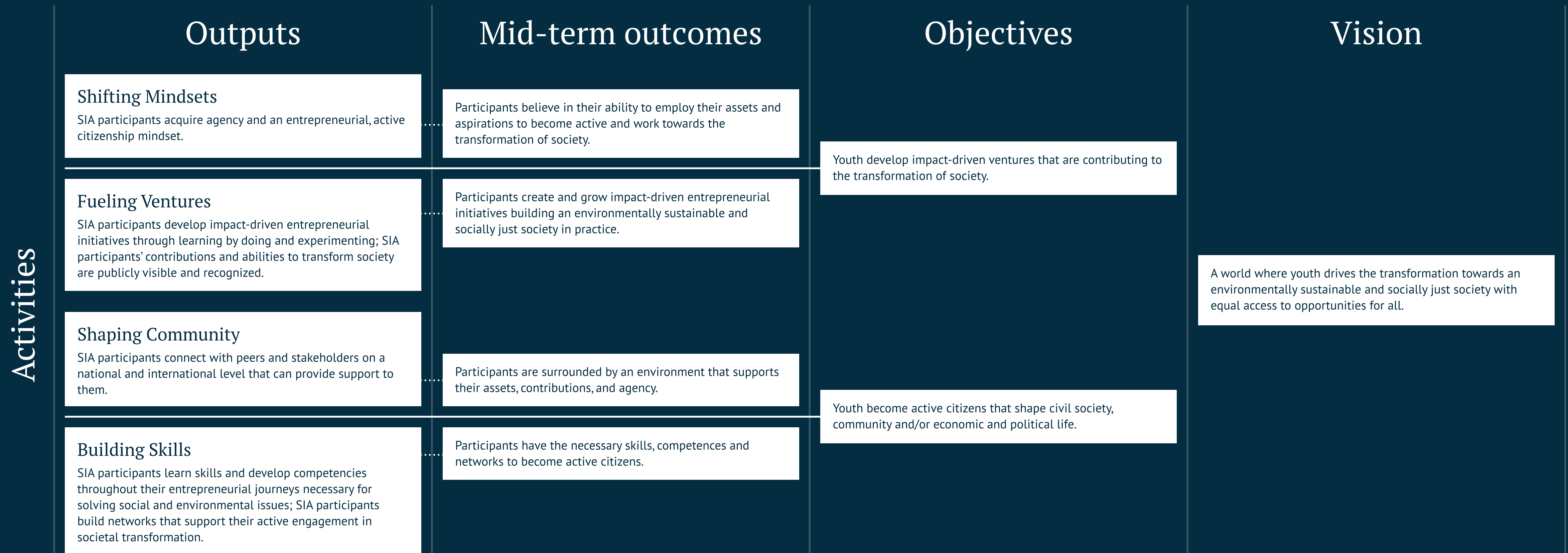
# Our Business is the Future

Social Impact Award (SIA), founded in 2009, is an international network empowering young people to transform society. Our impact-driven entrepreneurial journeys support young people in becoming changemakers that solve some of society's biggest issues.

Young people's disillusionment towards major institutions, along with their fear and anxiety about systemic challenges like war, climate, and economic opportunity have created a vacuum of hope, often filled by extremist rhetoric. Social Impact Award serves as a productive alternative, offering young people a space to imagine and build a better future for themselves and those around them.

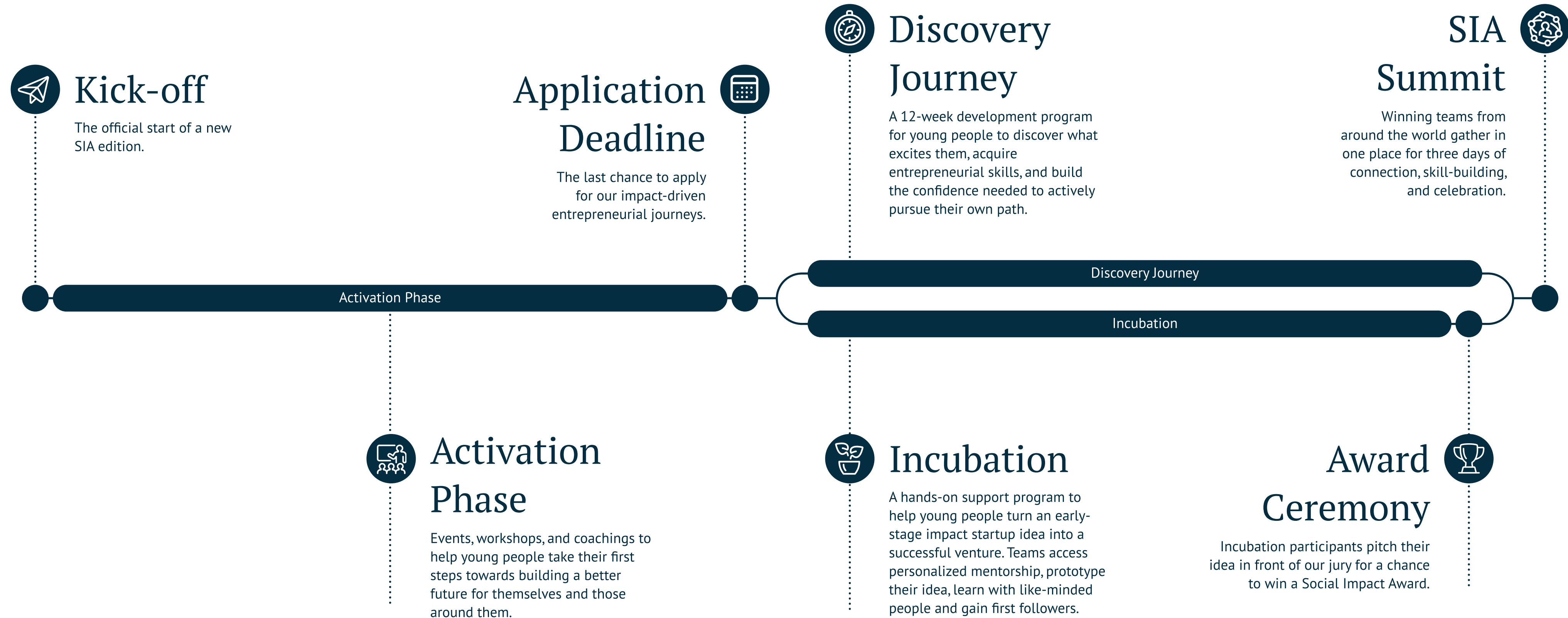
# Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change guides all of our activities. Below, we will dive deeper into each of our 4 key outputs and highlight progress made in 2025.



# The SIA Program

The activities our network delivers every year to advance our theory of change.





# Impact Measurement

Our scientific system for assessing success and failure.

# Why we Measure Impact

“Creating impact is a big ambition for the youth we work with, and for ourselves at SIA. At the same time, it can be hard to grasp. Did an intervention actually lead to a change? For whom? And did that change result from the intervention, or did something else happen in that person’s life? Impact measurement asks many tough questions, while also being our best chance to truly grasp the meaning of our work. The alternative is to rely on good intentions and intuitions alone – but unfortunately, those are often biased and incomplete guides for action.

At SIA, we measure impact through a broad array of instruments across a participant’s life cycle; each

programmatic phase has its own impact measurement instrument aligned with our theory of change. These short-term instruments are then complemented with alumni-surveys that aim at capturing long term effects.

Some aspects of our measurement system are unique: our dedicated use of these instruments have created a valuable longitudinal and international dataset that allows us to understand changes over a long time in our service quality, participants needs, and broader trends. This helps to interpret and benchmark results.

SIA also asks questions that others do shy away from. For example, we consistently explore burnout risks among our participants and explore the role of SIA in decreasing or increasing it. We explore negative side effects (mentors giving wrong advice, rules being intransparent, the competitive aspect of our program contributing to stress) that others gloss over. We work with academic partners to dig deeper on a range of issues, and to make sure that our findings are effectively used in research.

These efforts help guide our work in the right direction, making sure we are moving towards our vision for a better world.”



**Peter Vandor**

Founder of Social Impact Award and Senior Researcher, Founder and Manager of the Social Entrepreneurship Center at WU Vienna





# Progress on Ambition 2030

Advancing our Theory of Change,  
one year at a time.

# Ambition 2030

Measurable indicators of success for the next couple of years.

SIA is a multi-node, co-creative, and resilient network, active in

**40** countries

SIA supports the creation of

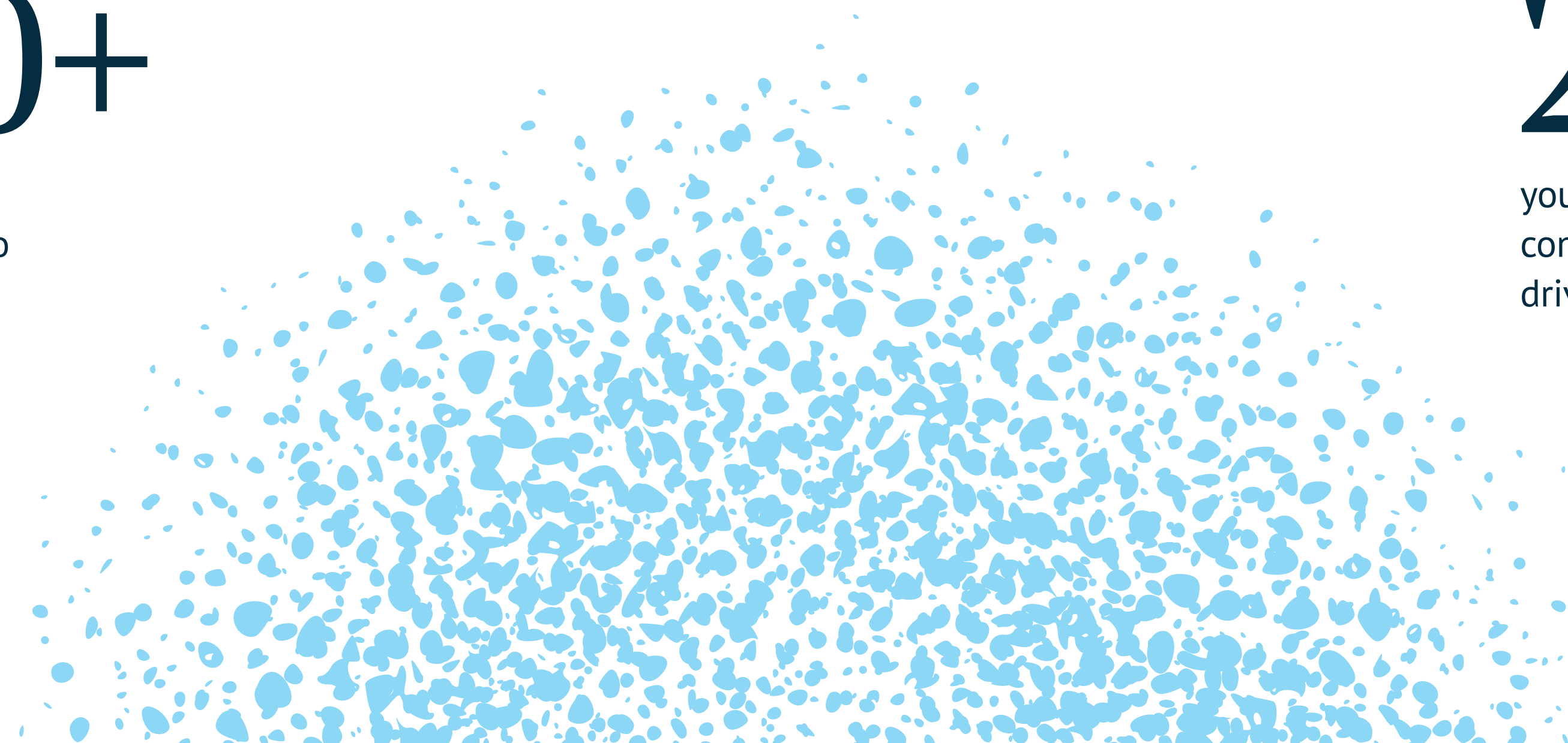
**1.100+**

impact driven ventures annually that contribute to societal transformation

SIA equips

**2.700+**

youth annually with the competencies and mindsets to drive societal transformation



# Fueling Ventures

Our Incubation and Award give early-stage social innovators the tools needed to turn their ideas into real impact.

03.1



# The SIA Incubation

A world-class startup incubator turning social and environmental ideas into reality.

The SIA incubation is a hands-on support program, offering a range of offerings to early-stage founders that want to take their venture to the next level. The incubation offers:

- 
- Personalized mentorship from industry experts
  - Physical gatherings and peer-to-peer formats with other changemakers
  - Support in creating marketing materials & gaining first followers
  - Access to a pool of experts for topical support
- 



“Our partnership with Social Impact Award reflects our belief that business should be a driving force for good in the world. Since 2021, we have worked closely with them to strengthen local social entrepreneurship ecosystems across 12 countries and give youth a platform to transform their intentions for impact into action. Our employees have supported these young innovators as mentors, jury members, and experts, helping guide their growth as social entrepreneurs and active citizens. 2025 was another standout year in this collaboration, with record participation numbers and impressive impact ventures. SIA's genuine commitment to empowering young people and the quality of their offerings has made them a valuable, long-lasting partner. We are looking forward to another successful year highlighting the power of young people worldwide.”

**Hemang Desai**

Global Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at SAP



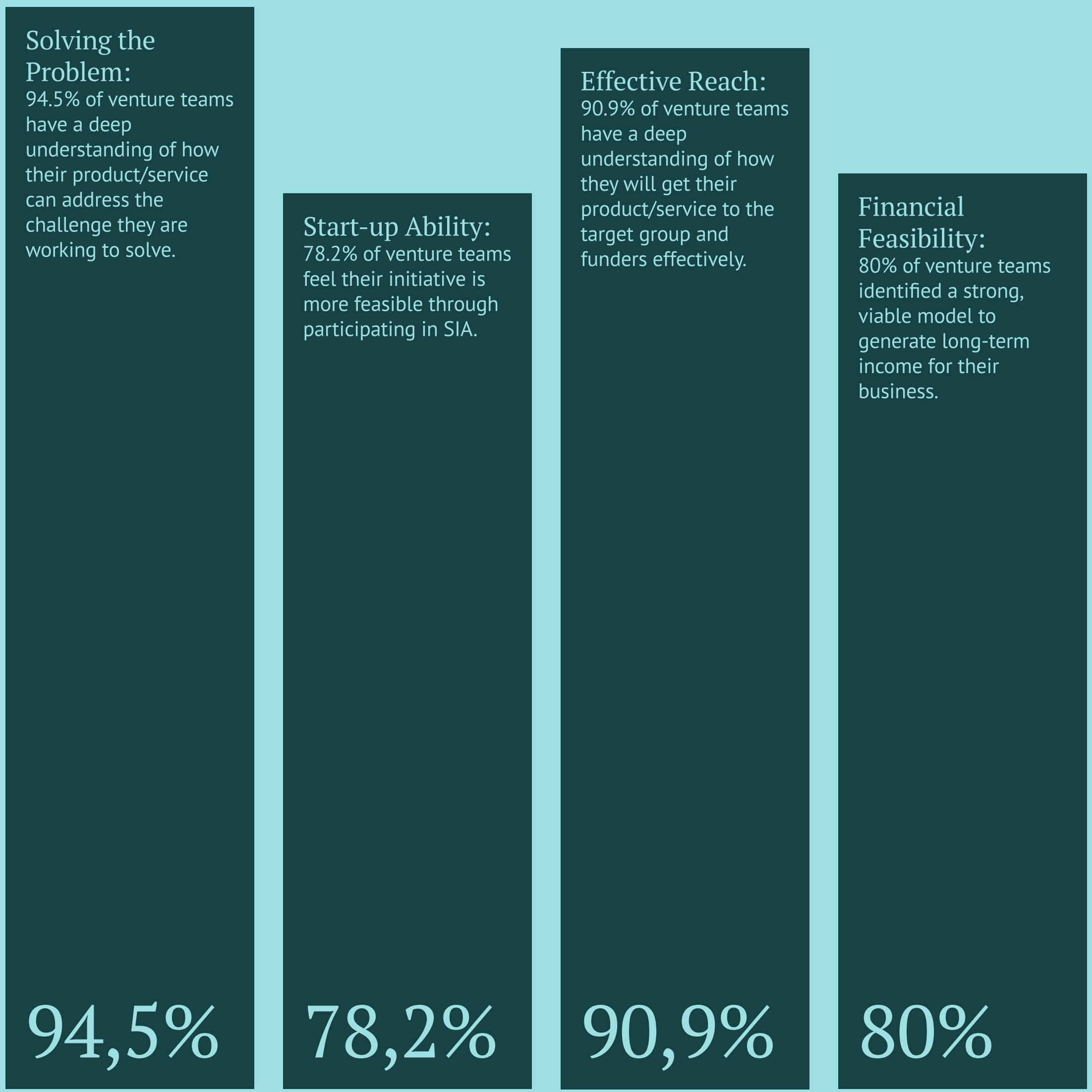
# The SIA Incubation

The SIA Incubation gets bigger and better. Countries are working hard to improve the quality of the journey and to expand the amount of finalists they can support in one cohort.



“Our long-term partnership with Social Impact Award strengthens Erste Foundation’s commitment to empowering high-impact organisations and the people behind them. By supporting the development of future founders and leaders, we together strengthen the capabilities and ecosystems needed for a more just and sustainable future.”

**Florian Bauer**  
Executive Director Social Finance & Impact Investing at ERSTE Foundation





SIA Montenegro



SIA Hungary



SIA Slovakia



SIA East Africa

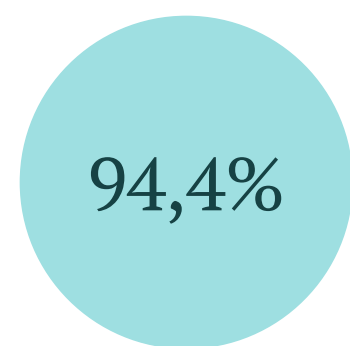


SIA Germany

# The Social Impact Award

The incubation culminates in the Award ceremony, where outstanding ventures win the Social Impact Award. Winners receive pre-seed funding and national recognition to fuel their growth beyond SIA. Ventures are selected by an expert jury from across the public, private, and civil sector, according to three criteria: impact potential, feasibility, and degree of innovation.

This is often the first public recognition & funding our participants receive, covering initial start-up costs and providing participants with the confidence to keep going.



94.4% of venture teams plan to continue working on their initiative.



92.546€ were awarded in funding to the most promising venture teams.

# Venture Story: MyProtectify

A transformative journey: the story of MyProtectify, a digital support service for victims of domestic violence, in the words of its founder Sogol Kordi.

“The idea for MyProtectify came from my own life. I experienced domestic violence myself, along with all the unclear information, closed doors, and lack of empathy that comes when looking for a way out. I wanted to create something that supported victims and truly empowered them. I never imagined that there were entire programs dedicated to bringing social impact ideas like mine into the world. Discovering this gave me the courage to keep going and actually turn that idea into something real.

When I applied to SIA, our organization had only existed for a few weeks. Everything was still very new. Since winning SIA in 2024, a lot has

changed. We’ve launched our support chat Maya, an anonymous and free chatbot offering round-the-clock emotional support, understandable information, individual plans for escaping violence, and recommendations for suitable counseling centers. We’ve also launched new updates for our services, and received major speaking opportunities on stage and international media outlets like RTL.

Building myProtectify has given me a strong sense of agency and responsibility. Every day, it feels meaningful to actively contribute to supporting people affected by domestic violence, who often remain unseen.”



Sogol Kordi

Founder & Head of Partnerships of MyProtectify



# Building Skills

Our participants acquire the competencies and agency necessary to build a better future for themselves and others.

# 03.2

# Discovery Journey

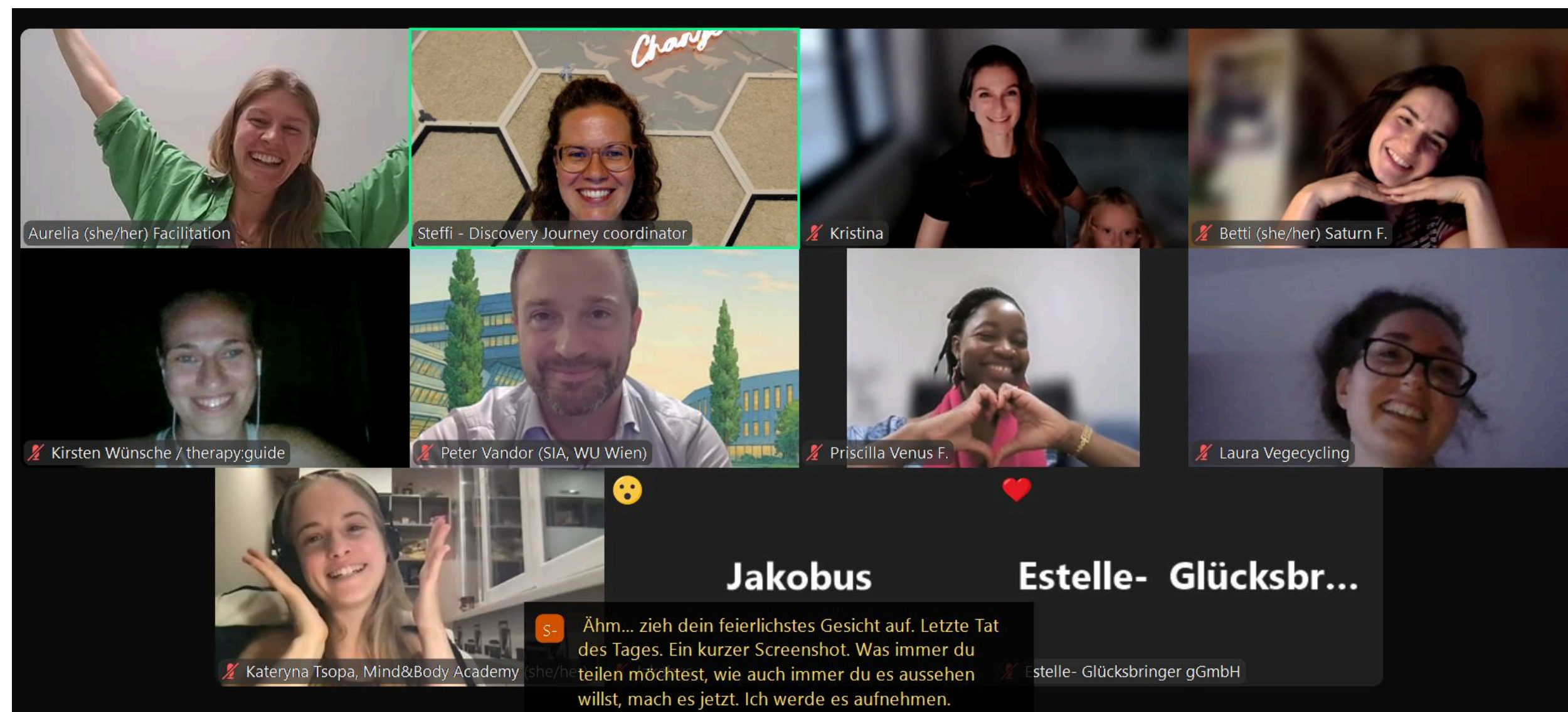
A transformative journey towards an impactful life.

The Discovery Journey is an ideation program giving young people the skills and confidence needed to imagine and build a more just and sustainable future. Participants build entrepreneurial, personal, societal, and collaborative skills over a 12-week, international journey online.



“An idea had been circulating in my head for a while, but it was very early stage. A friend told me about SIA and after seeing that the Discovery Journey was for people just starting out, I applied. The diversity of the community and the international nature of the program really helped broaden my perspectives. I became more confident to pursue my idea, prototype, fundraise, and attend other programs. I don’t know if I would have started, if it weren’t for the Discovery Journey.”

Kirsten Wünsche  
2025 Discovery Journey Participant



# Discovery Journey

The Discovery Journey was first piloted in Austria and Germany in 2025. Out of 109 applications, 32 participants were selected. As illustrated in the data, the Journey was especially successful in helping participants acquire the foundations of entrepreneurship, explore their motivations, and get started.

The program will be expanded to Ukraine in 2026 and improved based off of feedback from participants.

**Getting Started:**  
81.8% of participants learned how to develop and implement a social enterprise idea that contributes to solving societal challenges.

81,8%

**Entrepreneurial Foundations:**  
90.9% of participants increased their understanding of the concept of social entrepreneurship.

90,9%

**Career Direction:**  
72.7% of participants discovered whether or not they want to become a social entrepreneur.

72,7%



# Learning from Mentors & Experts

Mentorship and expert support are two of the biggest value adders of the SIA program.

Both the Discovery Journey and the Incubation offer participants the chance to learn from experienced individuals from across sectors. Many of these individuals are employees of partner organizations, offering their knowledge and expertise to serve the needs of young people. This also offers them an opportunity to give back to the community and expand their perspectives.



92,3%

92,3% of venture teams found SIA experts helpful in the development of their venture.



87%

87% of venture teams felt their mentor had the right professional experience to support them.



“Connection. Growth. Meaningful impact. That is what mentoring two SIA teams, from Romania and Moldova, meant to me. I found my community and walked alongside young people who dared to believe they could change something in their communities. I saw their doubts, their courage, and their transformation. I didn’t just help shape projects — I witnessed confidence being built. This journey strengthened my faith in the next generation and in a better tomorrow.”

Gina Avram

Senior Analytics Consultant at SAP

# Shaping Community

SIA is a safe, supportive, international community of changemakers fueling the movement for a just and sustainable society.

# 03.3





# SIA Summit 2025

Our once-a-year global gathering, celebrating the incredible work of the SIA community, landed for the first time in Slovenia.

In November of 2025, winners from 16 SIA countries, alumni, team members, and experts from the public, private, and civil society sector gathered for 3 days of connection, skill-building workshops, and thought-provoking discussions in Ljubljana. The event's festival style format put participants in the driver's seat, offering a wide-variety of sessions, panels, and experiences to choose from.



# SIA Summit 2025

Hosted at the historic Centre Rog, a cultural landmark in the heart of the old town, this year's Summit stood out as the most co-creative of all. Alumni stepped in as organizers and workshop hosts, sharing their experiences and expertise to this year's winners. Participants were given the chance to feedback global strategic changes. The SIA network reflected on the past year's success and planned the upcoming edition of SIA.

Regardless of their role, everyone left with a sense of connection to the broader SIA community, and a strong commitment to the movement of societal transformation.



“I really value the work of the SIA Community. I see a hopeful generation of young people who don't give up on believing that we can make the world a better place. They use entrepreneurship to create positive societal outcomes, not just profit. They are the heroes of our era and without exaggeration, are a lighthouse in an increasingly darkening world. Thank you.”

Luka Mesec

Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity, Deputy Prime Minister of Slovenia

# A Safe, Diverse, International Community

Our program serves as a safe and supportive environment for people from all backgrounds to thrive.

Alumni from 25+ countries

**1.554**  
alumni ventures

Participants self-assessing themselves as economically marginalized

**51,9%**

Participants self-assessing themselves as social-environmentally marginalized

**53,7%**

Participants self-assessing themselves as politically marginalized

**42,6%**

**Safe Space:**  
87,3% of participants felt the incubation was a safe and supportive space where they could be themselves without judgment.

**87,3%**

**Well-being Focus:**  
87% of venture teams experienced moderate to no risk of burnout.

**87%**



# Shifting Mindsets

Our in-person activities and digital content guide young people towards discovering their potential for impact.

# 03.4



# The Purpose Revolution Campaign

Debunking the myths that keep young people away from careers with purpose.

The Purpose Revolution Campaign, launched in 2025, is a multimedia content series confronting the rise of youth anxiety and frustration about the future. SIA alumni and team members took to the streets of Austria to talk with the public about their relationship with their future, and explore the myths that keep people away from pursuing their dreams.

As part of the campaign, SIA launched the Purpose Revolution podcast, a love letter to solving society's toughest challenges and why it's the best job in the world. The podcast welcomes builders and visionaries from across sectors to uncover secrets about meaningful work and provide concrete advice for young people navigating the uncertainty of the 21st century.

Views on social media

**5.6 million**

Listens to the podcast

**70.000**

Hours of consumed content

**5.000**

# Austrian Federal Prize for The Impact Blueprint

The world's first youtube series teaching young people how to build a better future for themselves and the world around them wins big.

In 2024, Social Impact Award released The Impact Blueprint, a 10-part Youtube series highlighting the stories of SIA alumni from across Europe and sharing their secrets on building an impactful life through social entrepreneurship.

In 2025, after being viewed over 400.000 times on Youtube, the series was awarded the Austrian Federal Prize in the category "Borderless Europe" by the Austrian Government.



# Shifting Mindsets

Our in-person activities create the environment needed for young people to tap into their potential. By the end of the program, participants understand their personal motivations better and have the confidence they need to pursue innovative ideas.

80%

## Self-Confidence

80% of venture teams feel they know their strengths better and feel confident applying them to create impactful solutions.

86,8%

## Future Challenges

86.8% of participants trust their abilities more and feel prepared to face future challenges after the incubation.

64%

## Mobilizing Others

64% of Discovery Journey participants feel they are better able to engage and mobilize others around a shared idea or goal.

100%

## Impact Commitment

100% of venture teams plan on staying in social or environmental career paths if they ever quit their venture.



“Supporting young people in shaping the transition to a sustainable and socially just society is an important task that can only be achieved together. We are therefore delighted to be able to strengthen SIA's commitment thanks to our participation. Together, we can achieve an even greater impact for people and nature.”

Katja Diemer

Head of Charities of Postcode Lotterie



# Network Development


Shifting towards a multi-node,  
decentralized network.



# Network Development

Ambition 2030 set big goals for us to become a multi-node, decentralized network. We deeply believe that meeting these objectives will make us more resilient, effective in creating impact, and scaling to new countries.

2025 was a standout year in the right direction:



Geographic  
Expansion



Youth Council  
Launch



Network  
Gatherings



Co-Creative  
Progress

# Geographic Expansion

2025 saw SIA landing in Bulgaria for the first time ever. Hosted by national organization ManEco, SIA Bulgaria successfully implemented itself within the local ecosystem and incubated a first cohort of 9 ventures.



“Bringing SIA to a country like Bulgaria is very important. It hasn’t always been easy, but it’s been totally worth it. The program brings development opportunities to young people and offers long-term support. We are happy to be surrounded by like-minded people that care about solving problems and overcoming social and environmental challenges.”

Vihren Mitev

Organizational Lead at ManEco and Coordinator of SIA Bulgaria





# Youth Council Launch

In an effort to stay closer to our beneficiaries and allow them to shape SIA's strategic direction, we launched the SIA Youth Council. The Council is composed of 10 SIA alumni elected by the broader alumni community, who meet twice a year to consult and advise the SIA team on key areas such as program design, strategy, and network development.

2 of the elected Youth Council members also represent SIA within the Steering Board, SIA's highest decision-making body.



“Being part of the SIA Youth Council has allowed me to amplify the voice of passionate young entrepreneurs and actively contribute to shaping programs. I have gained visibility, learned to advocate for the interests of young innovators, and strengthened my skills in committed leadership. This experience has been a true source of inspiration and personal growth.”

## Bernard Musibira

SIA DR Congo 2022 Participant, Current  
Youth Council Member

# Network Gatherings

2025 was a big year for our network gatherings. As with every year, our network met before the start of the entrepreneurial journeys to connect and strengthen our international ties. This year's retreat, hosted in Armenia, was no different. National team members left informed, connected, and ready to implement the Incubation and the Discovery Journey in their respective countries.

In an effort towards shared ownership, our network built and approved a new co-hosting framework for all gatherings. The new framework offers hosts the opportunity to nominate themselves as a national organizer of a gathering, and gives them more responsibility over the implementation of that gathering. As a result, the SIA Summit 2026 will be held in Montenegro, and the SIA Reflection Retreat 2026 will be held in Slovakia.



"Hosting the SIA retreat in Armenia was a milestone for our team. After years of gathering abroad, we finally had the privilege of welcoming the SIA network to experience Armenian hospitality firsthand in Gyumri, a city steeped in cultural heritage. It was an unforgettable and deeply meaningful milestone."

Tijay Jeghelian

Programs Director at Impact Hub Yerevan



# Co-Creative Progress

Co-creation is quickly becoming our main operating system at SIA, and affects everything we do. From who runs the program, to how the network supports itself, to strategic developments, co-creation leads the way forward.

In 2025, an alumni venture took over the implementation of the SIA program in Hungary. The venture Polip, who won in 2024, focuses on promoting youth participation in democracy.

Our global communications strategy brought together over 100 stakeholders including partners, youth, experts and team members to define the future of the our brand and marketing approach.

A network fund, used to fund opportunities for hosts to collaboratively launch new initiatives, was created, and the first fundraising workshop brought together participants from around the world. The network also launched peer-to-peer learning labs to dig deep and share best practices on a wide range of operational topics affecting the network.



# Storming Ahead

2025 was a major step in the right direction. We moved closer to our ambitious objectives of supporting more ventures, creating more active citizens, and scaling our network to new countries.

The achievements in this report could not have been possible without the commitment of our community members to societal transformation. SIA is grateful to all mentors, experts, team members, alumni, participants, and partners for their unrelenting support.

Our community will keep moving forward with innovation, collaboration, and optimism to create a more just and sustainable future for all. We invite you to join the movement, either as a participant, a mentor, an employee, or a strategic partner.

[Get in touch](#) →