

**WHAT A YEAR! IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY.**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT 2025**  
**PROTECT OUR WINTERS AUSTRIA**

# VISION

**We envision a world united by one vital goal: to protect the outdoors and build its resilience for future generations.**

**We are champions for climate action, driven to create a stronger community that takes care of nature while still enjoying its many offerings. We believe in our power to educate, collaborate, and advocate for the environment.**





# MISSION

Our mission is to rally the expansive outdoor sports community, from professional athletes to casual hobbyists, as trailblazers for climate action.

We channel the love and passion found in every outdoor sports devotee to help brands, organizations, and individuals explore their capacity to become climate advocates.

# 2025 - WHAT A YEAR. IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY

Looking back, it's impossible to sum it up in just a few words. 2025 was exciting, impactful, and full of real wins. At the same time it ended with painful budget cuts. Both are true, and both will shape the next years.

As if national elections in 2024 weren't enough, we jumped straight into another election campaign in 2025, this time focused on the elections of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce. These elections usually fly completely under the radar, even though they have enormous influence on Austria's climate and economic policies. Getting people, media, and companies to care was our biggest challenge. A 2024 study confirmed what many climate organizations had long suspected: the Chamber of Commerce is one of the most powerful blockers of ambitious climate policy in Austria. Shining a light on that reality became one of our key missions this year.

2025 also began as the International Year of Glaciers and it marked our 10-year anniversary as Protect Our Winters Austria. We kicked things off in mid-January with 200 people, workshops, film premieres, and a big celebration. And fittingly, we ended the year in the exact same way.

In between, a lot happened: We published two new Öffi Tourenführer (public-transport outdoor guides), organized around 20 "POW Tour" events, joined countless public discussions and panels, and

hosted about 10 school workshops. Together with three other partners we launched our first EU-funded project, joined protests against the construction of a massive hydropower plant in a previously untouched alpine valley, and finally published our long-awaited position paper on energy. Together with the wider POW Europe family, we raised awareness during our mobility month and pushed key conversations around climate-friendly transport.

From a strategic perspective, 2025 marked a major milestone. We achieved all the goals of our long-term strategy and developed a new roadmap for 2026–2030. On the policy side, we reached a new level, influencing more climate policy than ever before, both nationally in Austria and at the European level.

And yet, like the years before, 2025 was not an easy year economically. Since much of our funding comes from brand partners, many of whom were forced to make cuts themselves, we had to do the same. We started the year optimistic and even hired two new team members, but by the end of the year, we had to let three people go. Without a doubt, these were the most difficult decisions in POW Austria's history.

Still, as we head into 2026, we do so energized and motivated by the impact we know is possible. With strong projects, campaigns, and advocacy work ahead, we are also actively searching for new financial solutions to keep this work alive and to keep fighting for winters worth protecting.







## STRATEGY OLD AND NEW

One of our most important achievements in 2025 was reaching the goals set out in our long-term strategy for 2022–2025. Completing this strategy cycle successfully is more than an internal milestone, it demonstrates that Protect Our Winters sets clear objectives, uses resources responsibly, and delivers measurable impact.

Today, Protect Our Winters is recognized as one of only four NGOs with the strongest influence on climate policy in Austria. We have become a trusted source of knowledge on the effects of climate change in the Alps, particularly regarding its implications for tourism and mountain sports. This credibility enables us to bring science-based perspectives into political decision-making and public debate, where they can drive real change.

At the same time, our growing impact is reflected in the strength of our community. Over the past years, we expanded across all key areas: membership, newsletter subscribers, social media reach, alliance partners, and our team. Each of these developments represents people choosing to stand with us and choosing to act for a livable future.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the support of our donors, members, and partners. Their contributions enabled us to

build expertise, grow our reach, and act decisively at critical moments. As the climate crisis accelerates and public funding becomes increasingly uncertain, this support is not only a foundation of our past success, it is essential to ensuring that Protect Our Winters can continue to deliver impact in the years ahead.

Reaching these goals gave us the confidence and responsibility to take the next step. Building on what has proven effective, we developed a new long-term strategy that sharpens our focus, deepens our impact, and ensures that every contribution continues to make a difference. We are proud to present this strategy for 2026–2030 as the foundation for the next phase of our work.

**[Find the full strategy here](#)**







## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF GLACIER PRESERVATION

The International Year of Glaciers began for us with one of the largest events in Protect Our Winters' history. On January 10th, we kicked off the year with "From Here, We Act" - a completely sold out evening that combined the premieres of two films - "From Here" by Creative Alliance members Johanna Brunner and Richard Buchner and "Downstream" which was produced by POW Europe, a workshop on the impacts of climate change on the Austrian Alps and a celebratory gathering to mark the start of an important year. The event set the tone for our work: combining science, storytelling, and community to inspire action.

Throughout the year, glaciers remained the central theme of our communication and public engagement. Beyond the initial film premieres, we played a key role in the production of *Requiem in Weiss* by Harry Putz, a film inspired by our glacier funeral in 2023. The action not only influenced the title, but also became a powerful visual and symbolic element of the film itself. The ice coffin featured prominently, even appearing on the official movie posters. This collaboration demonstrated how advocacy can extend beyond traditional channels and into culture, reaching new audiences with an emotional and lasting message. The movie was shown in theaters across the german speaking region more than 200 times and the tour is still not over.

We closed the year in the same spirit in which it began: with a powerful and sold out gathering that combined reflection, inspiration, and celebration. "Unmuted, We Rise", the final event of the year also marked Protect Our Winters Austria's 10-year anniversary and featured *Unmuted* by Creative Alliance Member Luca Jänichen. "Unmuted" looks at the fragile high-mountain world through the lens of trail running. Four athletes run 200 kilometers from the Pasterze to the Hintertux Glacier to highlight rapid glacier melt and the challenges facing alpine infrastructure. Alongside additional films, we hosted a workshop and of course, a proper birthday party. Together, these moments framed a year dedicated to glaciers, honoring what is being lost, amplifying awareness, and strengthening the community committed to protecting what remains.





## GLACIER MEMORY

Our Glacier Memory project was a central contribution to the International Year of Glaciers. Due to its scale, resonance, and impact, we chose to dedicate a separate page of this report to the project.

Developed in collaboration with POW Creative Alliance member and photographer Jürgen Merz, the project brings together historical glacier photographs with his own contemporary comparison images. This powerful visual contrast makes glacier loss tangible and accessible to a broad audience. Before going into production, we were able to bring the Austrian Alpine Club (ÖAV) on board. Impressed by the project's educational value, the ÖAV decided to produce the Glacier Memory game for all of its approximately 230 mountain huts and to offer it through their online shop, significantly expanding the project's reach.

In addition, a 48-page booklet was produced to accompany the game. It documents all glaciers featured in the memory set and, in cooperation with Goodbye Glaciers, provides scientifically grounded projections of when each glacier is expected to disappear. Together, the game and booklet combine education, emotional connection, and scientific credibility, demonstrating how creative approaches can turn awareness into lasting impact.





## POW TOUR

The POW Tour brought our work directly to communities across Austria through around 20 events. Each tour stops combined short workshops, film screenings, and opportunities to learn more about Protect Our Winters and our projects.

A key focus of the tour was reaching rural regions and communities beyond major cities. By bringing climate knowledge, dialogue, and inspiration directly to these areas, we were able to engage new audiences and strengthen local connections. The POW Tour demonstrated how decentralized, community-based events can make climate action more inclusive, accessible, and impactful.





## WKO ELECTIONS

Our largest and most resource-intensive campaign of the year focused on the elections of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO). Held every five years, these elections traditionally have a very low voter turnout (around 30 - 35%) but still have a disproportionate influence on Austria's climate policy. Research has even identified the WKO as one of the strongest blockers of ambitious climate action in the country. These factors made it clear to us that raising awareness around the elections was both necessary and strategic. Also because no other organization was willing to shed some light on these elections.

The campaign aimed to increase voter participation and to highlight the connections between economic decision-making, climate policy, and a resilient, future-proof economy. A major challenge was visibility: the elections receive little media attention prior to voting, and this year they coincided with government coalition negotiations, which dominated public discourse.

Despite these obstacles, the campaign achieved significant reach. We contacted more than 90,000 potential voters and businesses, approximately one sixth of all Austrian businesses through direct email communication. We also developed a poster campaign that was ultimately rejected by official adver-

tising providers. This rejection itself generated additional attention, resulting in coverage by national media and posters being displayed independently by participating shops and businesses.

While the election outcome brought only a small improvement from a climate policy perspective, the campaign was a success in generating attention, fostering dialogue, and empowering voters to consider climate impacts in their decisions. It demonstrated how civil society can play a critical role in raising awareness, influencing public discourse, and advocating for climate accountability within Austria's economic and political systems.







## HUMAN FACTOR

HumanFactor is an Interreg Alpine Space project focused on bridging implementation gaps in sustainability by building knowledge, fostering networks, and providing hands-on support. Its cross-border approach leverages the collective expertise of the Alpine region, enabling mutual learning and turning local actors into sustainability pioneers.

In the first year of the project, our focus was on supporting project partners with their activities, hosting initial co-creation workshops, and identifying key stakeholders and target audiences. At Protect Our Winters, we are primarily responsible for establishing the community of practice, an initiative that taps into our extensive network and connects local actors across borders. By creating this collaborative space, we help ensure that knowledge is shared, lessons are amplified, and innovative sustainability solutions can be implemented effectively throughout the Alpine region.

This project is our first EU funded (Interreg AlpineSpace) project and funds most of a 50% position that is mostly responsible for this project.





## ENERGY PAPER & KAUNERTAL HYDRO POWER PLANT

In 2024, we joined forces with Global2000 and WWF to take early action regarding the planned hydro power plant in Kaunertal. In 2025, we seized the opportunity to submit our first official statement on the construction plans. The submission deadline also provided the perfect motivation to finalize and update our position paper on energy, which reflects our stance and expertise - you can find it **here**.





## MOBILITY

We expanded our Öffi Tourenführer series with editions #4 and #5, covering Munich and its surrounding regions as well as Vienna and the surrounding area. Both releases were accompanied by community events and such as hikes, strengthening local engagement around climate-friendly mobility. In Bavaria, we also co-hosted an event at the regional parliament in collaboration with Protect Our Winters Germany.

In September, we once again actively supported the Mobility Month across all POW European chapters. As one of four participating chapters, POW Austria produced a one-minute video highlighting a positive and inspiring narrative around public transport.



## HPCA

Depending on our campaigns and projects, we typically run our HPCA workshops mostly during a single semester. In 2024, we focused on the fall/winter semester of the 2024/25 school year and the spring/summer semester of 2025/26, hosting a total of nine workshops and reaching approximately 270 students in 2025. These sessions provided hands-on learning experiences and engaged the next generation in climate action, demonstrating the continued impact of POW's educational initiatives.



## GUIDES WORKSHOP

Following the 2024 survey, we developed the Guides Workshop and presented it in collaboration with KEM Pinzgau and GeoResearch at Kitzsteinhorn, an event that received nationwide media coverage. While the workshop has not yet been integrated into formal mountain guide training, the ultimate goal, it has already served as a model for the Austrian Alpine Club's new e-learning program on the same topic. Next steps include creating a complementary card folder and bringing the workshop into practical, hands-on use with guides.



# SUMMIT



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In October, we hosted our largest summit to date, which included a dedicated day for our alliances, particularly our athletes, creatives, and brand partners. This was not only a great opportunity to connect but it was of strategic importance to strengthen our work and collaborations. Together, we spent three nights at Ammererhof, collaborating on climate communication, volunteer engagement, and upcoming projects. Each day was filled with team-building and outdoor activities, strengthening connections across our community and fostering a shared commitment to advancing climate action.

# ADVOCACY

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# TURNING ACTIVISM INTO IMPACT

Over the past few years, Protect Our Winters has evolved from being “just” an activist movement into a professional advocacy organization. While this work often happens behind the scenes, feedback from our community shows that it is one of the main reasons people support POW. To make this often unseen effort visible, we are dedicating this section to our advocacy work and publishing it also separately as our first short advocacy report.

## Political Scorecards: Transparency Across Elections

Building on the scorecards we developed for the EU and national elections during our 2024 campaigns, we expanded this approach to the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO) elections. This required direct engagement with all major parties.

The purpose of our scorecards is simple: to raise public awareness of where parties stand on key climate-related issues. As a strictly bipartisan organization, we publish all responses without commentary or evaluation. Collecting these positions is rarely straightforward. A single email is usually not enough. In some cases, it took up to ten phone calls with different contacts and multiple follow-ups to receive complete answers, no exaggeration. This persistence is a core part of our advocacy work.



## National Climate Policy: Climate Law in Focus

During the summer, Austria's climate law returned to the political agenda. Throughout this period, we were in active exchange with all coalition parties, ensuring that climate ambition and accountability remained part of the conversation.

## European Collaboration: Strengthening the Movement

Throughout the year, especially in its second half, we worked closely with CAN Europe, sharing information and coordinating advocacy efforts. One concrete example was supporting colleagues from Poland by connecting them with Austrian MEPs, enabling them to submit critical parliamentary questions on nuclear energy policy in Poland. This kind of cross-border collaboration strengthens climate advocacy across Europe.

## EU-Level Advocacy: A High-Stakes Autumn

The second half of the year was especially intense on the European level. Negotiations around the EU's 2040 climate target turned into a political thriller.

After the ENVI Committee failed to reach a conclusion, responsibility shifted to the ENVI Council, moving negotiations to the ministerial level. We were in contact with Members of the European Parliament from multiple parties during the committee phase and continued our engagement with governing parties and MPs throughout the Council negotiations.

At nearly the same time, the revision of the Energy Taxation Directive was scheduled for closed-door negotiations. The proposal would have effectively extended tax exemptions for kerosene until 2035. We engaged directly with the responsible minister, who confirmed Austria's position as being in favor of aviation fuel taxation. Ultimately, ministers did not reach an agreement. We will continue monitoring and engaging on this issue as discussions are expected to resume in 2026.

## Strategic Litigation: Looking Ahead

In our taxonomy lawsuit, we finally received a hearing date set for 2026. We will share more details as the case progresses.





## Advocacy by the Numbers

**In 2024, our advocacy work included:**

**12 personal meetings with MPs and MEP's  
21 phone calls with MP's and MEP's  
Approximately 180 emails with politicians on all levels.**

**All with Austrian politicians from across the political spectrum.**

# POW IN EUROPE

© YASMINE





## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF GLACIER PRESERVATION

Glaciers have no representation in government halls or corporate board-rooms and no voice at the table. That's why Protect Our Winters aligned 2025 as its own Year of Glacier Preservation, working alongside the UNESCO-WMO initiative to ensure this moment became a year of action, not just a headline.

Throughout the year, POW amplified glacier voices through policy, storytelling, and culture, releasing its first documentary Downstream at COP29 in Baku, and hosting screenings and panel discussions with policymakers, scientists, and decision-makers at UNESCO in Paris, the UN Headquarters in New York, the EU Parliament in Brussels, ChangeNOW in Paris, and more than 50 events across Europe, North America, and New Zealand.

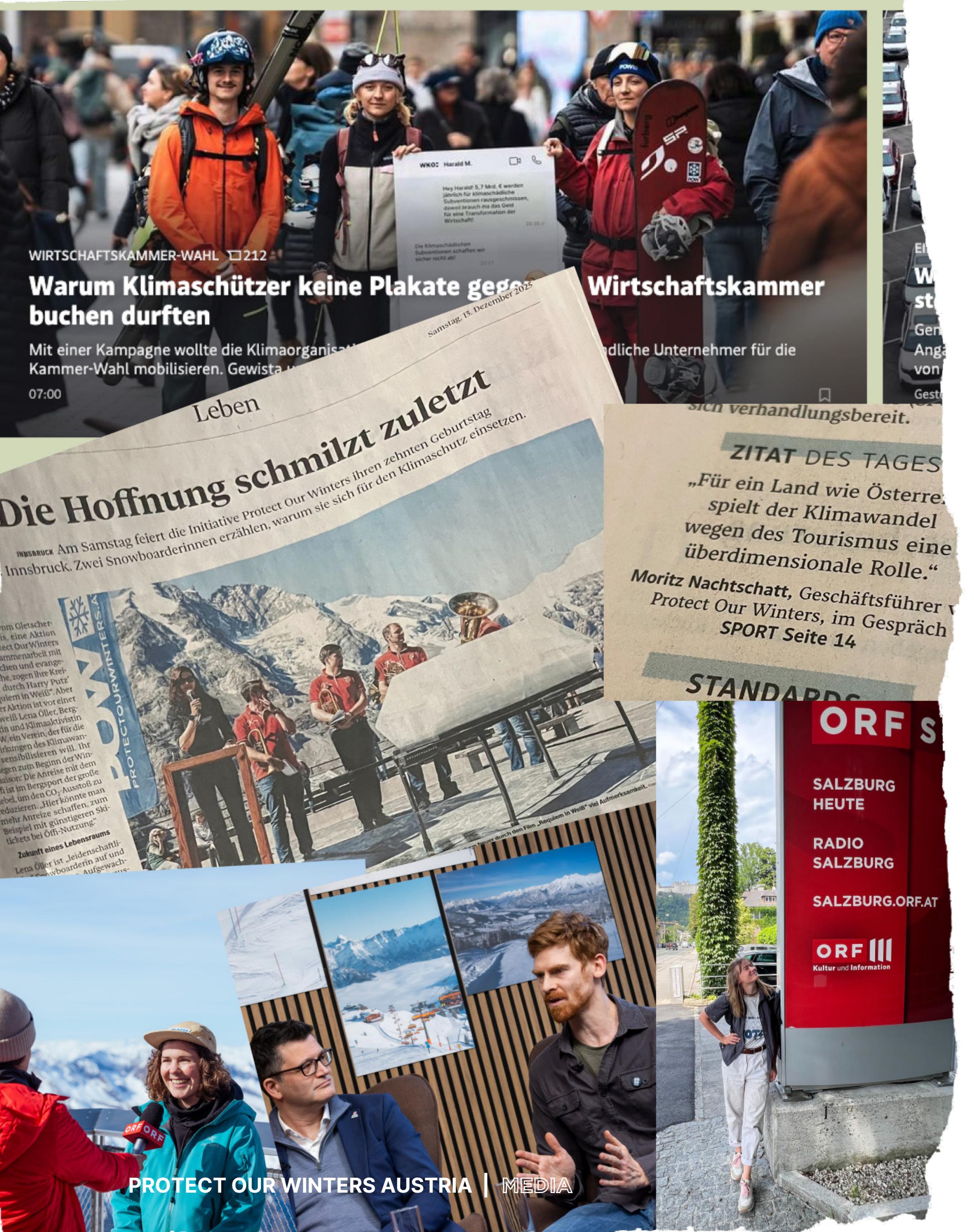
Yet despite a year dedicated to their protection, glaciers continue to melt at alarming rates. To close the International Year, The Voice of the Glaciers gives them a literal voice: a vinyl record pressed from ice and recorded on Mer de Glace, capturing its cracks, groans, and trickles as it slowly melts while playing, symbolising irreversible loss. The project marks the launch of 1% for the Glaciers, calling for lasting, collective action beyond the year itself.



## BRAND ADVOCACY DAY

When Protect Our Winters first imagined a Brand Advocacy Day, the intention was clear: policymakers need to hear from ambitious outdoor and winter sports companies that are already leading on climate. But the question was whether this call would truly resonate. The answer came in Amsterdam, where more than 60 leaders from across Europe gathered because they care deeply about the outdoors, the climate, and the future we all share. The day showed why the outdoor community's voice is so powerful: it is credible, values-led, and uniquely positioned to connect business, science, culture, and lived experience. Purpose-driven brands, athletes, scientists, creatives, and advocates came together not just to talk about advocacy, but to practice it, grounded in real examples from pioneers like our hosts, Tony's Chocolonely and Patagonia.

The first Brand Advocacy Day succeeded because it transformed shared ambition into collective commitment. It made one thing clear: when purpose-led brands stand together, advocacy isn't optional, it's how lasting change begins.



# MEDIA

Across all topics, we successfully developed media-relevant campaigns that captured attention both within our core audience and beyond. Our 2023 Glacier Funeral project reached not only cinema audiences but was also featured in museum exhibitions, including the Glacier exhibition at MUSE in Trient. We participated in national TV panel discussions during the Ski World Cup in Saalbach, positioning the event as a new benchmark for sustainable sporting events.

Our campaigns were widely covered across diverse media outlets. We sparked important conversations about distant source markets and climate-conscious tourism as well as freedom of speech. Additionally, we were frequently consulted for our expertise on mobility, tourism, and mountain sports, participating in numerous panels and interviews throughout the year.

- 40+ Articles and mentions in nationwide newspapers
- 4 Movies
- 3 Exhibitions
- 4 appearances on national TV
- 3 Podcasts
- 5 Radio appearances



# TEAM & FINANCES

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## TEAM

At the beginning of the year, we approached our financial situation with cautious optimism. Based on this assessment, we made deliberate investments in our team to strengthen our impact. We started the year with the same core team as at the end of 2024, and added a 20% position for social media, as well as a temporary 20% project role supporting the WKO elections through March. In April, we further expanded our capacity by hiring a 20% position dedicated to volunteer engagement and coordination. In addition, we pre-financed the budget for an EU-funded project, knowing that reimbursement would not occur until 2026.

These decisions were made consciously and in good faith, with a clear understanding of the financial risks involved. We knew that if additional income could not be secured, we would eventually be forced to make difficult staffing decisions.

Unfortunately, despite our efforts, we were not able to generate the necessary new income and had to face these consequences. The ongoing economic downturn has led many brands to significantly reduce their budgets, while grants and public funding have also become more limited. This combination has made it increasingly challenging for smaller organizations like Protect Our Winters to sustain their work.

Looking ahead to 2026, the broader economic outlook remains uncertain. Like many civil society organizations, we operate within an economic system that directly affects our ability to act, even when the urgency of the climate crisis continues to grow. This reality makes the support of our community more important than ever. Every donation helps us maintain our independence, retain expertise within our team, and continue advocating for a livable future.



# FINANCES 2024

Income: +171.470 €

Membership fees	25.839
Donations	71.995
Partnerships	49.362
Merchandise	8.850
Other Income	15.424

Expenditures: -197.578 €

Purchase of merch	0
Salaries & non wage labor costs	117.039
Representation allowance	1.157
Service fees	54.044
Travel costs	3.481
Rent (summit)	5.572
Marketing/Advertising	3.197
Bank fees	2.489
Meetings	4.023
Other (licences, postage, membership fees...)	5.942

Balance 31.12.24

+66.202 €

# FINANCES 2025

Income: +140.432,83 €

Membership Fees	31.239
Donations	11.027
Partnerships	62.008
Donations earmarked for education	28.800
Other income	7.358

Expenditures: -195.883,18 €

Human Factor	18.965
Salaries & non wage labor costs	121.297
Representation allowance	450
Service fees	32.416
Travel costs	2.666
Rent (Co working places)	1.986
Marketing/Advertising (APA OTS)	5.102
Bank fees, tax consultancy, insurance	3.036
Meetings/Catering (Summit)	7.810
Other (software, postage, harddrives, membership fees...)	2.371

Balance 31.12.25

+10.752,85 €

# WHAT'S AHEAD



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2026 will be a year of deepening impact, new alliances, and bold approaches to climate advocacy, both on and off the snow.



## Taking Advocacy to the Next Level

In 2026, we will elevate our advocacy work by creating direct, personal exchanges with decision-makers. One new format we are planning is inviting Members of Parliament to join us on a ski tour. Experiencing climate change firsthand in the mountains creates a level of understanding no briefing paper can replace.

## Pushing Global Sport Further

Three years after launching our first campaign targeting the International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS), we have already achieved meaningful progress. FIS has taken important steps toward sustainability and now clearly recognizes climate change as an existential threat to winter sports.

This year, we aim to intensify this dialogue and encourage FIS to become the climate leader winter sports urgently need. While the Olympic Games will naturally be part of the conversation, we will not run a dedicated campaign, instead, we will celebrate outstanding athletic performances while continuing to advocate for systemic change behind the scenes.





## Strategic Litigation: Taxonomy Lawsuit

In February, our EU taxonomy lawsuit will finally go to court, an important milestone in our long-term effort to strengthen climate integrity in sustainable finance. We will share updates as the case progresses.

## Science, Storytelling and Community Support

In spring, we plan to launch our first-ever crowdfunding campaign. A central element will be the measurement of the Pasterze Glacier, Austria's most iconic glacier. This project will combine scientific monitoring, public engagement, and fundraising to highlight the tangible impacts of climate change.

## Unlikely Alliances, Powerful Messages

This summer, we will run a campaign around beer. Yes, beer. As always, it will be closely linked to our core climate topics, but once again we aim to work with unexpected partners to reach new audiences and spark conversations beyond the usual climate circles.

## A Busy Autumn on Mobility

Autumn will bring Mobility Month once again, along with many events and public actions. As in previous years, we will use this momentum to promote climate-friendly transport and engage communities across the country.





YOU WANT TO  
SUPPORT OUR WORK ?



Click **HERE** or  
contact us!



# THANK YOU FOR READING

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