



# Annual Report 2025

## Building Belonging in Berlin



# Table of contents

- 2** Foreword from the Director
- 3** The Year in Numbers
- 5** Our Highlights
- 11** Our Community
- 14** Financial Overview
- 15** Our Partners
- 16** Looking Ahead
- 17** Get Involved
- 18** Appendix



# Foreword from the Director

Dear friends and supporters of Hejmo,

Having been so warmly welcomed into the team at the beginning of February, I can only say what an honour it is to follow in the footsteps of my predecessors, Mine, Ragip, and everyone who has shaped Hejmo into what it is today. Hejmo has been close to my heart since its inception - a place where we find comfort and solace in collectivity; a safer space to learn, unlearn, and make mistakes.

In this period of intense political uncertainty, loss, and violence, we are reminded that Hejmo's community is nurtured by so many people who believe we are stronger together and who understand that the personal is always political. Whether we are holding space for reflection, remembrance, and renewal during Nowruz, sharing an Iftar, playing the guitar, baking a cake, or simply chatting over a cup of tea, Hejmo continues to be a home away from home - a welcoming place to experience joy, connection, and hope.

This year, we will continue to expand our intercultural offerings, with an increased focus on projects centring youth, sustainability, and the queer community. We look forward to building on what Hejmo does best: bringing people together in a myriad of ways that foster solidarity, creativity and belonging.

Warmly,  
Nicky Böhm



# The Year in Numbers

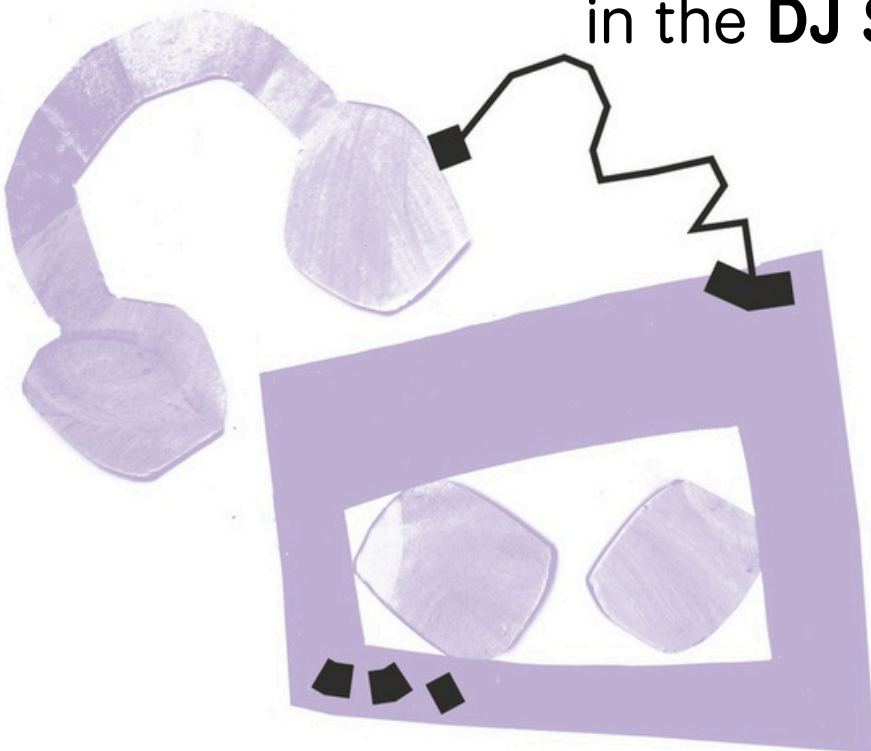
**+14.000 Participants**

**+2.000 Volunteers**

**+6100 Participants**  
in the **German Sprachafé**

**+600 Participants**  
in the **Open Art Space**

**+250 Participants**  
in the **DJ Sessions**





Over 40% of respondents discovered Hejmo through **word of mouth**, highlighting strong **community-driven growth**.



More than **80%** of respondents come to Hejmo to be **part of a community**.



Over half of respondents engage with Hejmo to **meet new people and build connections**.

## Some words by our community:

you are awesome <3

Thank you so so much  
for what you do, love  
uu!!

Ich bin sehr stolz auf eure Arbeit  
und finde es schade, so weit weg  
zu sein.

I love this community so  
much! Thank you to the team  
of staff and volunteers for  
what you do to make this  
incredible space exist!



# Our Highlights

## Hey Hejmo!

2025 marked an important moment for our organization: the beginning of a new chapter under **a new name**. This change was not about leaving something behind, but about adapting what we have been building for years and making it more accessible.

In 2025, Give Something Back to Berlin became Hejmo. Our former name reflected our beginnings as a volunteer initiative, rooted in solidarity and civic engagement. Over time, however, the organization grew into something broader: a place to connect, create, and belong. While "Give Something Back to Berlin" carried history and meaning, it could also imply an expectation to give back, or suggest a hierarchy between those who give and those who receive. That has never been our approach.

Hejmo stands for welcome without conditions. Everyone is invited to take part as they are, with nothing expected in return. The name is shorter, easier to use across languages, and more closely aligned with how people actually experience our work. Hejmo is our word for home - not as a physical building, but as the feeling of warmth, safety, and connection that is created together. It's something that grows through shared meals, conversations, and relationships, shaping the Berlin we want to live in.

Alongside the name change, we also launched a new website. You can now find us at **[www.hejmoberlin.org](http://www.hejmoberlin.org)** and on Instagram as **@hejmoberlin**. The website brings our projects and activities together in one place, with a clearer overview and an updated activity calendar, making it easier to see what's happening and how to join.



# Blue House

A vision we had carried for a long time became a reality in 2025: **we opened our own space** in Neukölln, right at street level, in the neighbourhood we love. Being directly connected to the street matters to us, as it allows everyday encounters, spontaneous conversations, and a sense of openness that reflects how we work.

In July, we opened the doors with an open-house event, welcoming familiar faces alongside many new neighbours - which is exactly what we set out to do. Since opening, the Blue House has quickly filled with life. Cooking sessions finally moved into a kitchen with room to breathe. Piano lessons, yoga sessions, and gatherings found a home with more space and flexibility.

We hosted our first community talk, centred on the idea of home, and closed the year with an Open Music Night that was both crowded and cozy - a good summary of how the space is used. The Blue House is also the result of a lot of collective, hands-on work: painting walls, installing sound panels, rearranging furniture, and adjusting the space as needs emerged. And thanks to the generous donation of Ikea Tempelhof, we could furnish it completely! Today, it also features artworks created by community members during a collage workshop around the theme of home, which shows that this place is shaped by the people who use it.

More than a building, the Blue House allows us to offer space in a very concrete sense, and to see our shared idea of home take form in everyday moments. We're excited to see how many more stories, memories, and connections will grow from this bright-blue corner in the years to come.



# Building more spaces for Youth



In 2024 we decided to focus more on creating activities for young people to connect, learn, and just be themselves. Thanks to support from the Deutsche Kinderhilfswerk, Goldman Sachs Gives, the Berliner Klassenlotterie, Aktion Mensch, and Buddy Bear, we were able to expand our offers this year.

This summer we hosted our first **holiday camp for girls** in Neuensund in Brandenburg. Twelve girls, some of them from our Club der Sterne, some new to Hejmo got to spend time in nature, sitting around a campfire under the stars, dancing in the kitchen while making pizza, and going on long walks to the lake. The trip was such a success that we hope to make it a yearly tradition.

Back in Berlin, we launched the **Klang Club**, a weekly meetup where teenage boys can experiment with instruments, collaborate creatively, and connect through making music. At the same time, our Club der Sterne continues to bring girls together each week for afternoons of crafting, dancing, and creativity. During the fall school holidays, we also launched our first DJ workshops for youth, thereby expanding our Open Music Lab offer.

2025 marked an important step in deepening our youth work, which is especially important at a time when youth spaces in Berlin are shrinking because of budget cuts.



# More spaces for FLINTA\* community members

Creating spaces where FLINTA\* community members feel safe, welcomed, and encouraged to express themselves has been a key focus of our work this year.

Within the Open Music Lab, we introduced **biweekly music production hangouts for FLINTA\*** participants. The response was immediate and strong. These sessions helped make music production more accessible by offering a supportive, non-competitive environment where participants could experiment, learn technical skills, and collaborate at their own pace. With the addition of these hangouts, the Open Music Lab now hosts music production sessions on a weekly basis, strengthening continuity and peer learning. For many participants, this was their first time engaging with music production in a space designed around their needs.

Alongside this, the Open Hearts Space expanded its embodied and reflective offerings for women. We hosted our first **Open Disco Space** for women, which quickly became a recurring format throughout the year. Dancing together created a powerful sense of connection beyond language. Participants curated the playlist collectively -from Arabic and Polish tracks to North American pop and the occasional Macarena- and co-organised the gatherings by sharing food and shaping the atmosphere together. What emerged was a joyful, grounding community ritual.

We also established a **monthly mindfulness group for women** as part of the Open Hearts Space. Meeting regularly to meditate and reflect, participants created a space of calm and consistency in their everyday lives. Over time, trust grew, and the group became a source of emotional support and collective care.

Together, these spaces strengthen long-term community bonds and contribute to more inclusive, sustainable cultural and wellbeing infrastructure in Berlin.





# Open Kitchen On the Road

In June and July, Open Kitchen travelled across Berlin, bringing our format into community gardens and neighbourhood spaces: **Klimainsel** Wilmersdorf, **Himmelbeet** in Wedding, and **Studio Nagelneu** in Neukölln.

Being hosted by community gardens felt natural. These are spaces rooted in patience, care, and collective responsibility - values that also shape Open Kitchen. Just as plants require time, attention, and the right conditions to grow, communities flourish when nurtured with consistency and trust.

Food once again became our shared language. Cooking and eating together allowed relationships to develop gently and across differences. Each location brought its own rhythm, and we adapted to the space - listening, learning, and creating room for exchange.

Open Kitchen On The Road strengthened our connections across districts and introduced new participants to our work. At the same time, long-standing Open Kitchen community members accompanied us throughout the journey, welcoming newcomers and anchoring each gathering with familiarity and warmth.

By meeting people where they already gather, we deepened partnerships and reinforced a simple insight: care creates the conditions for communities to grow.



# And much more!

Within the **Open Music Lab**, we introduced our first **five-week Beginner DJ Course**, offering an accessible entry point into DJing and electronic music culture. Participants developed technical skills while building confidence in creative roles that are often less accessible. The OML Book Club complemented this practical work with critical reflection, exploring books on music (particularly electronic music) and its social and political histories. Together, these formats deepened both artistic practice and cultural understanding.

**Open Hearts Space** gathered for its **yearly summer picnic** and August community event in Hasenheide, bringing together participants from across all OHS activities. Meeting under the same tree each year, decorated collectively by the group, has become a small but meaningful ritual of continuity and belonging.

A special milestone was reached by the **Arabic Choir**, which began in 2024 within the Open Language Cafés and continued to grow this year. The choir marked its **first public performance** at Hejmo's name change event, reflecting the steady growth of the group over the past year. For many more moments together!



# Our **Community**

## Mohamed

Open Language Café volunteer



**I'm Mohamed, an Egyptian resident of Berlin for over 7 years. I do software, writing and music with various degrees of proficiency. I got to know Hejmo in 2022 when I was looking for a place to volunteer and have been a regular since then.**

### **What is your favorite part about Hejmo?**

My favourite thing about Hejmo is how it is open to all and inclusive for everyone.

### **What does Hejmo mean to you?**

Hejmo is my little home in Berlin. It is a safe space where one can explore various activities and meet awesome people without fitting into any mold.

### **Can you share a moment when you truly felt the impact of Hejmo's work?**

As a volunteer in the Arabic language café, every time we help a learner understand and practice even a small part of the Arabic language, I feel we have real impact.

### **What's one lesson or skill you've learned through Hejmo that you'll take with you?**

I learned how to work and organise with a diverse group towards a general goal.

# Didem

**Frauensprachcafé participant**

**I am from Turkey and have been living in Berlin for more than four years. I previously worked at a university in Turkey, where I taught management courses. Currently, I work as a freelance instructor in Germany.**

**I joined the women's speaking club called Frauensprachcafé in spring 2024.**



## **What was your favorite Hejmo-related memory from 2025 and why?**

When someone says to me, "Oh, you can speak German," it makes me very happy — and this is thanks to Hejmo. When I first joined Frauensprachcafé, my German was very weak. I still have a long way to go before I feel completely comfortable, but I know I have improved a lot with Hejmo's help.

One moment stands out to me. When I started my B2 course, my teacher asked me some questions about Turkish politics. I was able to explain the situation in German. He said he was positively surprised that I could express myself so clearly. I was able to do that because we talk about many different topics in Sprachcafé. This moment did not happen at Hejmo, but it happened because of Hejmo.

## **What's one lesson or skill you've learned through Hejmo that you'll take with you?**

I hope my German will stay with me. Learning a new language is sometimes like being a neglected partner — it needs constant attention. I hope the things I learned in Sprachcafé stay with me. Fingers crossed.

From a social perspective, I learned that giving and sharing make you richer as a person and help you grow. Thanks to the volunteers, I learned this through real experience. I also learned a lot about different cultures and how to understand and accept differences. Hopefully, one day I can also give back to the community.

# Our **Community**

## **Anschutz hilft e.V.**

### **Partner**

**For several years, Anschutz hilft e.V. has financed our band coaching, in which we support aspiring musicians in forming their bands, recording a song, and even performing at our community events. Here, they tell us a little more about why they decided to support us.**

### **Tell us a little more about Anschutz hilft e.V. What do you do?**

Anschutz hilft e.V. is an initiative of the Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) that supports local non-profit organizations located near Uber Arena and Uber Platz. The funding focuses on concrete social, cultural, and medical projects. Revenue from ticket-donation campaigns has increased to more than 100,000 euros annually, enabling the organization to support up to 18 projects per year.

### **You've financed our band coaching for several years now. Why is it important to you to support organizations over a longer term?**

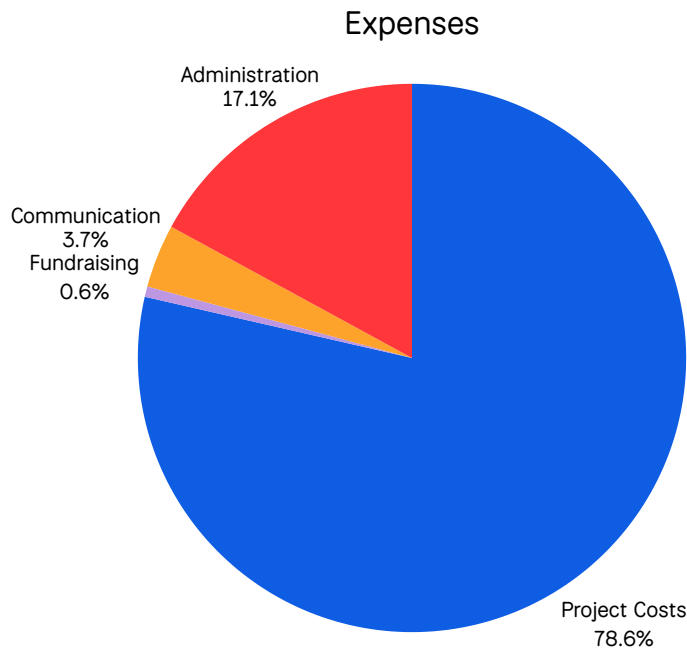
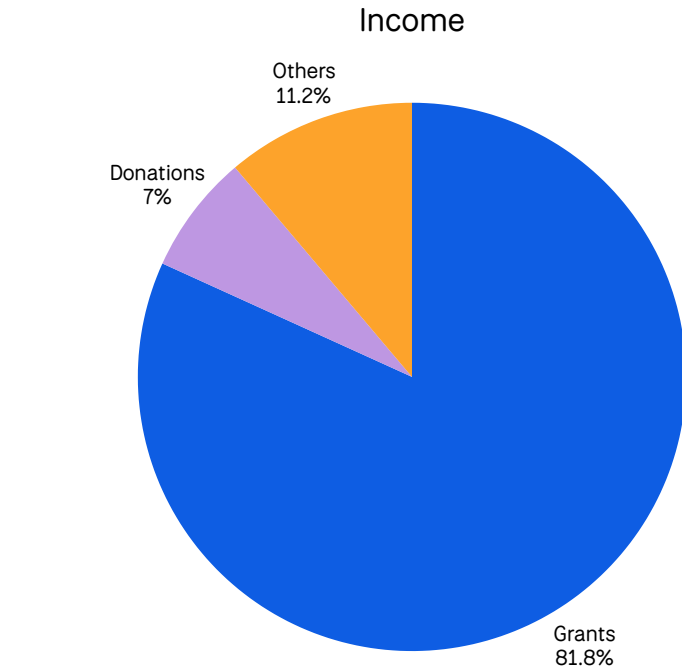
Sustainable social impact can only be achieved through reliability. Many of the projects we support help people through challenging life situations. Long-term support provides planning security, stable structures, and the opportunity to create meaningful, lasting change. As a company deeply rooted in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, continuity is a core value for us: only long-term partnerships build trust, strengthen effectiveness, and enable real change in the local community.

### **Why did you decide to support Hejmo?**

Hejmo is an inspiring example of cultural participation, empowerment, and talent development—values that align perfectly with our commitment to the neighborhood. Your projects create accessible opportunities, foster community, and help young people discover and grow their abilities. Music is at the core of AEG's business, so there is a natural connection to a project that supports music. This local impact reflects exactly what Anschutz hilft e.V. aims to support: initiatives that make Berlin more vibrant, inclusive, and socially connected. We are therefore delighted to support your band camp and additional activities in the long term.

# Financial Overview

**In 2025, we had an income of 875.748 € and expenses of 855.816 €. Our income is coming from:**



**We are a signatory of the Initiative Transparente Zivilgesellschaft, certified by CAF America, and a member of the German fundraising association.**

# Our Partners

**We are fortunate to have a strong network of supporters, including funders, partner organizations, companies, and volunteers. Without them, our work would be impossible. We thank everybody who supported our work this past year.**

7Mind  
Ableton  
Aga Khan Foundation  
Aktion Mensch  
Anschutz hilft e.V.  
Atelier Gardens GmbH & Co. KG  
Audible  
BAMF/EU  
Berliner Kita-Institut für  
Qualitätsentwicklung (BeKi)  
Bezirksamt Neukölln  
Buddy Bear e.V.  
Candid Foundation  
Cqs Berlin  
Deutsche Stiftung für Ehrenamt und  
Engagement  
Deutsches Hilfswerk  
Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk  
DIS Stockholm  
Diversity Lab  
Duolingo  
Fliegerwerkstatt  
Frauenalia  
Fritz Henkel Stiftung  
Futurium  
Gemeinschaftsunterkunft Bessemer  
Straße  
Goldman Sachs Gives  
Himmelbeet  
Internationaler Bund (IB) Berlin-  
Brandenburg  
ICJA

Klimainsel  
Kwia  
TBB-LKMO  
Lottostiftung Berlin  
Lululemon Community Wellbeing Grant  
Mama Cash  
Martin Roth Initiative  
Mediationszentrum Berlin  
Migrationsbeirat Neukölln  
Migrationsrat Berlin e.V.  
Musicboard Berlin  
Noisy Rooms  
Novation  
Pangea Haus Wilmersdorf  
Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband  
Project Together  
Quartiersmanagement Donauskiez  
Refuge Worldwide  
Refugio/Berliner Stadtmission  
Senatsverwaltung für Arbeit, Soziales,  
Gleichstellung, Integration, Vielfalt und  
Antidiskriminierung  
SPI  
Start Social  
Stiftung Berliner Sparkasse  
Studio Nagelneu  
Springer Nature AG  
Sudskompass  
Total Management  
The Poetry Project  
Welcome Alliance  
ZukunftZwei

**Thank you also to the individual donors from our community. Your support means the world to us.**

# Looking ahead

2025 was a **year of transformation** for us. We stepped into a new chapter by adopting a new name, opening a new space, and piloting fresh project ideas. At the same time, we navigated a leadership transition while continuing our core work with care and consistency. Through these changes, we have sharpened our focus, strengthened our structures, and gained greater clarity about the path ahead.

In 2026, we look forward to building on this foundation: growing the programmes that have proven meaningful, carrying forward what works, and creating space for new ideas to emerge. Above all, we will **continue nurturing** what has always been at the heart of Hejmo - a place where stories are shared, connections are built, and community can thrive.



# Get involved

## Volunteer with us

We always look for volunteers for our projects. If you're interested, you can check out the requirements in our website or send us an email to [welcome@hejmoberlin.org](mailto:welcome@hejmoberlin.org).

## Donate

Regular Donations allow us to plan and to support our community where they need it most. By **donating monthly or yearly**, you can create the **biggest impact**. Every amount, no matter how small, allows us to buy ingredients for Open Kitchen, instruments for Open Music Lab, art supplies for Open Art Space, and all the other knicks and knacks that we need to keep the lights on. And if a **one-time contribution** feels right for you, it also makes a meaningful difference. You can donate by scanning the code to the right.



scan me to donate!

## Other ways to get involved

### Book a Workshop

Engage your team in hands-on workshops focused on community-building, volunteer engagement, and cross-cultural communication. Our sessions offer practical insights into inclusive participation and social cohesion in Berlin's diverse communities.

### Employee Engagement Experiences

Organize corporate volunteering and team-building activities that combine social impact with meaningful connection. From community cooking sessions to DJ workshops at our Berlin project spaces, your team becomes part of a larger story of participation and belonging.

### Support a Community Project

Fund specific initiatives such as free music lessons, intercultural cooking sessions, or creative workshops for refugees and migrants in Berlin. As a project partner, you'll receive regular updates and opportunities to connect directly with the impact you are supporting

### Give Back with Your Sales

Design a cause-related marketing initiative by donating a percentage of your sales to support Hejmo's community programs in Berlin. Together, we can create measurable impact while strengthening your brand's social responsibility profile.

### Music for a Cause

Partner with Hejmo by hosting a fundraising concert or donating a portion of ticket sales. We collaborate with artists and venues who want their events to contribute to inclusive community-building in Berlin.

### Start a Fundraiser

Support our work by collecting donations with your colleagues, organization, or community. Organize a marathon, dinner, or event with proceeds supporting our work. More info [here](#).

## Our Staff

**Nicky Böhm** Director

**Antonina Bajer** Project Coordinator

**Antonina Stasiuk** Project Manager, Open Heart Space

**Joe Marshall** Project Manager, Open Music School

**Matheus Soares Lopes** Project Coordinator

**Ophélie Kauffmann** Project Manager, Open Music Lab

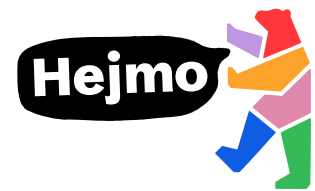
**Ricarda Bochat** Project Manager, Open Kitchen, Open Language Cafes

**Àngela Mora** Communications Manager

**Christin Bohnke** Partnerships Manager

**Felipe Sáez Riquelme** Finance Manager

**Maria Castrillo** Communications and Partnerships Coordinator



## Our Board

**Silke Georgi** Chair

**Majid Albunni** Deputy Chair

**Raphaël Mukarji** Treasurer

**Dana Dimant**

**Muireann ní Sheanlaoich**

## Contributors to this report

Angela Mora

Christin Bohnke

Maria Castrillo

Nicky Böhm

## Contact Information:

**Hejmo**

Sharehouse Refugio

Lenaustrasse 4, 12047 Berlin

[www.hejmoberlin.org](http://www.hejmoberlin.org)

[welcome@hejmoberlin.org](mailto:welcome@hejmoberlin.org)

For questions and comments about this report, please contact Christin Bohnke at [christin@hejmoberlin.org](mailto:christin@hejmoberlin.org)

Date of Issue: May 2025

