



Strategic plan, 2022-2026

Updated March 2025

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1. Introduction

Systemic Justice works to radically transform how the law works for communities fighting for racial, social, and economic justice. We do this by building communities' power to leverage the courts in their campaigns for change and opening up their access to justice.

Certain groups in society are fundamentally and structurally disadvantaged. Racialised groups are disproportionately affected by police violence; migrants are treated inhumanely on and within Europe's borders; and social services and commercial products, such as mortgages and consumer credit, are provided based on assessments that include people's identity markers like ethnicity, religion, and gender, disproportionately affecting those who are already marginalised and placed at a disadvantage.

The courts are powerful agents for change, but marginalised communities are currently unable to leverage their full potential. Recent news cycles illustrate how court victories can spur on change: in climate justice, we see how litigation against states is sparking them to take action on reducing carbon emissions, and decisions on marriage equality are spurring on the "legalisation" of gay marriage. But strategic litigation is not used as widely as it could be by those working on racial, social, and economic justice. Moreover, existing litigation efforts do not always serve these communities or centre their needs. For example, current climate litigation does not address the needs of marginalised groups, and the marriage equality movement has been critiqued for privileging whiteness and subordinating non-normative relationships. An intersectional approach is lacking, often due to uneven power dynamics between communities and those doing the legal work. Legal fees are high, processes are complex, and the legal profession continues to inadequately reflect our society. This means that litigation tends to be closed off to and not driven by the communities that could use it the most.

By creating a truly participatory, open model of partnership, strategic litigation can not only strengthen existing campaigns for justice but also be a point of gravity around which solidarity and new campaigns are built. Centring communities' perspective and lived experience is key here. Instead of having lawyers take over and set the agenda, Systemic Justice develops community-driven litigation campaigns, making it possible for communities to take back power and go to court on their own terms.

Systemic Justice is the [first organisation in Europe that is Black-led](#) with a majority BPOC team and works with community partners on strategic litigation by taking a community-driven, intersectional approach. Our litigation focuses on issues of racial, social, and economic justice. We applying [an intersectional lens in all our work](#), and address issues across [the digital and non-digital context](#).

Our foundational values:

Anti-oppression: we challenge oppression (racism, homophobia, ableism, sexism, xenophobia, transphobia) by confronting systems of domination, privilege, exclusion, and institutional violence.

Intersectionality: we approach our work through an intersectional lens that centres how an individual's social or political identity and personal characteristics can overlap and combine to create different modes of discrimination, exclusion, and oppression.

Justice: we believe that justice means providing all individuals with an equal opportunity to enforce their rights, access remedies and receive reparations for violations of their rights, and to push for change before the courts.

2. Towards racial, social, and economic justice

Systemic Justice works on the basis of a theory of change (see [Annex 1](#)) developed in 2022, which will be subject to revision following an external evaluation of Systemic Justice's five-year pilot phase in 2026.

SYSTEMIC JUSTICE VISION	
A world where communities have the power to use the courts on their own terms to secure racial, social, and economic justice	

Towards this overall vision, Systemic Justice works to radically transform how the law works for communities fighting for racial, social, and economic justice. This work is organised into three tracks of work, each of which has an outcome.

OVERALL OUTCOME 1	Power is built and communities are confident and well-equipped to use litigation on their own terms
OVERALL OUTCOME 2	Community-driven litigation is used as a tool to advance community-defined priorities of racial, social, and economic justice movements
OVERALL OUTCOME 3	Equitable working models and practices for community-driven litigation are considered the norm amongst litigators working on racial, social, and economic justice

The three tracks of work, which also provide the structure for our theory of change, are:

1. Building the knowledge and power of organisations and movements fighting for justice and equality.
 2. Launching and sustaining community-driven strategic litigation.
 3. Scaling impact by promoting equitable working models with the broader field of litigators.
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2.1. Building knowledge and power

We believe that communities should be able to make informed choices about how they want to incorporate litigation in their campaigns for change. This is why we work to build the knowledge and power of organisations and movements fighting for justice and equality to better decide if and how to integrate litigation in their strategies for change. We do this by:

- Developing resources on strategic litigation, to assist in better understanding the different aspects of it, and to help guide considerations on if or how litigation might be a tactic to include in campaigns for change.
- Delivering workshops and knowledge-sharing events to assist those doing community-based or -facing work in better understanding strategic litigation as a tool for change and what it might do for their campaigns.
- Hosting regular drop-in calls to address community questions and assist in finding support elsewhere for matters outside Systemic Justice's scope of work.

- Ensuring that all our resources are accessible-by-design and offered in multiple formats and languages so they can benefit and be used by as large an audience as possible.

2.1.1. *Connected outcomes, immediate outcomes, outputs*

Under this track of work, the following outcomes and outputs will bring Systemic Justice closer to achieving its overall outcomes and long-term impact:

OVERALL OUTCOME 1	Power and knowledge is facilitated and built within communities so they are confident and well-equipped to use litigation strategically and on their own terms.
Outcomes	<p>Communities campaigning for racial, social, and economic justice have access to learning resources that support them in building an understanding of strategic litigation</p> <p>Communities are supported in directly applying this learning to their own campaigns, so they can initiate the building of a litigation strategy on their own terms</p> <p>Communities are equipped to identify the risks and opportunities in leveraging strategic litigation, and have greater power when accessing the law and legal representation</p> <p>The needs of communities are continuously centred in the resources that are produced and provided, and there is a regular assessment of these needs and relevant feedback for existing resources</p> <p>Communities have a better understanding of how communities can work with Systemic Justice in leveraging the courts through community-driven strategic litigation</p>
Outputs	<p>Designing and implementing a strategic litigation learning journey for communities, that is accessible to all, including by:</p> <p>Producing learning resources in multiple formats, and on the basis of needs identified by communities related to strategic litigation</p> <p>Holding workshops, trainings, and other learning convenings to facilitate the application of knowledge to community's own campaigns, and to initiate and deepen the designing of their own litigation strategies</p> <p>Conduct regular needs assessments and feedback opportunities for the refinement and further development of resources and activities</p> <p>Apply accessibility-by-design principles to existing resources, so they can reach a broad range of communities and community partners</p>
Activities	Collect feedback and input from communities in Systemic Justice's network to assess ongoing needs in relation to building knowledge on litigation, including topics, resource types and formats, and accessibility needs.

	<p>Hold at least six workshops per year on an introduction to strategic litigation to communities seeking to learn more about strategic litigation and what it can do for their cause.</p> <p>Further develop Systemic Justice’s Community Toolkit for Change, and make it more accessible to communities (including by translating this foundational resource into different languages).</p> <p>Regular convenings with community organisations across movements for knowledge sharing, strategising, and workshopping resources and campaigns.</p>
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2.2. Launching community-driven litigation

We litigate with community partners to achieve change by leveraging the power of the courts. Through a truly participatory, open model of partnership, we jointly build litigation campaigns to bring about structural change on issues of racial, social, and economic justice. Recognising that structural change takes time, Systemic Justice enters long-term, trust-based partnerships and develops strategies that tackle root causes rather than addressing merely the symptoms of unjust and unequal power structures.

When exploring a partnership, we jointly discuss the following questions:

1. What is the bigger change the community wants to see?
2. Would the community want and be prepared to leverage litigation to support the campaign to bring about this change?
3. What are the shorter-term steps to achieving the change the community wants to see, and how might they translate into legal actions?

If we mutually decide to move forward together, we will jointly design the strategy for the litigation campaign. We will work together closely as the effort unfolds, in which Systemic Justice will take care of the legal aspects of the campaign whilst taking the lead from the community partners themselves.

2.2.1. *Connected outcomes, immediate outcomes, outputs*

Under this track of work, the following outcomes and outputs will bring Systemic Justice closer to achieving its overall outcomes and long-term impact:

OVERALL OUTCOME 2	Community-driven litigation is used as a tool to advance community-defined visions and goals, and on the basis of strategies designed by communities themselves
Outcomes	<p>Communities gain knowledge and confidence in their understanding of strategic litigation, what it entails, and the impact it can have on their cause</p> <p>Communities are supported in a sustainable way and are given space to design their own litigation strategies, set goals and priorities, make tactical decisions, and shape legal arguments in their cases</p>

	Case management and strategy are managed in a transparent, accessible, and accountable way to facilitate community decision making
Outputs	<p>Trust-based, equitable partnerships and ways of working are established with all communities involved in litigation work</p> <p>Litigation strategies are developed that meet the needs, vision, goals and priorities of all community partners</p> <p>Cases are built and handled in accordance with the community-designed litigation strategies, and these cases achieve outcomes that the community can build on further, with our support, in their campaigns for change</p>
Activities	<p>Litigation community partnerships are built with at least six communities working on climate justice or social protection, and they are supported in designing a litigation strategy, preparing for litigation through a litigation readiness programme, and building and taking cases according to the community-designed strategy.</p> <p>Community partners are supported in this process through regular meetings, workshops, and strategising sessions, as well as the necessary legal work and co-ordination of legal resources to ensure impactful cases can be taken.</p> <p>Systemic Justice's community-driven litigation methodology is developed and refined on a regular basis, seeking to de-centre the lawyers in the litigation process, and to ensure strong, trust-based, and sustainable partnerships.</p>

2.2.2. Evidencing Racial, Social and Economic Injustice

Our research projects and activities are undertaken to guide and infuse Systemic Justice litigation projects and legal work, and to provide reliable up-to-date information in service to organisations and movements across the region. This involves the design and implementation of innovative, non-extractive research methodologies which foreground experiences of the harms caused by injustice; evidencing structural harms on marginalised groups and communities.

2.2.2.1. Connected outcomes, outputs, and activities

Our research supports our work to build the power of community organisations and guides and informs community-driven litigation projects. The following outcomes and outputs will bring Systemic Justice closer to achieving its overall impact:

Overall outcome	Research knowledge, information, and evidence drives the identification and prioritisation of litigation and other opportunities for change and action, and informs all Systemic Justice's legal action and litigation projects.
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Outcomes	<p>Regular production of evidence outputs of systemic injustice as experienced by racially, socially, and economically marginalised groups and communities across Europe.</p> <p>Systemic Justice recognised as a leading authority in the production of reliable, accessible, and community grounded research knowledge and information.</p> <p>Organisation remains aware of the trends, changes and community effects of systemic injustices across the region.</p>
Outputs	<p>2023: The production and publication of secondary data analysis of outputs from the 2022 <i>Surfacing Systemic Injustice: A community view</i> report to further understanding of climate justice and social protection ecosystems across Europe.</p> <p>2023: The publication of rapid evidence assessments to gather the most up-to-date research knowledge and information relating to climate justice and social protection.</p> <p>2024: The production and publication of 'Revisiting Systemic Injustices across Europe' (RSIE), a research report that gathers the stories, testimonies and narratives of community organisations and movements of modalities of systemic harms across Europe.</p>
Activities	<p>2023: Establish the Systemic Justice – Research Support Network (SJ-RSN).</p> <p>Convene quarterly meetings with SJ-RSN to provide oversight of all SJ research projects and activity (June 2023, September 2023, December 2023, March 2024).</p> <p>2023: Design and implement SJ non-extractive, community driven research methodology to guide research outputs.</p> <p>2023: The provision of research capacity to respond to ad-hoc research request in support of legal, operations, and communications needs.</p> <p>2023: In collaboration with SJ-RSN, community organisations, and movements establish (theme-specific) research partners with representative (European) zonal coverage.</p> <p>2024: Post-publication community dissemination activities for <i>Revisiting Systemic Injustices across Europe</i> report.</p> <p>2025: With the research undertaken to date affirming our course, we are now focusing on the litigation readiness work with communities in the two identified thematic areas before we consider how and when to expand into additional themes based on community needs in 2026.</p>

2.3. Scaling impact by promoting equitable working models

There is a growing desire within the legal field to take a more community-focused approach in litigation work. To meet this need, Systemic Justice facilitates a community of practice for

litigators, legal practitioners, and litigating organisations working on cases that concern racial, social, and economic justice issues in Europe. In the Community of Practice, participants come together to:

- Share ideas, experiences, and best practices.
- Support each other towards individual and shared goals.
- Pool valuable learning and create new knowledge.

Systemic Justice's role in the community of practice is to cultivate, organise, and facilitate the community to ensure that members get high value for their time and participation. In 2022, the community of practice defined a shared objective for the work, which was to "to work collectively to promote community-centred lawyering and reframe litigation processes so they can be more accessible and better serve communities and their objectives."

2.3.1 Connected outcomes, immediate outcomes, outputs

Under this track of work, the following outcomes and outputs will bring Systemic Justice closer to achieving its overall outcomes and long-term impact:

OVERALL OUTCOME 3	Equitable working models and practices for community-driven litigation are considered the norm amongst litigators working on racial, social and economic justice in Europe
Outcomes	<p>Establish and facilitate a Community of Practice that can collectively promote community-centred lawyering and reframe litigation processes so they can be more accessible and better serve communities</p> <p>Share Systemic Justice's methods of doing lawyering differently, in support of legal practitioners shifting towards a more community-driven approach</p> <p>Collaborate with the network in support of Systemic Justice's community-driven litigation and building knowledge and power where possible</p>
Outputs	<p>Design and implement a curriculum for a learning journey on decolonial, anti-oppressive, and trauma-informed lawyering</p> <p>Facilitate projects with the objectives of:</p> <p>developing a methodology for putting communities in the driver's seat in litigation, and</p> <p>organising litigation workshops to share and acquire knowledge as a community.</p> <p>Regular convening and engagement with CoP participants, including annual retreats</p> <p>Take steps to ensure that knowledge, ideas, and lessons are exchanged, developed, and shared beyond the CoP</p>
Activities	Annual retreats and other convenings for Community of Practice members to discuss how the community is running, reassess its goals and structures, share ideas for improvement, and develop projects for the community to work on together.

	<p>Host an online platform for the sharing of information, ideas, updates, and opportunities within the Community of Practice.</p> <p>Work collectively on a focused project to learn about decolonial, anti-oppressive, and trauma-informed lawyering as well as restorative justice and a lawyer's role in it.</p>
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2.4. Theory of Change

Systemic Justice works on the basis of a theory of change which is structured along the above three tracks of work. See Annex 1.

3. A different kind of organisation

Systemic Justice is a non-profit (*stichting*) registered in the Netherlands with ANBI (Dutch Public Benefit Organisation) status. As of July 2024, we have a two-tier governance structure consisting of a Management Board and a Supervisory Board.

From the very beginning, we have sought to build an organisation that is truly aligned with its foundational values of anti-oppression, justice, and intersectionality. Ensuring that such values are lived in practice requires critical questioning of the wisdom of “best practices” in non-profit governance and implies thinking of governance in a more holistic way to co-create a governance structure that aligns to our values. This also includes the team and the board reflecting on how power should be shared within the organisation and what ways of working together can make it possible for everyone involved to help accomplish its mission.

3.1. Organisational development

Developing Systemic Justice over the period of 2022-2026 is a joint effort between the organisation's team and board, which requires ongoing adjustment and learning. The below objectives and activities/outputs serve as a framework for this work which can be refined over time.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE	
An organisation built and developed in alignment with a set of guiding operational values that are aligned to the organisation's core values to create an anti-oppressive, intersectional, and positive just work place for staff, enabling the organisation to deliver on its mission.	
TEAM CAPACITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing: Undertake continuous team capacity planning exercises and reviews to ensure capacity and structure matches workload. • Ongoing: Build the operational framework that supports the growth and development of the team's capacity. <p>2025 milestones: Please see Human Resources section below (page 17)</p>

GOVERNANCE AND LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing: Establish and undertake structured organisational learning that helps us deepen our knowledge around working in and shaping an anti-oppressive work environment, including through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structured self-reflections in a team setting. ○ Trainings and workshops during SJ team retreats and throughout the year. ○ Creating the space to develop new models of learning and reflection within the team and as individuals. • Ongoing: Establish and facilitate feedback and self-reflection spaces where the team can reflect on the work environment, goals, and workload. <p>2025 milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisory Board recruitment of 3 additional members • Development of Management Board – Supervisory Board ways of working
A REMOTE WORK SETUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing: A strong cohesive remote work culture that facilitates connection, collaboration and impactful work together. • Ongoing: Organise three annual team retreats (spring, summer, autumn), to strengthen teamwork, and facilitate joint planning and strategising. • Ongoing: Organise smaller team convenings and bilateral in-person meetings where needed. • Ongoing: Support colleagues who have special wishes for their remote working setup, including working e.g. in a shared office environment, co-working space, and home office setups. <p>2025 milestones:</p> <p>Refine approach to remote working by setting and respecting clear boundaries, establishing clarity in availability, organising online social gatherings, implementing collaborative technology solutions.</p>
M&E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing: Develop and implement project-specific monitoring and evaluation solutions, where needed. • Ongoing: Produce annual progress report (due February) for organisational funders (see below under Funding). <p>2026 milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake review of pilot phase (2022-2026).
COMMUNICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing: Refine and expand presence on social media in line with hope-based communications strategy. • Ongoing: Produce external annual report • Ongoing: Develop integrated partner communications strategies for litigation projects as needed, working directly with partners and providing communications, campaigning, and press support.

	<p>2025 milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of redeveloped website • Launch of RSIE 2.0 interactive website • Publication of translated RSIE report (Spanish, French and accessibility version)
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3.2. Operations

Systemic Justice seeks to ensure that its internal operational setup supports the team's ability to deliver on the organisation's mission. This means ensuring smooth and efficient day-to-day running of the organisation by designing and implementing policies, systems, and procedures.

OPERATIONS OBJECTIVE	
Anti-oppressive and just operations that enables our team to put the power of litigation into the hands of communities.	
HUMAN RESOURCES	<p>Objective: A joy-filled workplace defined by experiences of equity, justice, and equality</p> <p>Ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of team and procurement of consultants as necessary to support organisational needs; • Work with the team to develop organisational practices that make sense for the way we work, are efficient, and responsive to team and partner needs; • Schedule organisational practice review sessions regularly. Check to make sure the practices are aligned with our values, are accessible to all, and are not just reflections of dominant culture/voice; • Support staff with learning organisational practices and tools through onboarding, scheduled refreshers, additional support; • Develop and continuously refine well-being support offers to team, including e.g. psycho-social support, healing, and therapy. <p>2025 milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and onboarding of Executive Director • Recruitment and onboarding of new Head of Legal • Recruitment and onboarding of legal team members • Recruitment and onboarding of new fundraising and communications team members • Development of staff handbook and key HR, People & Culture policies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update of jurisdictional employment compliance
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION	<p>Objective: Financial management and planning drives the organisation's strategic decision-making and development;</p> <p>Ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refine financial management practices according to established best practice. • Budgetary planning and tracking of the organisation's financial situation. • Develop and revise annual organisational budget for board approval. • Develop grant budgets, make adjustments, and produce financial reporting as necessary. • Prepare for annual external audits and ensure learnings from audits are integrated into financial management practice. • Develop and refine procurement policy and practice. <p>2025 milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refinements to new organisational ERP • Development of finance and accounting handbooks • Revise payment and budget management procedures • Update and implement procurement policy • Develop KPI dashboard
TECHNOLOGY	<p>Objective: Frameworks, processes, and tools guide and facilitate collaboration and workflows;</p> <p>Ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the organisation's technology solutions provide for secure, reliable, collaborative, and user-friendly workflows. • Procure IT solutions and manage relations with external providers, including hosting, IT support, software, and hardware suppliers. • Deploy hardware and software and ensure information security practice in line with recognised standards. <p>2025 milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising CRM implemented • Legal case management platform implemented • Implementation of new task and project management platform • Key IT policies updated and implemented • Develop and launch home.systemicjustice.ngo for staff handbook and other core policies
RISK MANAGEMENT	<p>Objective: Compliance and risk management across programmes and operations safeguard the organisation;</p>

& COMPLIANCE	<p>Ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-annually refine organisation-wide risk management framework covering internal organisational and external programmatic risks and mitigation measures. • Ensure all policies and internal procedures are values-aligned, are socialised, applied and updated as necessary. • Ensure organisational compliance across all areas (governance, finance, HR, legal, IT) <p>2025 milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refine organisational risk management approach and assessment • Update and implement key policies: safeguarding, anti-racism, code of conduct, conflict of interest • Update and implement change management approach
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3.3. Funding

Systemic Justice seeks funding which enables it to act in line with our organisational values. While we acknowledge that philanthropy and the capitalist system need to change, the work we need to do is urgent and, given the challenges we're facing, we require robust resources to make the work sustainable for our team and partners, and can thus not have the perfect be the enemy of the good. In this context, Systemic Justice's foundational parameters for receiving funding include:

- No funder gets to dictate our actions: This includes what issues we take on, do not take on, the partners we do this with, who we act in solidarity with, and everything in between.
- No funding we accept should harm the communities we work with: For example, if funding directed at a specific litigation campaign puts communities in harm's way or triggers trauma for them.
- We do not rely on donations from the communities we're working with: While crowdfunding can be a powerful campaigning tool, and we do not exclude the possibility of using this for specific litigation projects, we will not seek direct donations from the communities we serve.
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FUNDING OBJECTIVE	
To robustly resource Systemic Justice's work via a diverse set of income streams	
FUNDRAISING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022-2026: Sustain ambitions of developing litigation projects in line with programmatic objectives and a solid operational backbone for the organisation, while ensuring no individual source of funding exceeds 30% of annual turnover.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023: Have a funding pipeline in place by EOY that guarantees operations and activities at 2023 level and that can accommodate an increase in line with 2024 ambitions; • 2024: Explore viable options for building a high net worth individual (HNI) fundraising infrastructure by EOY that minimises negative impact on the team; • 2024: Explore viability of, and pathway to, government funding.
FUNDER RELATIONS	<p>Ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align reporting requirements and ensure a majority of funders receive annual narrative report and annual accounts as main source of reporting; • Convene 2 annual joint funder calls to discuss reporting and forward-looking plans; • Continue stewardship and explore synergies between Systemic Justice and other grantees of Systemic Justice funders.

POST-2026: SYSTEMIC JUSTICE BEYOND EUROPE

Systemic Justice's five-year pilot period (2022-2026) will serve as a basis for evaluating the community-driven approach to strategic litigation which sits at the core of our work.

Beyond this period, the ambition is to continue and expand the work in Europe but also to explore options for testing the viability of Systemic Justice's community-driven litigation model in other global regions and through other modalities (e.g. locally based chapters or other ways to maximise the impact of the work locally).

Annex 1: Theory of Change 2022-2026

