Recourse Strategy 2025–2030

RECOURSE

Making finance accountable to people and planet

Contents

Summary

This strategy is intended to guide Recourse as an organisation over the five-year period from 2025 to 2030.

Anchored in on our vision, mission and values, the strategy operates around three external change goals and one internal change goal focused on organisational development. It is complemented by four cross-cutting strategies, intended to inform work under the external change goals which will replace the previous "Rights and accountability" and "Ecological Justice" programmes.

Background

This strategy was developed after extensive discussions with staff, partners and other stakeholders, and takes into account the external context in which Recourse operates, as well as our strategic positioning, track record and lessons learned to date. It should be seen as an evolution of the 2020–2025 strategy, which seeks to deepen and extend the results already achieved under that previous strategy.

Recourse targets development finance through international financial institutions (IFIs), as a means of influencing the wider investment community and governments, to ensure inclusive, environmentally sustainable, socially just and pro-poor development. Because IFIs use public money, they are accountable to citizens. As governments are shareholders in these institutions, this enables civil society to hold them to account.

Recourse's work covers a range of IFIs, specifically the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as multilateral development banks (MDBs), including the World Bank Group (WBG), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). We also work strategically with allies to engage other actors such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), and bilateral development finance institutions.

This strategy builds on the deep expertise of Recourse staff, their effective influencing across IFIs, and diverse international experience. Further, it aims to complement the resources, networks, and expertise of our CSO (civil society organisation) partners from Africa, Asia and Latin America, and of the civil society alliances and coalitions within which we work.

The strategy also takes into account the rapidly evolving funding environment, the challenges of remote working, and the need for operational resilience. It also addresses the challenges that staff face in engaging in fast-moving, complex and interconnected policy debates. As Recourse's programme of work has expanded over the last five years to cover new, emerging issues, this has led to a growing need to refresh our strategic direction and organisational goals, measure our impact and communicate our work more widely.

The volatile geopolitical context has brought new political challenges in the struggle to achieve progressive action at the level of IFIs, for a just energy transition and for human rights—in particular women's rights. The rise of extremist politics, wavering commitments to climate action, and the undermining of multilateral economic governance are major concerns, threatening progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement.

This in turn has brought new challenges to multilateralism, both in the context of IFIs and for other international fora, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Power dynamics within and amongst IFIs are evolving and shifting. Although the US continues to play a dominant decision-making role, other players are still important, including Europe, and increasingly other shareholders such as India and China. Moreover, fora such as the G20 are pushing IFIs to be "bolder" and take more risks, but without adequate safeguards and accountability mechanisms. This puts vulnerable communities, such as Indigenous Peoples, under increased threat. It has led to an intensified focus on risky 'private sector first' approaches and financing for 'false solutions', which derail efforts to pursue a truly just transition. IFIs are moving more and more finance outside the scope of safeguards and disclosure, demanding ever greater scrutiny.

In this context, the work of Recourse has never been more crucial. Campaigning to promote a vision of better and more sustainable development, advocating to reverse highly damaging IFI policies and practices, standing in solidarity with civil society organisations and the communities they support—all of this is more important than ever. With this strategy, Recourse will aim to address these challenges through three change goals focussed on Upholding rights, a Just Transition, and a Fair International Financial System, and several cross-cutting strategies.

This strategy identifies clear and emerging opportunities to advocate for people and the planet at IFIs. These include:

- IMF reform processes and the current debate on international financial architecture, which provide a platform to advocate for changes in global financial governance;
- Growing pressure on climate/nature goals, which provides opportunities for collaboration and advocacy on climate/nature finance, especially finance for energy access and just transition;
- Increasing demand for evidence and solutions in the public financing of clean energy;
- Fast evolution of new financing models being implemented by MDBs to "de-risk" and "leverage" private sector investment;
- Rising threats to safeguards and accountability mechanisms, alongside opportunities to influence safeguard reform (such as the three-year process to reform the Sustainability Framework of the World Bank Group's International Financial Corporation (IFC)).

Vision, mission, values and stakeholders

The Recourse Strategy 2025–2030 is based on the following:

Vision

Our vision is a world where people and planet are at the heart of development.

Mission

We campaign for international financial institutions to be democratic in their governance, and accountable, rights-based and environmentally sustainable in their policies and practices. We call for a just reform of the international financial architecture, and work in solidarity with allies, movements, and affected communities towards our vision.

Values

Our work is guided by respect, justice, solidarity, accountability and credibility.

Stakeholders

Recourse targets the international financial institutions (IFIs), fora and multilateral spaces that hold considerable sway over the global financial system. This includes multilateral development banks (MDBs), namely the World Bank Group (WBG), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and African Development Bank (AfDB), as well as other regional and national development finance institutions. It also includes the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the UN climate convention (UNFCCC), the G20, Financing for Development, and regional fora.

We collaborate with organisations and networks around the world that stand up for the rights of women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and communities impacted by IFI policies and practices. We work in solidarity with partners across Africa, Asia and Latin America, with whom we co-create and implement influencing strategies and support critical engagement with IFIs.

External change goals

Recourse will pursue three external change goals, to achieve the following changes:

Upholding rights: IFIs strengthen people's rights in their policies and practices, to effect more equitable and sustainable development. IFI rules and accountability systems are better equipped to prevent, reduce and remediate harm to people and the planet.

Just transition: IFIs support a transformative shift in investments away from fossil fuel-based and extractivist energy systems to renewable energy systems that are people-centred, just, accountable, affordable and accessible.

Fair international financial system: The international financial system and institutions prioritise climate-resilient, just and equitable development that is rights-based, accountable and empowers communities in policy and practice.

In this strategy, Recourse moves from having two thematic programmes to working towards three external change goals. This approach entails planning for and monitoring results in the three distinct goals, while recognising their interconnectedness and incentivising activities which contribute to multiple goals. For instance: Recourse may work with a partner organisation to support a community complaint to a MDB accountability mechanism (upholding rights goal). If the complaint is upheld, it has the potential to bring remedy for the complainants, but also to leverage wider change, for instance at the level of the just energy transition (just transition goal), or in engendering more inclusion in IFI policies (fair international financial system goal).

1. Upholding rights

IFIs strengthen people's rights in their policies and practices to effect more equitable and sustainable development. IFI rules and accountability systems are better equipped to prevent, reduce and remediate harm to people and the planet.

Publicly-funded development banks should respect, protect and fulfil the rights of affected communities and be fully accountable—both to communities and tax-paying publics—for their actions. IFIs should also use their substantial leverage with clients—both public and private—to ensure they respect human rights.

One of the main ways Recourse holds financial institutions accountable is through non-judicial independent accountability mechanisms (IAMs). The two main ways of influencing IAMs is by bringing cases in support of communities, and by influencing how IAMs operate. As IFIs are accountable to the environmental and social standards they espouse, Recourse also seeks to strengthen those protections, and to improve transparency and disclosure—a prerequisite for communities to be able to know about and access IAMs.

The race to triple renewable energy by 2030, although founded in the undeniable urgency of the energy transition, is having untold social and environmental costs, notably in the rush to build large dams or solar parks and grab transition minerals. Recourse will promote a rights-based approach to this issue, as a technocratic approach is not truly sustainable if it undermines the rights of the communities affected by those development choices.

This goal has three complementary components: **safeguards, accountability, and remedy.**

- **Stronger safeguards**: Recourse will advocate for IFIs—including the IFC, ADB and AIIB—to strengthen key safeguards or policies within the next five years. Through this work, we will ensure IFIs improve protections for affected communities, in particular for women, Indigenous peoples and marginalised groups, in line with international human rights norms. This work will underpin a just energy transition and a more equitable and sustainable financial system.
- **Stronger rights for complainants**: Recourse will engage with policy reviews of IFI accountability mechanisms within the next five years—including the AIIB, ADB, EBRD and EIB—to promote stronger rights for complainants, including better accessibility, independence, protection from retaliation, and access to remedy. We will also monitor and advocate around IFI initiatives which threaten to weaken IFI accountability, such as co-financing, mutual reliance (where access to IAMs is limited), or delegation of project approvals. This will complement the Finance goal on the exemption of new financing modalities.
- **Remedy for communities who have suffered harm**: Recourse will help to secure remedy and achieve systemic policy changes. We will do this by working with partner organisations to support communities affected by unjust development projects in at least five cases, including by filing cases to IAMs.

2. Just transition

IFIs support a transformative shift in investments, away from fossil fuel-based and extractivist energy systems towards sustainable renewable energy systems that are people-centred, accountable, affordable and accessible.

The urgency of the climate crisis demands that IFIs stand firm in their commitment to combat climate change, in line with the Paris Agreement, and support a just transition to clean, accessible energy for all.

To achieve this, IFIs must rule out all forms of finance or support for fossil fuels—including through financial intermediaries, technical assistance, guarantees and policy-based lending. This means closing remaining loopholes for coal financing, including for 'captive coal', and recognising that fossil gas is not a 'transition' fuel. To contribute to tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030, IFIs must scale up investments in sustainable renewable technologies in a way that both safeguards and empowers communities. This means avoiding 'false solutions' (listed below) and projects with high social and environmental risk, as well as ensuring fair benefit-sharing in renewable energy projects and in the exploitation of transition minerals.

Recourse will work with partners and coalitions to bring hard-hitting campaigns to IFIs and their shareholders, based on evidence and local experiences. Our research will expose where IFIs are still supporting fossil fuels or damaging projects and highlight both bad and best practices. Over the next five years, we will seek to influence MDB energy policy/strategy reviews, Paris Alignment and climate finance methodologies, and country strategies and platforms.

We will focus on the following thematic areas:

- **Sustainable renewable energy transition**: Recourse will campaign for measurable shifts in MDB practice and policy towards an increase in renewable energy investments with high standards for a people-centred, just transition. We will advocate for IFIs to actively support national transitions to 100% renewable, decentralised energy systems, with a focus on energy access for all that also promotes gender equality (Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 7).
- **Equitable approach to transition minerals:** Recourse will advocate for IFIs to support a just and equitable approach to transition mineral extraction and processing. Such an approach actively seeks to involve and benefit the communities and countries where minerals are located. It focuses on minimising demand, ensuring robust safeguards, and fostering a circular economy.
- **Stop funding fossil fuels**: Recourse will advocate for IFIs to fully align with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit, by excluding financing for all fossil fuels, including 'captive coal' and fossil gas.
- **No 'false solutions'**: Recourse will campaign for MDBs to avoid supporting 'false solutions', i.e. socially and environmentally risky technologies, such as nuclear, co-firing of power stations with fossil fuels, hydrogen, waste-to-energy, industrial biofuels, offsets, carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS), large-scale hydropower, and geothermal energy.

3. Fair international financial system

The international financial system and institutions prioritise climate-resilient, just and equitable development that is rights-based, accountable and empowers communities in policy and practice.

The international financial system, by design, is primarily serving the interests of wealthy industrialised countries and is dominated by IFIs that are to a large extent undemocratic and unaccountable. Their policies and lending practices heavily influence countries' development pathways towards extractivist and creditor-centric models, and direct international financial flows towards projects that prioritise private profit over people and the planet.

Recourse will work with partners to support the democratisation of multilateral spaces where international financing priorities and practices are discussed, such as the G20, UNFCCC and Financing for Development, to influence the design of financing models and instruments so that they deliver for human rights and the planet, and help build momentum around economic alternatives.

This three-tiered approach will contribute towards countering finance's power by prioritising human rights over short-term economic profit and shifting power over economic decision-making to communities.

- **Financing flows—shifting power in the international financial system**: Recourse will advocate for a shift of power from financial capital to the people by working with partners to open up civil society space and build people's capacity to engage. Together, we will urge IFIs and financial regulation mechanisms to be democratic, accountable, and consistent with international human rights, climate obligations and a just transition. This includes influencing IMF reform processes and the ongoing debate on the future international financial architecture, which provide a platform to advocate for changes in global financial governance, including on debt.
- **Financing models that work for people and the planet**: Recourse will expand the evidence base on how unsustainable financing models, including the intensified push for IFIs to enable private finance and private sector-led development, can harm the most marginalised and vulnerable communities, undermine gender equality and contribute to environmental destruction and climate change. We will work with partners to explore and campaign for new development financing models that are rights-based, democratic, and non-extractive, with social, ecological and economic justice at the heart.
- **Financing modalities that enhance transparency and accountability**: Recourse will expose and challenge how obscure and untransparent financing modalities allow MDBs to continue to support fossil fuels and other problematic projects, including those that violate the rights of communities. We will research and monitor how traditional and 'innovative' financing modalities translates into government policy and projects on the ground and what the real impact is. We will use the evidence to challenge approvals of new projects and new modalities, and to engage in IFI policy review processes to push for financing modalities to become more accountable, transparent, and people and climate-friendly.

Internal change goal

Recourse is a strong and sustainable organisation that follows a strategic approach to finance, operations, and communications. This foundation enables a thriving, expert global staff team and partners to deliver our mission.

A successful organisation is built upon a solid base: robust internal systems and a resilient, thriving team of people. Recourse's team has grown in number and expanded geographically over the past few years, along with our programme of work and partnerships.

Over the next five years, Recourse will improve internal systems, cultivate robust financial health, and nurture our global team. We will seek to be strategic, innovative and ready to adapt to the evolving economic and geopolitical landscape. Recourse will continue to strengthen our position as a professional, respective, global organisation.

This internal change goal has four aspects:

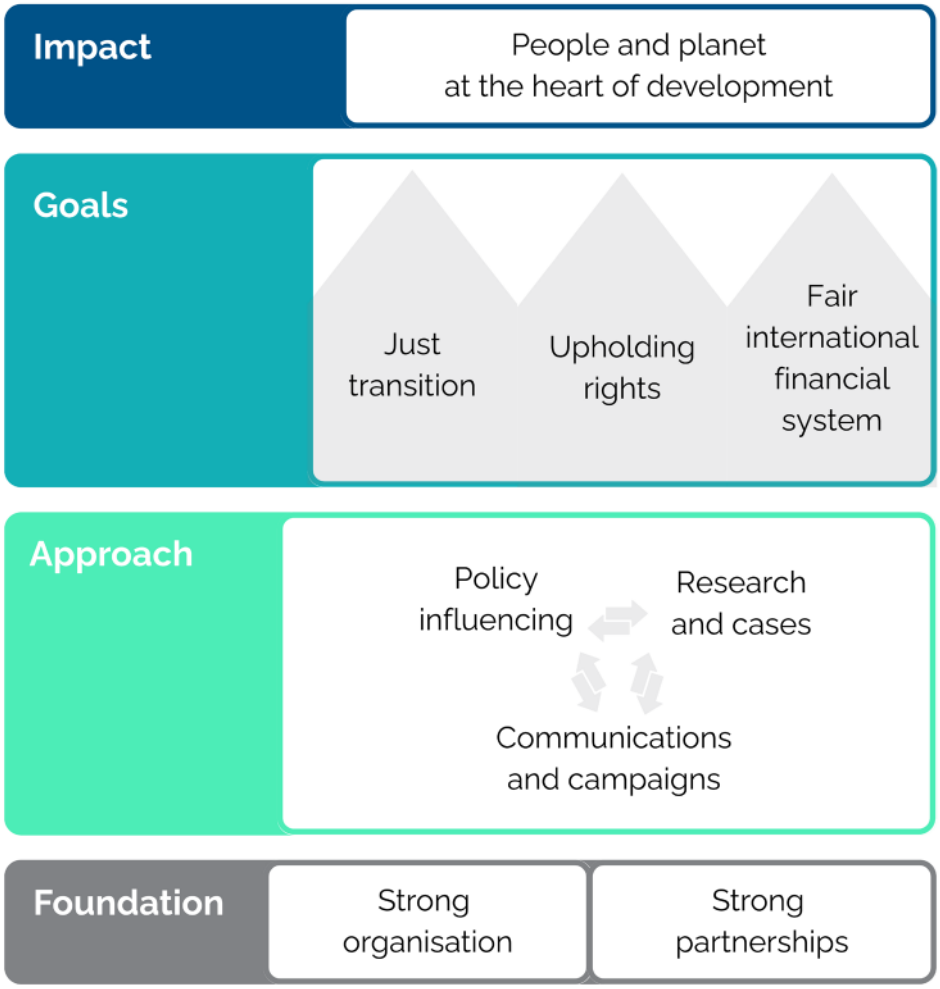
- **Strong team and operations:** Recourse will implement and maintain efficient operational systems that enable seamless workflows and transparency in a remote workplace. We will cultivate a diverse, skilled, and motivated global team, providing an inclusive and supportive work environment which nurtures creativity, innovation and professional development. As staff wellbeing is paramount, we will put systems and policies in place to support staff through peers, line managers, and a staff forum. We will seek to continuously improve operational, human resource and governance systems to support scalable and impactful campaigns and partnerships.
- **Financial resilience:** Recourse will work towards long-term financial sustainability through securing steady and diverse revenue streams, and optimising resource allocation. This will require planning, continuous evaluation, and flexibility to respond to unanticipated shocks. We will foster a culture of accountability and transparency in financial reporting, and ethical decision-making in fund management. As a values-driven organisation, we will engage with donors as collaborators, seeking alignment where funding supports and accelerates our mission.
- **Respected brand:** Recourse will update the communications strategy with target audience profiles and power analysis. We will work to ensure visual consistency across products, as well as clarity in tone and messaging.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)**: We will put in place robust and dynamic monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks to ensure that our work aligns with our mission and delivers meaningful results. This will help us to communicate our impact to stakeholders, in turn cultivating trust and improving the effectiveness of our campaigns.

Cross-cutting strategies

The Recourse Strategy 2025–2030 builds on our existing approach of:

- using evidence-based advocacy, campaigns and communications to achieve policy and practice change at IFIs, to protect and uphold people's rights and ecological justice, with a strong focus on gender equality;
- working closely with global coalitions and partners from Africa, Asia and Latin America to influence IFIs and hold them accountable;
- supporting and building coalitions to maximise impact, foster long-term systemic change and contribute to the wider movements for economic justice and climate justice.

In order to deepen our impact in pursuing the three external change goals under this strategy, Recourse has prioritised four areas through which we will strengthen our ways of working, internally and with partners. This will ensure that a consistent range of influencing tactics are deployed in all areas, enhancing synergy across the three interconnected goals.



Policy and advocacy

Recourse will deliver more effective, partner-centred, and evidence-based advocacy, by establishing an internal Policy and Advocacy Hub for coordination, strategic planning, and continuous adaptation to the evolving environment.

Recourse recognises that more effective advocacy, policy coherence and coordination is essential to achieve our change goals.

Recourse's policy and advocacy approaches are guided by three principles: we are partner-centred, evidence-based, and gender-informed. We strive to be informed by our partners and work alongside them in all our advocacy efforts. We use real world evidence when advocating for better IFI policies and practices, based on rigorous desk-based and primary research, informed by our partners and their local context. Gender equality is also integral to our rights-based commitments and values, as outlined in our Gender and Sexual Orientation Policy. We advocate for gender sensitive policy and practice at IFIs and strive to live these values in our own organisation and operations.

As there is considerable overlap between the three external change goals, to ensure that we are coordinated and aligned on key issues and approaches, we will set up an internal *Policy and Advocacy Hub*. This will serve as an internal forum to discuss and agree Recourse approaches to priority policy issues and related advocacy efforts, and to supervise external products. This includes revisiting already-agreed policy positions and approaches, to ensure they are up to date with the latest research and analysis.

Our advocacy work will be stronger when we: coordinate our messages strategically; plan consistent advocacy efforts throughout the year, not just around IFI meetings; and build trusted relationships with key allies and targets in a coordinated way. To complement this, and in light of a rapidly changing external environment, we will conduct regular power mapping exercises to ensure our messages and approaches are fit for purpose and impactful.

Research and case work

Recourse will extend our use of research, analysis, and case work to drive accountability and systemic changes in IFIs.

Recourse uses research, analysis and case work to effect change from the top down and the bottom up. Understanding what is happening at the IFI level enables us to call out problematic investments, close financing loopholes for harmful projects, and raise standards in policy and practice. We also work with partners on the ground to identify cases where IFI projects are harming people and the planet.

By building a strong evidence base and highlighting the bad cases (as well as good practice), we are well positioned to demonstrate the real world effects of problematic IFI policies, push IFIs to remediate the harms they have caused, win systemic changes, and influence global debates on development and climate finance. By bringing this evidence to partners, coalitions, wider civil society movements, and the media, we enable civil society action and contribute to shaping narratives, both at the institutions we target and other global fora.

Going forward, we will retain and build on Recourse's strong reputation for high-quality research while more strategically planning and communicating our research outputs, to ensure maximum impact and coherence of voice/position (see 1 above).

Case work—where we work with and support the local CSOs and affected communities that are calling attention to a specific project—can be hugely rewarding and impactful but is also time and resource intensive. We will map and adequately resource all of our existing case support to ensure that partners are properly supported. We will further develop case work connected to the energy transition, innovative financing instruments, debt and austerity. Building up work in this area can be key to driving change but also requires a long-term commitment from both Recourse and partners. Therefore, we recognise the need to co-create long-term advocacy strategies with partners, to be clear about the risks upfront, and to ensure adequate, long-term resourcing to make change possible.

Communications and campaigns

Recourse will implement a communications and campaigning approach that effectively reaches target audiences, spurs action, and shifts narratives, together with our partners and coalitions.

Recourse's communications and campaigning inform how the organisation and staff are perceived by others. Maintaining a good reputation as experts, and collaborating with partners to elevate their expertise and build a stronger voice together, are crucial to the success of our mission.

Recourse will take a strategic approach to communications, to ensure that our messages reach audiences effectively and spur action. This means shaping messaging for the target audience and using the right tools to reach them, whether it's a LinkedIn ad, a printed briefing, a video, or a well-placed opinion piece, as well as the traditional long-form report. We will plan ahead but remain agile to respond to news and spontaneous ideas.

We will work together with partners to shift narratives (e.g. gas is not a "transition fuel", but rather a "climate-busting fossil fuel") and create the discursive space for campaigns on specific IFI policies or practices. Our outputs will remain underpinned by evidence, but also seek to tell the human stories behind the data, especially those of women, sexual/gender minorities, and marginalised communities.

These efforts will require increased communications staff capacity and upskilling of programme staff/partners. It will require stronger and more streamlined internal tools: a completed brand book and publication templates; an editorial calendar; comms plans for every publication or key influencing moment; terms of reference for every comms product; a roster of reliable service providers; an improved press database; and monitoring/evaluation of campaign activities. It will also involve deepening our advisory partnerships (such as with the Global Strategic Communications Council), coordinating better with partners, and raising the profile of staff/partners as thought leaders in the media.

Recourse campaigns with and through our allies and partners, aiming always to achieve impact that is greater than the sum of our parts. We do this in many ways: by convening, networking, capacity-building, seeding movements, co-ordinating issue- or institution-specific groups, hosting workshops, holding speaker events for Recourse experts and partners, and more. In the coming years, we will double down on this multiplier effect, needed now more than ever to boost action for justice. Recourse will seize opportunities where our core strengths and expertise are most relevant. For example, coordinating CSOs globally on the IFC Sustainability Framework review.

Partnerships

Recourse will implement a coherent, equitable, and sustainable partnership model, amplifying civil society voices and advocacy efforts globally, prioritising gender equality and shifting towards long-term strategic alliances.

Recourse will better collaborate with partners by creating a coherent, equitable, and sustainable partnership model that amplifies civil society voices and power, and strengthens advocacy efforts from the local to the global level. This model will be based on mutual respect and equity. It will entail co-developing research, advocacy and campaign strategies and plans, whilst deepening relationships and trust.

In light of the significant narrowing of civil space in recent years in many countries, Recourse will develop a risk protocol to guide our engagement with partners in those countries. We will also support partners' advocacy and access to regional and global multilateral fora. A key measure of our success will be the extent to which we shift away from ad hoc collaborations to strategic alliances over the long term.

Recourse will also further prioritise advancing gender equality in partnerships by embedding gender considerations, supporting women-led organisations, and ensuring gender-responsive approaches in all activities with partners.

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Kraijenhoffstraat 137A 1018 RG
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

www.re-course.org