

## OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS IN:

# ALBANIA

## A BRIEF HISTORY

The Open Society Foundation for Albania (OSFA) began its work in 1992 with a similar mission to its sister foundations across the former communist world—to help them to become open, democratic societies. But the challenges in Albania were unique: the Stalinist rule of Enver Hoxha (from 1944 to 1985) and his successor Ramiz Alia (1985 to 1992) left Albania's population of some 3 million people impoverished and isolated not only from the West, but from the Soviets and the Chinese as well.

Open Society responded with an initial focus on supplying basic equipment and physically reconstructing crumbling institutions, particularly in health and education, together with a program of scholarships and fellowships aimed at increasing opportunities for educated Albanians to travel and study abroad, and efforts to support the development of independent media.

This work was redoubled after the violent unrest that swept Albania in 1997, following the collapse of a series of vast pyramid investment schemes destroyed some \$1.2bn in savings. Today, we continue to support Albanian partners working on human rights, transparency and minority rights, and to work with the government on the process of reform required by the European Union on the way towards membership.

## QUICK FACTS

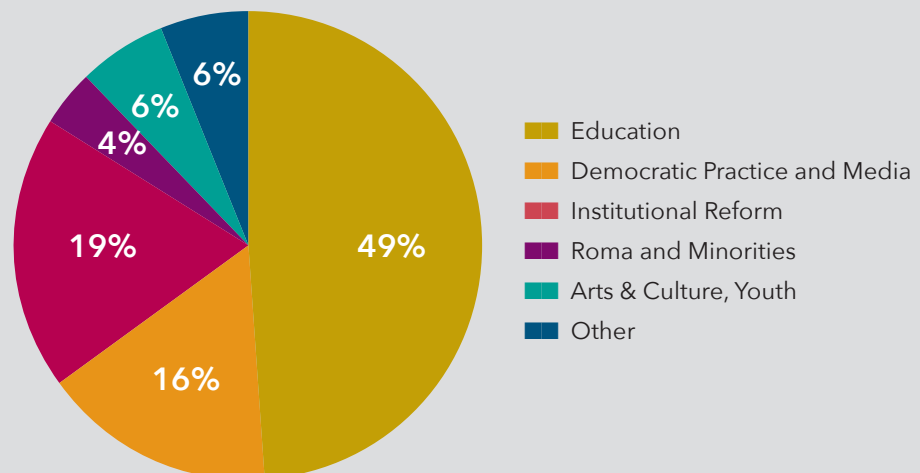
2016 PROJECT FUNDING

**\$2.2M**

TOP FOUR GRANT RECIPIENTS IN 2016

ResPublica, BIRN Albania, Children are the Future,  
Youth Roma and Egyptian MovementTOTAL FUNDING IN ALBANIA  
SINCE 1992**\$131M**NUMBER OF STAFF  
EMPLOYED BY OSFA  
IN TIRANA**13**

FUNDING BY SECTOR SINCE 1992



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### FACTS ABOUT ALBANIA AND THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

- 01** In the 1990s, we spent more than \$57 million building 275 schools and kindergartens for children across the country. Almost 70 percent of Albania's population has benefited from these schools and children are still educated in them today.
- 02** The foundation's support for Albania's plans to join the European Union, which includes funding the E.U. policy hub, a network of young professionals that promotes and monitors the performance of the integration process.
- 03** In 2015, the Foundation earmarked \$600,000 to support the process to overhaul Albania's judicial system—a step required for E.U. membership. The money was used to fund of a 20-strong expert panel, conduct public outreach and opinion surveys, establish a dedicated website and organize conferences.
- 04** Our funds have supported efforts by Res Publica, a public interest law group, to win compensation for families whose lost relatives in explosions at an ammunition factory in Gerdec in 2008 that killed 26 people and destroyed hundreds of homes.
- 05** The Open Society Foundation in Albania is one of three local organizations chosen to implement a major Swiss aid project in Albania, **LëvizAlbania** (MoveAlbania), which seeks to strengthen local democracy through the engaging civil society groups and individuals.
- 06** In 2014, we established a dedicated unit to study organized crime in Albania—publishing threat assessments and the first typology of such groups ever compiled in the country.
- 07** We have supplied medicine and medical equipment to 12 public hospitals since 2013 and training to doctors since 1996.
- 08** The Foundation built Albania's first internet antenna in 1997, and helped to deliver free online services to libraries, universities and NGOs over the next three years.
- 09** More than 90 young Albanian student journalists have gone through a four month training program at the studios of our partner Qendra Media Aktive, receiving hands-on experience of working in radio, TV and text journalism, with the support of Open Society.