

ORIGINAL



A Note from the Board

The year 2025 marked a milestone in OriginAL's evolution. What began as a bold idea of GERMIN and the Global Albanians Foundation has grown into a global program with strong demand, high participant satisfaction, and deepening responsibility.

Connection to our Albanian homelands is not inherited automatically; it is discovered through experience. Identity forms across places, languages, and family stories — and diaspora youth can only sustain these ties when we collectively create space for them to explore their heritage.

OriginAL provides such a space. It is a learning journey centered on people, relationships, and context. It invites participants to see our homelands with honesty and complexity, and to build unity without requiring uniformity.

As a Board, our role is to protect this vision as the program scales. We are grateful to the teams in Kosova and Albania for their commitment to safety, educational quality, and participant care. We are equally grateful to our donors and partners who make this experience possible.

Looking ahead, we will expand access through scholarships, establish a global alumni network, and structure extended internships — ensuring that OriginAL continues beyond two weeks into lasting connection, leadership, and engagement.

With gratitude, on behalf of the Board,

Anila Hyka-Smørgrav, Co-Chair, GERMIN

Avni Mustafaj, Co-Chair, GERMIN

Mark Kosmo, Chair, Global Albanians Foundation

January 2026

Executive Summary

In 2025, OriginAL delivered its biggest year to date, welcoming 107 young people across three cohorts from 23 countries. This represents 85% growth compared to 2024 and brings the program to 257 participants since launching in 2022.

Across Kosova and Albania—and, for the first time, North Macedonia—participants visited a record 14 cities and more than 70 historical, natural, and institutional sites, linking heritage with civic learning and contemporary perspectives. **OriginAL is growing not only in numbers, but also in appeal—becoming a program that Albanian youth worldwide aspire to join.**

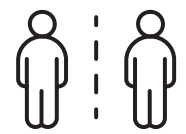
Satisfaction remained strong (88/100), and participants reported deeper emotional ties and greater knowledge of history and culture. The OriginAL circle also grew through leadership and service: 27 alumni supported selection interviews (105 volunteer hours), and participants contributed ~368 hours of community volunteering.

With disciplined financial stewardship, we enter 2026 ready to expand access through scholarships and strengthen alumni engagement in response to growing demand.

A Transformational Journey

Shifting from Remittance to Investment Culture

OriginAL exists to reconnect diaspora youth with Albanian heritage through an immersive 2-week cultural, educational, volunteer, and emotional experience, designed to:



Deepen Albanian identity understanding and belonging



Foster lifelong friendships and cross-border networks



Inspire leadership and future engagement with the homeland



The Larger Purpose: Bridge, Belonging, and the Albanian 21st Century

OriginAL addresses a generational need shared across the diaspora: the desire for belonging and connection to a homeland that many know only through stories, language, or family memory. Today, Albanian youth are dispersed across the world—from New York to Zurich to Melbourne—yet remain deeply tied to their identity.

Identity alone, however, is not enough. OriginAL transforms identity into connection, comprehension, and contribution. Through immersive learning, historical context, and peer networks, participants move beyond nostalgia and toward a more confident understanding of who they are—and how they can shape the future of the Albanian world.

A Narrative Shift: From Emigration to Co-Creation

For decades, the dominant Albanian narrative has been one of departure: that youth must leave the Balkans to prosper. While this reality shaped previous generations, it does not have to define the next.

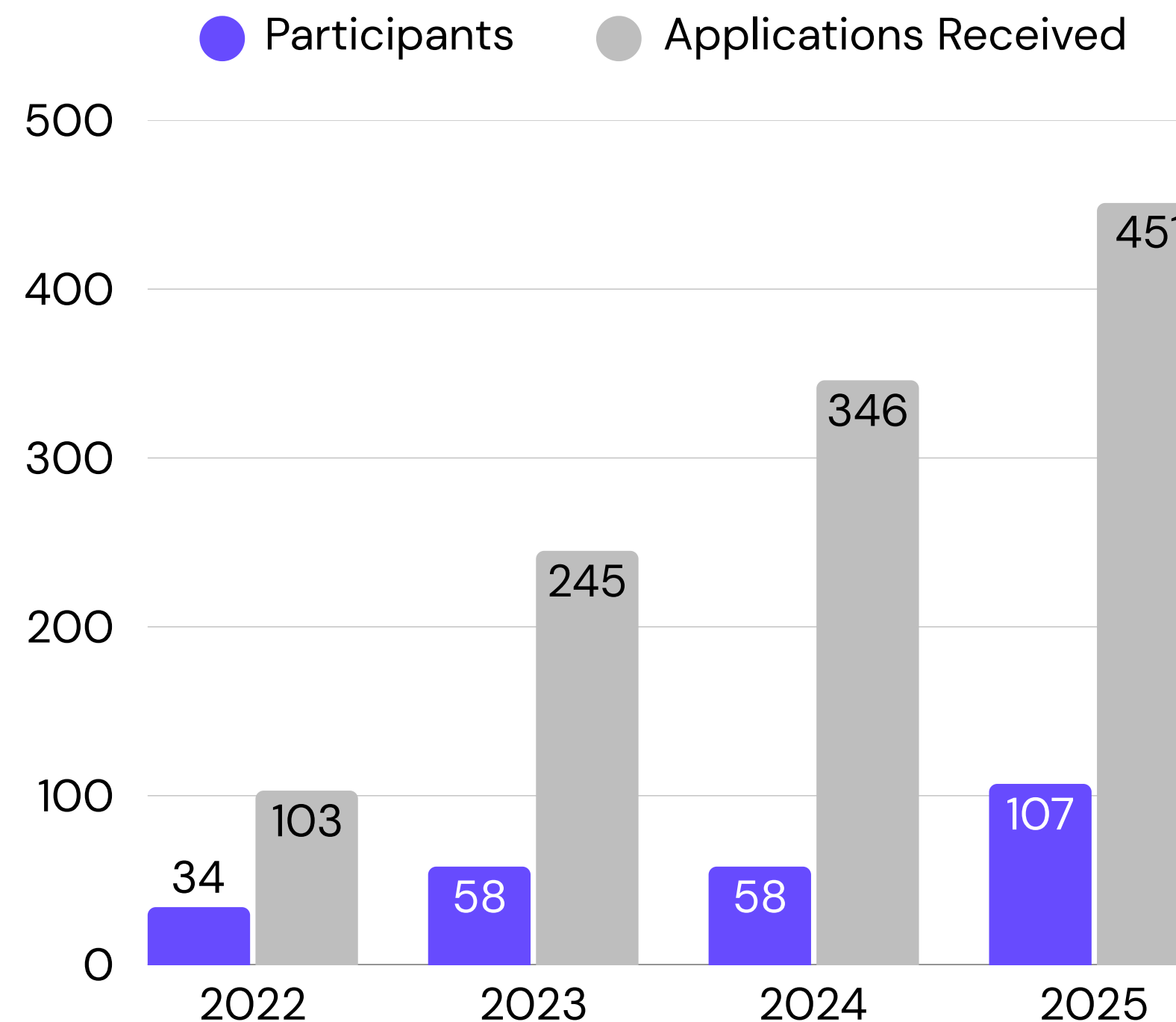
OriginAL helps reframe this narrative by (1) elevating possibility over pessimism; (2) turning heritage into agency; (3) transforming distance into advantage; (4) making the diaspora a strategic asset. The long-term goal is a new story of Albanian mobility—one defined not only by remittances, but by investment, exchange, ideas, innovation, and civic participation.

Program Growth Since Launch

OriginAL has received more than 1,000 applications since the first cohort, with interest rising steadily each year since 2022.

In 2025 alone, we received 450+ completed applications from eligible candidates who met the basic criteria (age, origin, and distance).

Despite this strong demand, the program was able to admit only about one in five eligible applicants. As a result, many highly qualified applicants are unable to participate due to funding constraints.



An OriginAL Generation

Albanian Diaspora Youth (18–24 years old)

01 Countries (25)

USA, Germany, UK, Italy, Greece, Canada, Turkey, etc.

02 Fields of study

Business, Medicine, Law, Computer Science, Engineering, etc.

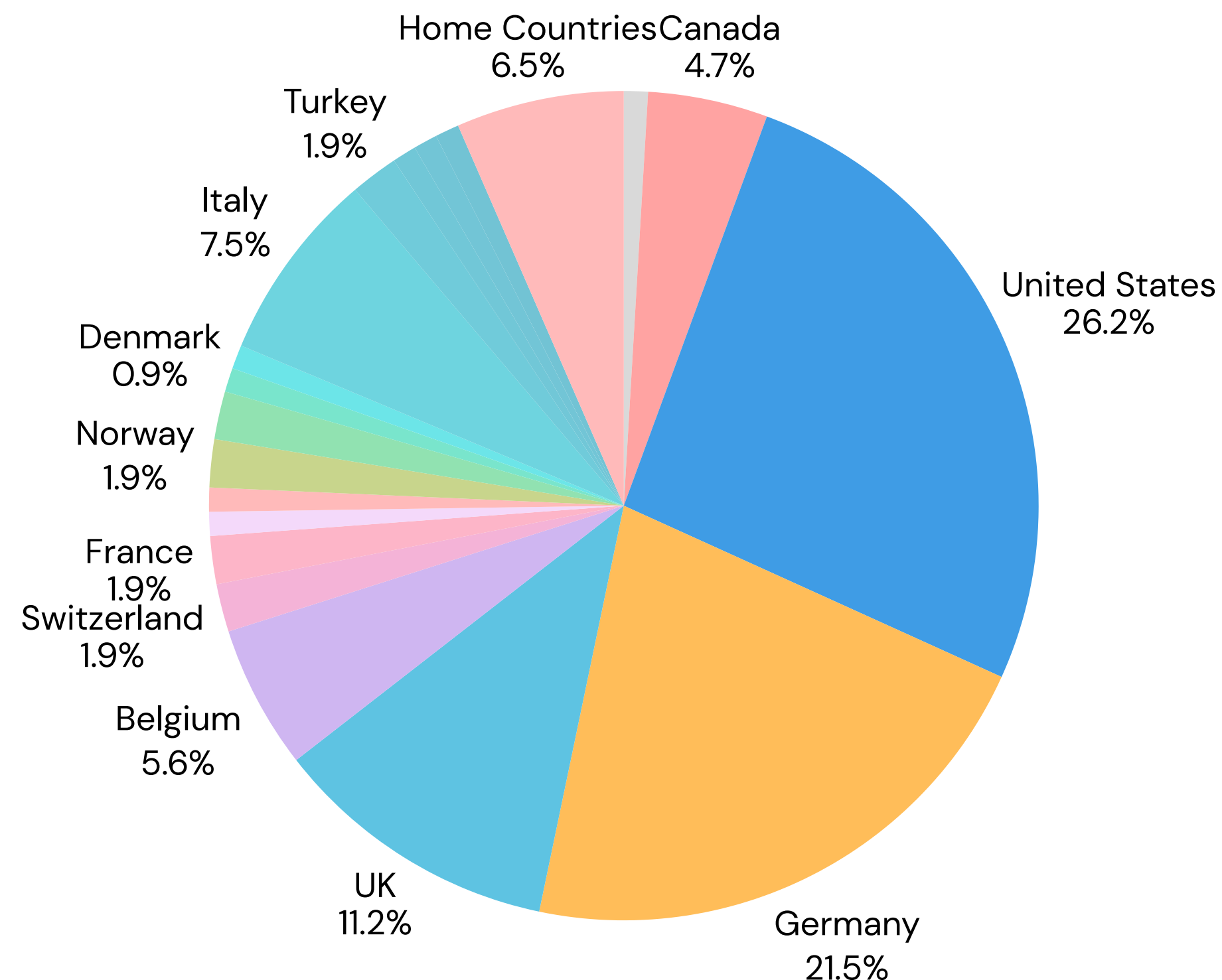
03 Need to Connect

Identity connection, community, leadership development



2025 Participants

United States	28	26.20%
Germany	23	21.50%
United Kingdom	12	11.20%
Italy	8	7.50%
Belgium	6	5.60%
Canada	5	4.70%
Kosovo	4	3.70%
France	2	1.90%
Sweden	2	1.90%
Switzerland	2	1.90%
Turkey	2	1.90%
Albania	1	0.90%
Austria	1	0.90%
Denmark	1	0.90%
Finland	1	0.90%
Greece	1	0.90%
Montenegro	1	0.90%
Netherlands	1	0.90%
North Macedonia	1	0.90%



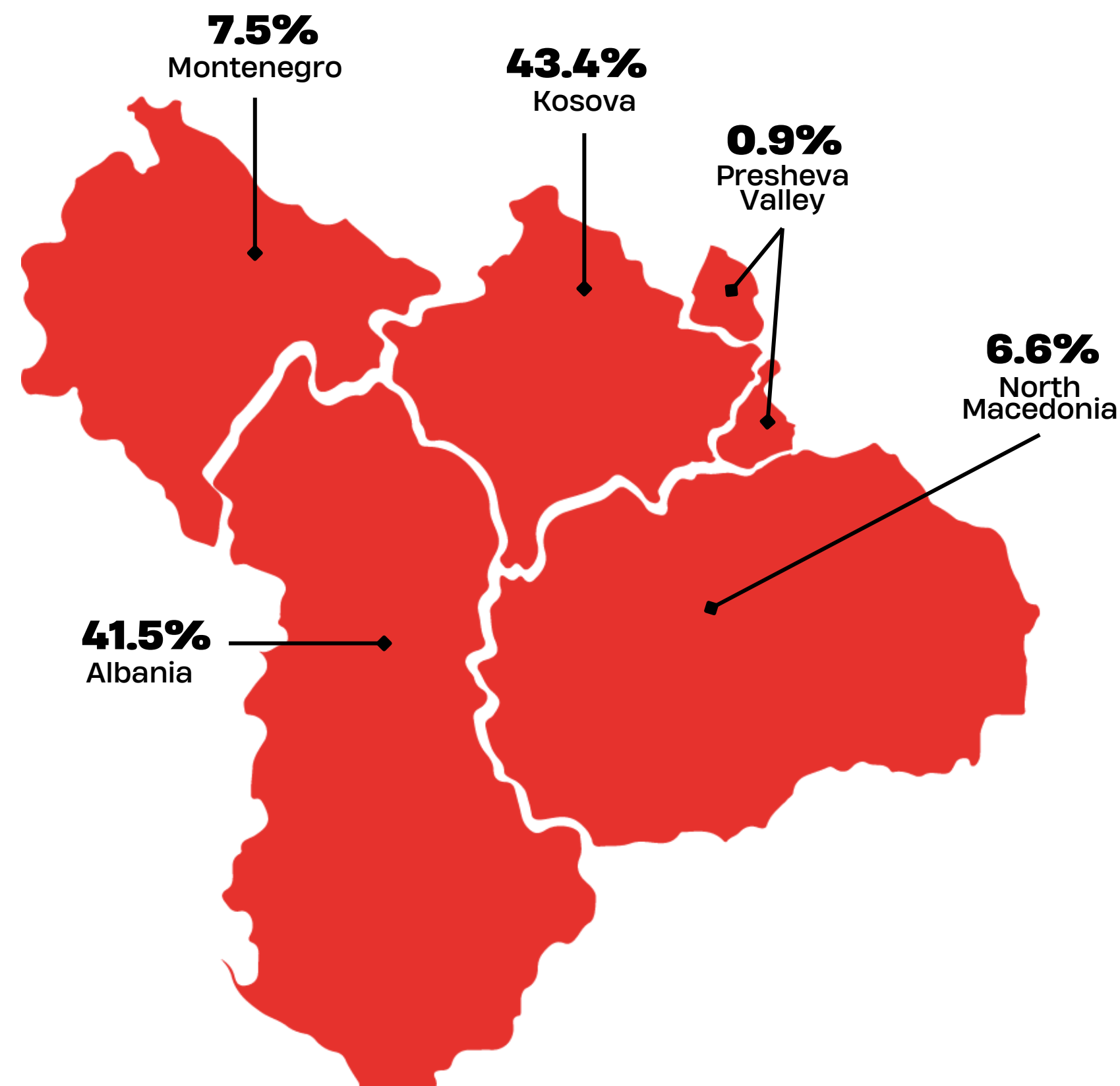
New in 2025: Australia (1), Norway(2), Spain(1), Portugal(1).

2025 Participants' Origin

The participants in OriginAL 2025 reflect the diversity and complexity of Albanian-homeland territories across the Western Balkans.

In our selection process, we balance not only countries of residence, but also countries of family origin, so each cohort represents the full mosaic of our community.

As the alumni network grows, this diversity becomes a long-term asset—enabling deeper engagement, leadership development, and stronger connections between diaspora youth and all the homeland places.

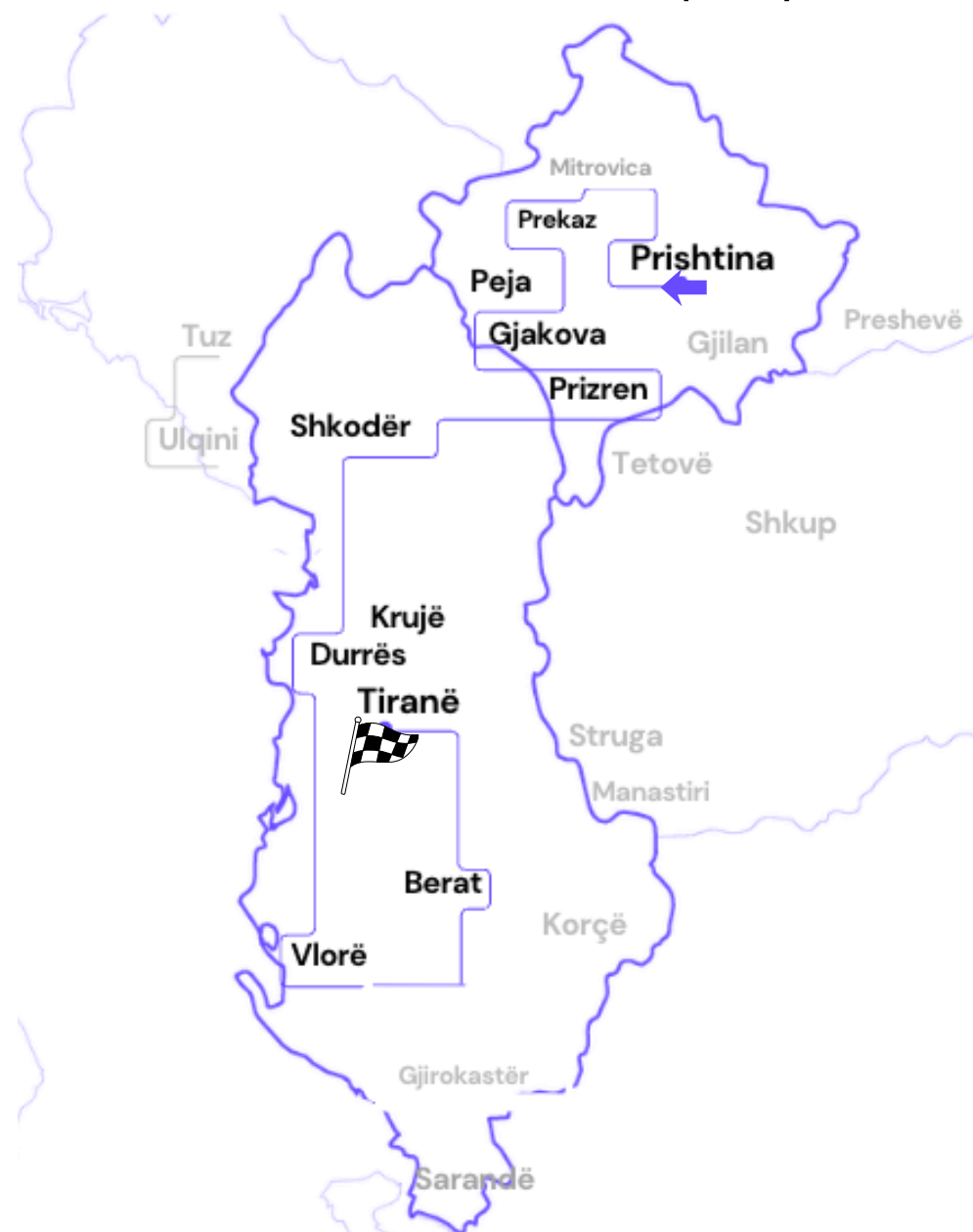


2025 – Travel Itineraries

Cohort 6 (June)

36 participants, 13 countries

Focused on memory and cultural continuity across Kosovo and Albania, with key visits to Prekaz and Krushë e Madhe. Marked the program's first municipal partnership in Albania with Durrës Municipality.



Cohort 7 (August)

39 participants, 18 countries

Focused on cross-border learning and youth innovation. Included educational visits such as BONEVET Gjakovë, partnerships with Shkodër Municipality, and first-time stops in Sarandë and Butrint.



Cohort 8 (November)

28 participants, 9 countries

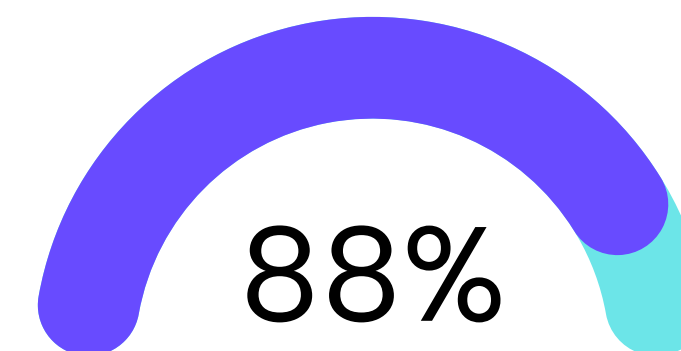
Expanded the map to North Macedonia and added new routes in southeastern Albania. Cohort met President Bajram Begaj — the highest-level institutional encounter in OriginAL's first four years.



Participants' Feedback

What participants gained, based on post-program surveys (1–5 scale, 5 = highest), and how they score OriginAL

More emotionally attached to the homeland	4.8
Knowledge of Albanian History Improved	4.5
Feeling part of a worldwide Albanian community	4.1
More comfortable participating in Albanian cultural life	3.9
Increased knowledge of Albanian language	3.9



Cumulative Net Promoter Score (NPS) by Cohort (2025); participants evaluate the program in a range between 88/100.

Based on data from over 150,000 organizations, the average NPS for non-profit organizations is cited with a median score of around 63.

Mostly valued:

- youth-to-youth community building activities with local organizations, hubs, and community centers;
- Safety and care throughout the program; consistently rated highly for transport, overall safety, and health measures taken by the staff.

Program Impact

257 youngsters connected to the **origin culture** and **each other**.



Achievement

3 Alumni

Moved to homeland (2 in Kosova, 1 in Albania)

2 Alumni

Acquired Kosova's citizenship after the program

530+

Hours volunteered for local organizations

10 M+

Social media reach,
contributing to promotion and
positive image of locations
part of the program

1.5M+

Estimated economic Impact in
the home countries (program
expenses, participants'
expenses, alumni visits, etc.)

+90%

of participants report deeper
connection to Albanian
identity, values, and homeland
countries

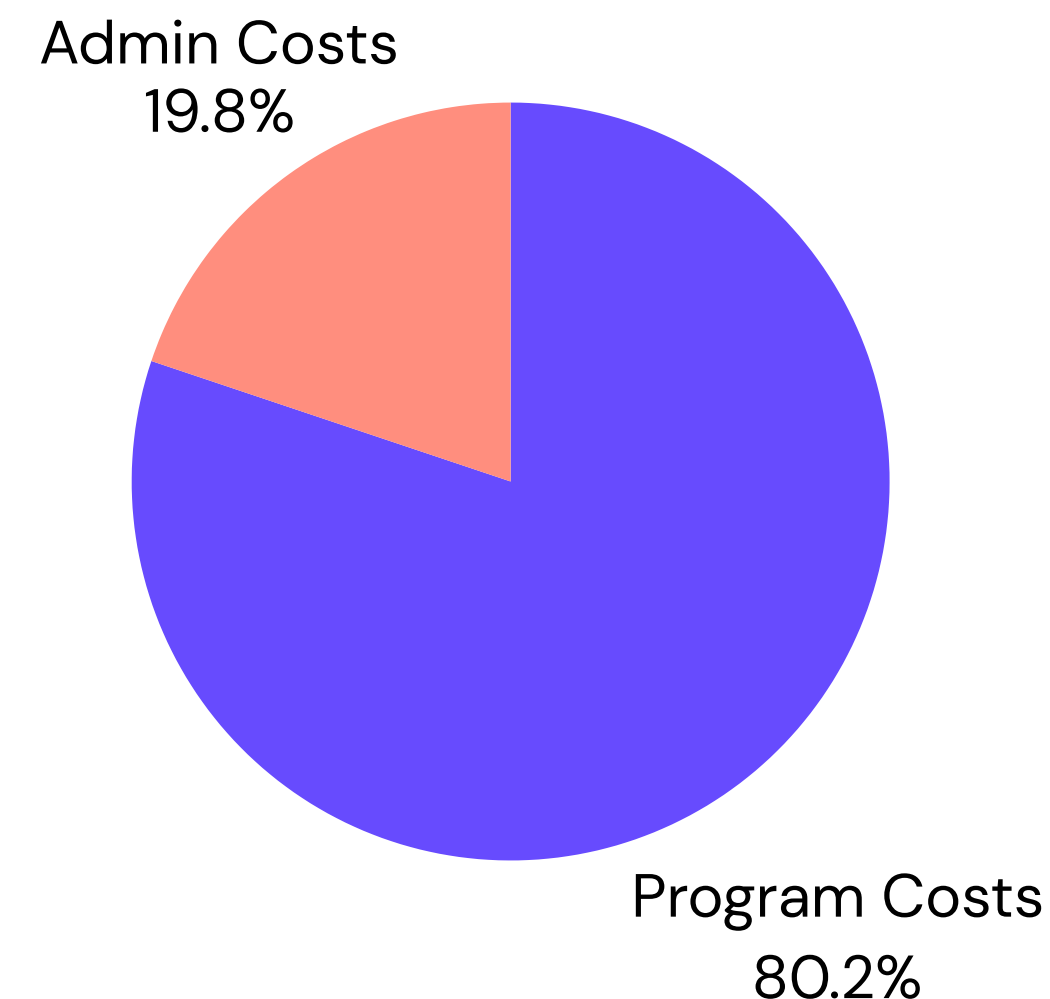
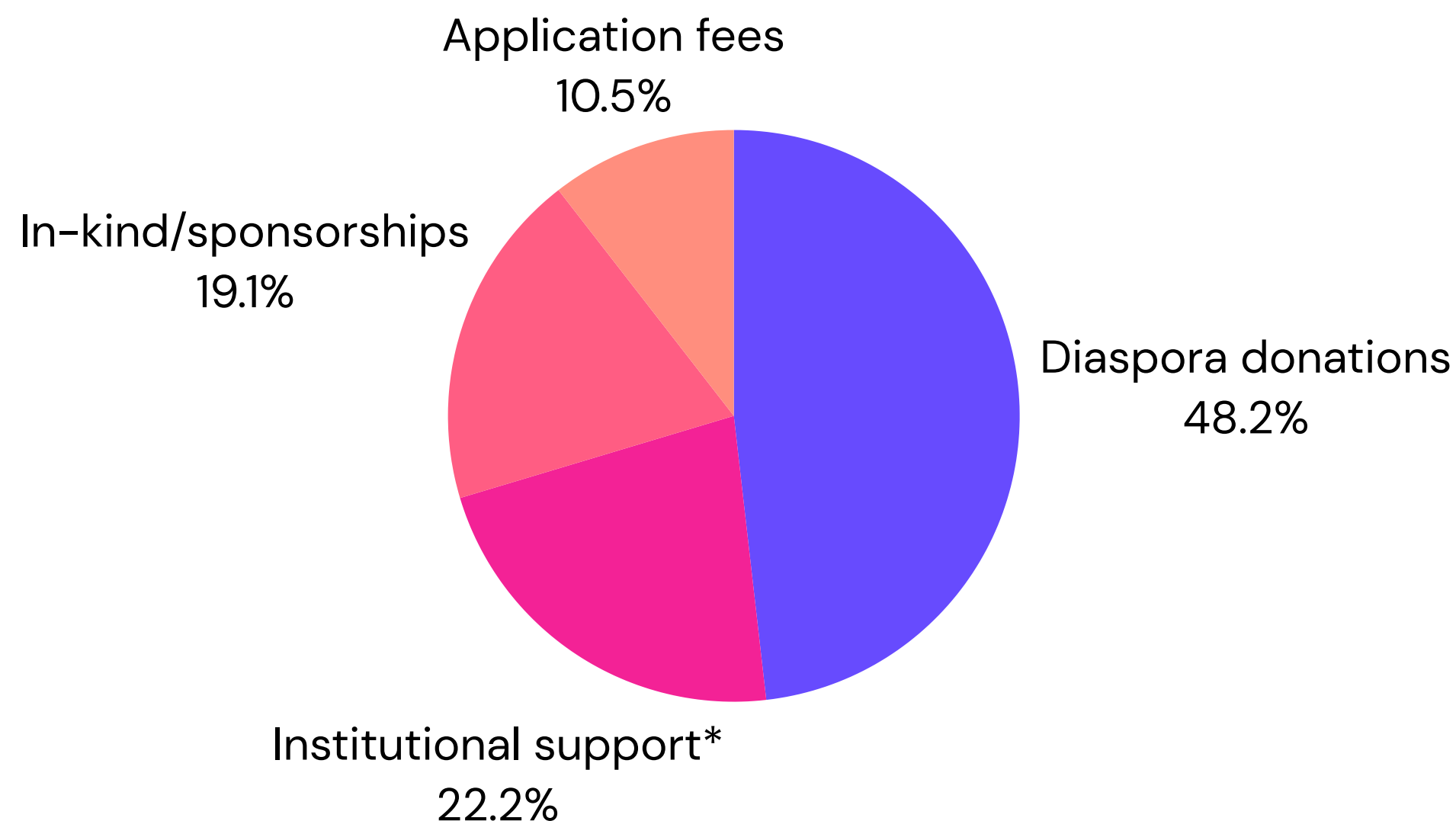
Alumni Volunteering (2025)

- In 2025, OriginAL alumni began transitioning from participants to co-builders of the program.
- 27 alumni from the 2024 cohorts contributed 105 volunteer hours by supporting selection interviews for 2025 applicants (~3.9 hours per alumnus).
- 75 participants completed structured community volunteering during the program (~262.5 hours total, 3.5 hours per participant).
- Total volunteer contribution: ~368 hours connected to OriginAL in 2025.
- In parallel, we strengthened the alumni network through virtual regional meetups, starting with alumni in the United States, Germany, and Switzerland, to support ongoing connection, leadership, and future engagement.



Financial Overview (2025)

The average cost per participant in 2025 is €1,506 (\$1,800). This is a 15% decrease from last year due to increased participation and stewardship control of Administrative costs (economies of scale). In total, the program has received **income of €162,063**, and expensed **€161,100**.



**Mostly from international development funding (German Cooperation -GIZ)*

Future Goals

2026–2028

Over the next three years, OriginAL will add one cohort per year to meet growing demand while maintaining quality of this life-changing experience. This expansion builds on a strong foundation: 257 alumni to date, proven delivery across multiple cohorts, strong local partnerships, and a more efficient cost per participant through economies of scale.

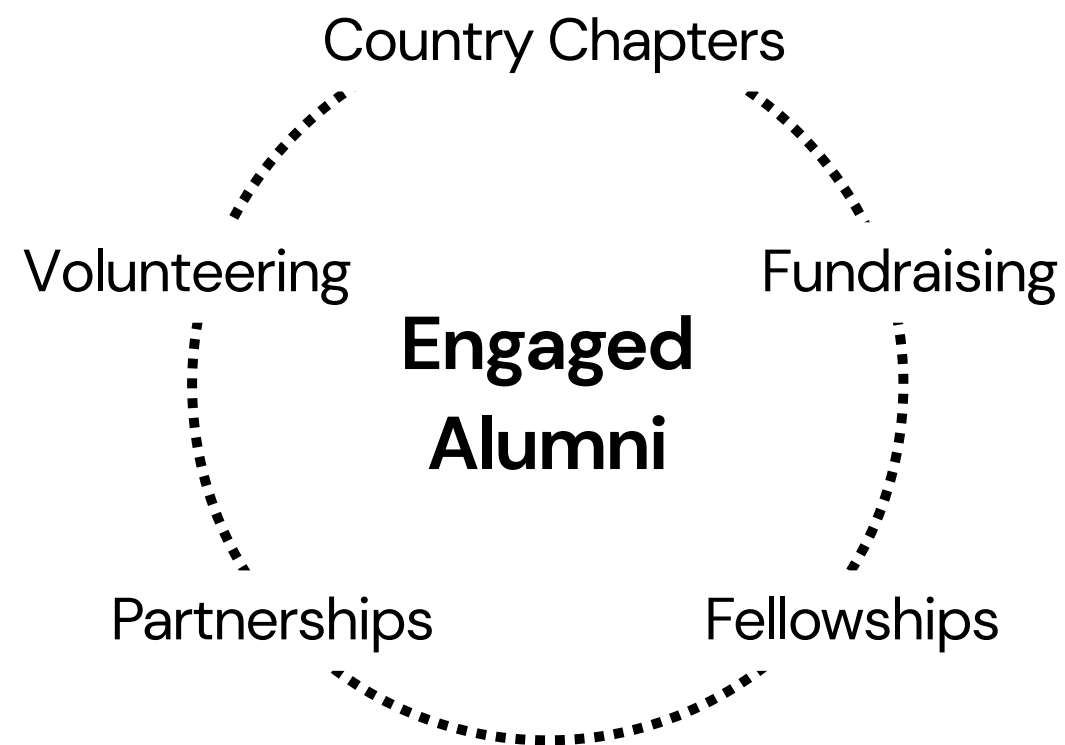
By 2028, we plan to:

- Create Germin's Global Albanian Network
- Welcome 600 new participants over 3 years
- Deliver 24 cohorts, reach 900 alumni in total
- Secure funding for 600+ scholarships to sustain the program for future generations



Expanding the Alumni Engagement

Establish a Global Albanian Network



- We will establish the network in every location where we have OriginAL alumni.
- The initiated regional meetups will evolve into a global alumni network that fosters a structured and continued engagement.

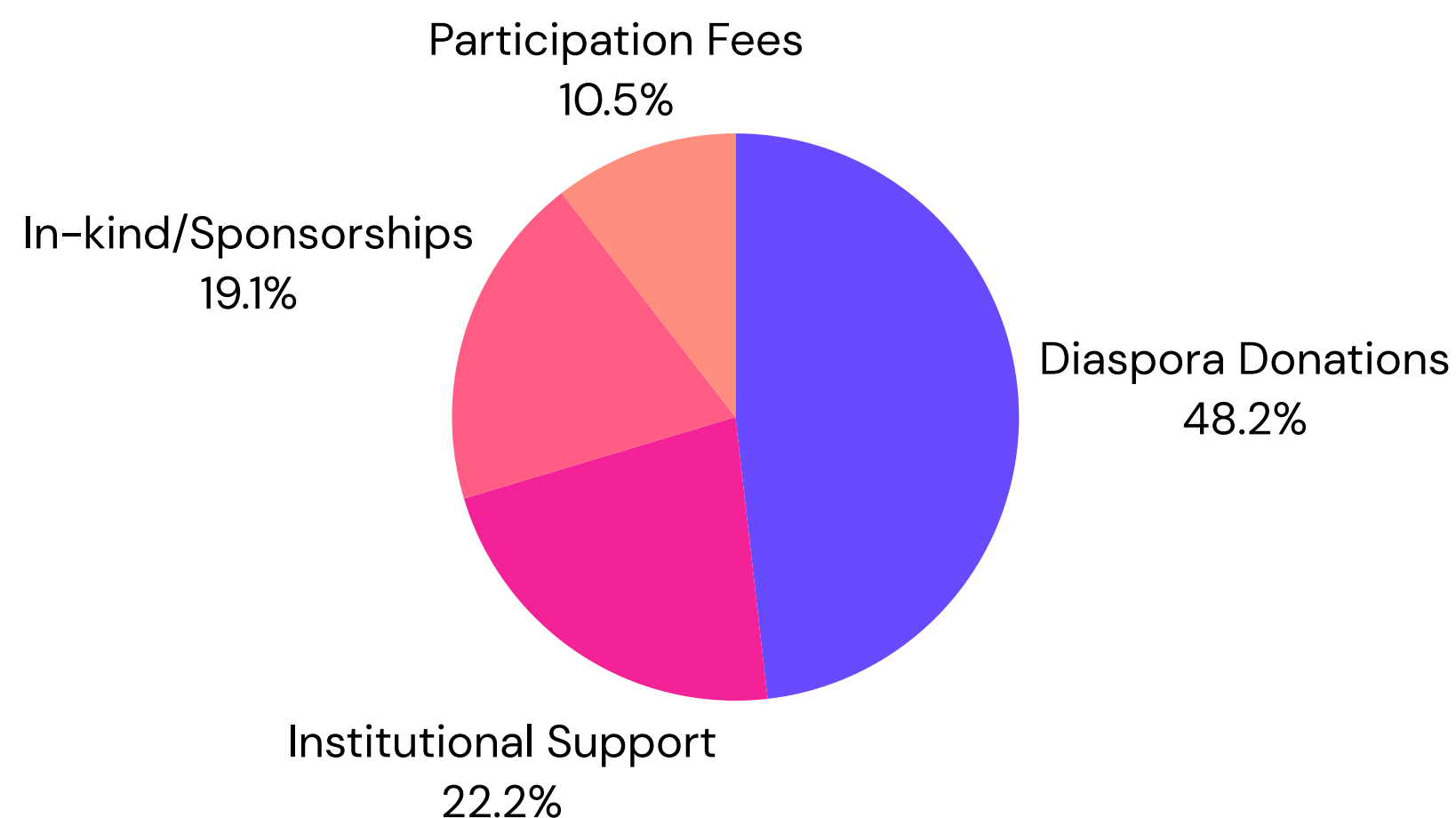
Pilot OriginAL Internships



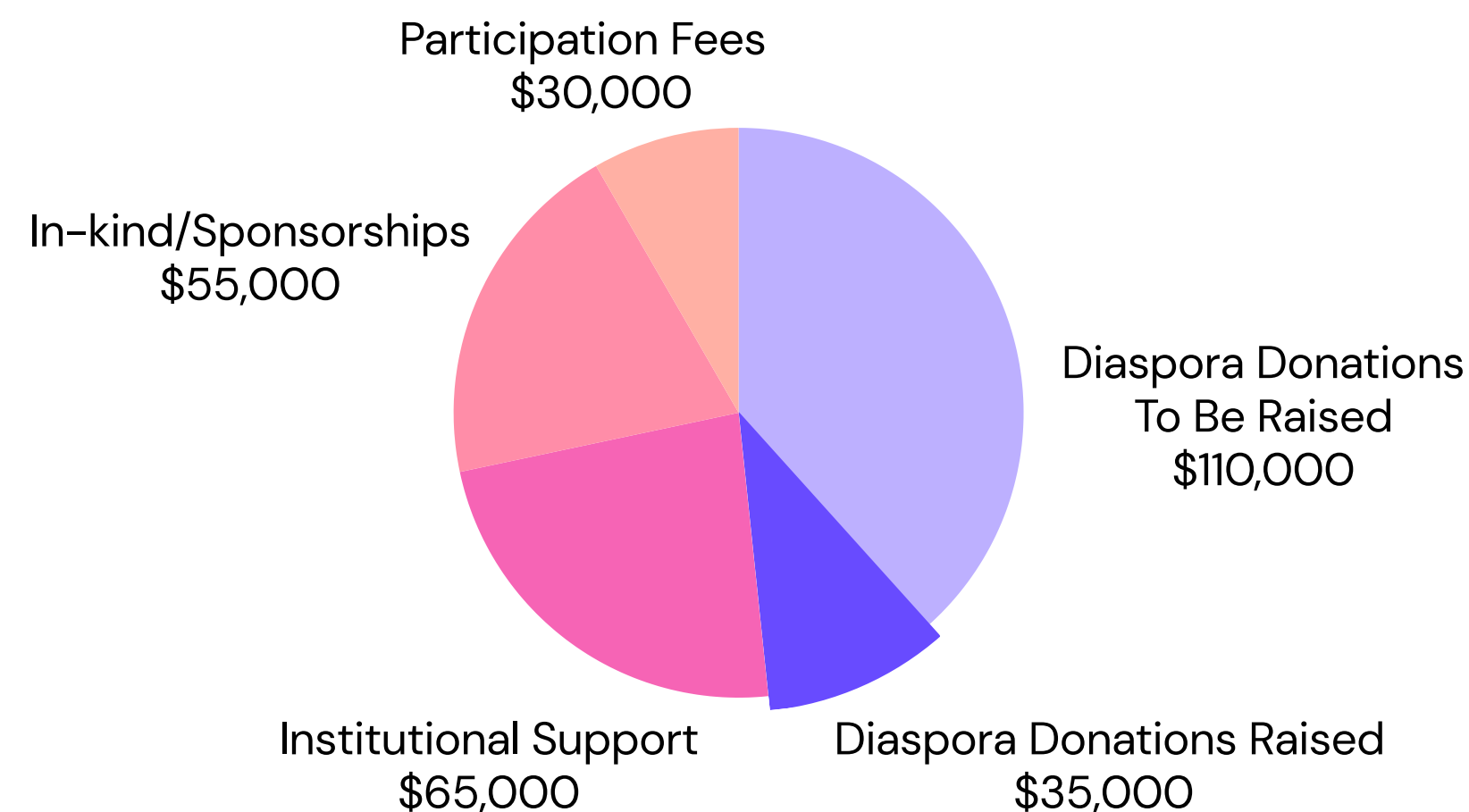
- In collaboration with local companies, we plan to offer a 1–3 month paid internship for participants upon completion of OriginAL.
- The goal is to provide participants with practical experience and extend/deepen their connection to the homeland.

Financial Projections (2026)

Based on the 2025 average cost per participant (\$1,800), we need to raise about \$300,000 to enroll 150+ participants in 2026. Using last year's funding mix, roughly half of this should come from diaspora giving. We've raised \$35,000 so far, leaving \$110,000 to raise before the summer cohorts. January 2026



Income Channels in 2025 (\$162,063)



Income Channels Projection in 2026

Alumni Testimonial

"To anyone in the **Albanian diaspora**, I can't recommend the **OriginAL** programme enough.

It's a **life-changing** experience that will leave you with a **deeper understanding of your roots**, lasting friendships, and a renewed sense of pride in your heritage.

I'm forever **grateful for this journey**, and I know it has shaped the person I am today. 🇦🇱❤️"

**Gjovani Cinari, UK Alumn from Cohort 5
(returned/moved to Shkodër in '25)**



Alumni Testimonial

“Like most people who grew up in the Diaspora, there was always a part of me that felt stuck in the **in-between**, never fully here or there.

Through OriginAL, and through the **meaningful relationships** I built and the unforgettable memories I shared with my cohort, that feeling began to fade. I no longer feel alone in the in-between.

Wherever I am in the world, I know there is someone from OriginAL who understands my story, and reminds me that belonging can exist across borders.”

**Erza Gashi, US Alumna from Cohort 2
(returned/moved to Kosova in '23)**



Donor Testimonials

I can think of few worthier initiatives than mobilizing the Albanian “mërgata” to support and advance our nation's interests.

I am particularly pleased (and proud) to support OriginAL. It is by far the most promising, farsighted Albanian initiative I have seen in the past twenty years.

Elvin Guri,
Philanthropist & Entrepreneur



As members of the diaspora ourselves, our family knows how difficult it is sometimes to feel connected and understand our cultural and ethnic heritage.

We are delighted to work with this organization to spark the alignment with their roots for so many young people starving to understand and appreciate their heritage.

Richard Lukaj,
Philanthropist & Financial Executive



2025 Institutional Donors and Supporters





<https://germin.org/>info@germin.org

GERMIN's mission is to serve as a vibrant, dynamic bridge that connects Albanians worldwide to inspire leadership and innovation, enhance engagement and entrepreneurship, and to facilitate and build strategic connections. Our vision is to foster a globally connected and empowered Albanian Diaspora, actively contributing to the social, economic, and democratic development of their home countries. We strive to build strong, lasting ties between the diaspora and local communities, driving sustainable progress and meaningful impact.



<https://globalalbanians.org/>info@globalalbanians.org

The Global Albanians Foundation works to promote Albanian philanthropy in all countries where Albanians live, with particular focus on Diaspora Philanthropy to help Albanian not-for-profit organizations address important social, economic, and cultural issues. Our vision is to develop an online platform for thousands of people to support hundreds of Albanian not-for-profit organizations in Albania, Kosova, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Presheva, and throughout the Global Albanian Diaspora.



Let's continue to **nurture** a **lifelong bond** that fuels **identity, community,** and **future prosperity.**

DONATE ❤️

The infrastructure is in place — community and diaspora engagement will shape what comes next.

 [originalbanian](https://www.instagram.com/originalbanian)

 origin-al.org

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