

**Question for written answer E-000743/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Eleonora Evi (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Project to construct an airport in a protected area in Albania

A project is under way to construct an airport and downscale a protected area in the Vjosa-Narta Protected Landscape area in Albania.

In its Communication SWD(2021)289 final on Albania, the Commission expresses serious concerns about the impact of strategic investments on biodiversity: 'In April 2021, Albania signed the contract to build Vlora Airport within the Vjosa-Narta Protected Area, in contradiction with national laws and international biodiversity protection conventions that Albania has ratified. This Protected Area is a candidate for the Emerald site network, which provides shelter to more than 62 species of birds listed in the EU Birds Directive. Vjosa River, as one of Europe's last wild rivers, should receive proper protection status.'

The site is an important wetland area, classified as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a Key Biodiversity Area, and proposed as an N2000 site (NaturAI project). It contains 11 different habitats, 8 species of reptile and amphibian, 10 species of mammals and 8 fish species covered by the Habitats Directive.

What steps will the Commission take to counter the plan to construct this airport in the Vjosa-Narta protected area?

How will it help bring Albanian legislation into line with the Habitats Directive and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands within the ambit of Albania's accession to the EU?