

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001754/24
to the Commission
Nikolaos Anadiotis (NI)
(18 September 2024)**

Subject: Failure to apply the rule of law in Albania

On 29 May 2024, the European External Action Service (EEAS) — the Diplomatic Service of the EU — published its Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World. ⁽¹⁾ On Albania (p. 7 of the report), it says that local elections ‘on 14 May 2023 were conducted in a generally calm manner’. ⁽²⁾

In those elections, in the Municipality of Himarë, as we all know, the party of the ethnic Greek candidate from Northern Epirus, Fredi Beleri (now MEP for New Democracy and the EPP), won. However, the losing party continued in office, in fact for 15 months, until August 2024. Never since the 5th century BC, when democracy was established in Ancient Athens, has anything of that kind ever happened. It is unprecedented in the annals of world history for a party that loses an election to continue governing, while the winning party remains in opposition.

In view of this, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Why was Albania not formally condemned for this flagrant violation of the fundamental principle of democracy?
2. Have the reasons why this fact escaped the notice of the Diplomatic Service of the EU been looked into? Did those who drafted the EEAS Report conduct any investigation into who was responsible for its not being recorded?

Submitted: 18.9.2024

**Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(18 December 2024)**

Albania held regular local elections on 14 May 2023 in all of its municipalities. Elections were assessed by observers as ‘well-administered, competitive and with the participation of key political forces’, as also noted by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) ⁽¹⁾.

The EU continues to monitor electoral developments in Albania and to encourage Albanian authorities to address all outstanding recommendations from the ODIHR and the Venice Commission on the electoral law and the electoral administration in Albania, in order to align them with the principles of the European electoral heritage.

The EU attaches great importance to the respect of rule of law and fundamental rights. Through the enlargement process and the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Agreement ⁽²⁾, the EU is closely following reforms on the rule of law, the strengthening and protection of the fundamental rights in Albania and provides policy recommendations in that regard. The Commission will continue to closely monitor electoral developments in Albania.

Moreover, as from 2024 Albania also participates in the annual Rule of Law Report. In its 2024 Rule of law Report, Country Chapter in Albania, the Commission found that overall corruption is prevalent in many areas, including during electoral campaigns, and found that preventive measures suffer from an overly complex legal framework and continue to have a limited impact, particularly in vulnerable sectors ⁽³⁾.

As part of the European integration process of Albania, the EU closely monitors and supports the consolidation of democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights in the country.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/2023-annual-report-human-rights-and-democracy-world-0_en?page_lang=en

⁽²⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/2023%20EU%20country%20updates%20on%20human%20rights%20and%20democracy_2.pdf

⁽³⁾ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/553972.pdf>

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-with-albania.html>

⁽³⁾ SWD(2024) 828 final, 2024 Rule of Law Report, Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Albania, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/0154dce1-5026-45de-8b37-e3d56eff7925_en?filename=59_1_58088_coun_chap_albania_al.pdf