

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002177/24
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)
(18 October 2024)**

Subject: Unfortunate expression of approval for Albania's accession to the EU

The EU Ambassador to Albania said in a statement that Albania can continue its accession path 'without the need for a plan B' and he praised 'the efforts of the Albanian Government in a particularly lengthy and complex process in which candidate countries are asked to implement a series of economic, legislative and sometimes constitutional reforms'. This was following the approval given by the intergovernmental conference (IGC) of the European Council, which 'examined the negotiating chapters overall for Albania'.

Unfortunately, this 'overall examination' appears hypocritical when one looks at the actual implementation of the Copenhagen accession criteria. Albania shows no respect for the rights of minorities and the implementing authority has full control over the (inexistent) judiciary, as can be seen from the concerted action against the Greek ethnic minority of Northern Epirus. It is clear that the arrest of the elected mayor of Himara, who was a member of the Greek ethnic minority of Northern Epirus, and his removal from office, show a defeat of the institutions, of democracy and of the rule of law against the political machinations of a mafia state and of micropolitical decisions.

In view of the above:

1. Does the Commission not agree that the full reinstatement of the elected mayor of Himara would be the only way of showing genuine respect for the rule of law and for the rights of the Greek ethnic minority in Albania?
2. Does it not believe that the failure to reinstate the Greek mayor of Himara should be considered a blocking issue for Albania's accession to the EU?

Submitted: 18.10.2024

**Answer given by Ms Kos on behalf of the European Commission
(24 March 2025)**

The Commission acknowledged that the repeat municipal election took place in Himara on 4 August 2024. Holding transparent, inclusive and credible elections in line with international standards is a key requirement for any country aspiring to join the EU. A number of complaints by representatives of political parties were dealt with by the Albanian complaint mechanisms.

The Commission also took note that the Electoral College decided to uphold the decision of the Central Election Commission's Sanctions and Complaints Committee which had dismissed the opposition coalition's request to invalidate the results of the Himara by-elections and repeat the mayoral by-elections in the municipality.

The EU will continue to encourage Albanian authorities to address all outstanding recommendations from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe — Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and from the Venice Commission on the electoral process.

The Commission attaches the highest importance to the respect of rule of law and fundamental rights all throughout the accession process.

Through the enlargement process and EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Agreement ⁽¹⁾, the Commission follows closely reforms on the rule of law and the strengthening and protection of the fundamental rights in Albania, including minorities, assesses progress and provides policy recommendations in that regard notably through its annual report ⁽²⁾.

Moreover, as from 2024 Albania also participates in the annual Rule of Law Report ⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02009A0428%2802%29-20210901>

⁽²⁾ SWD(2024) 690 final, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a8eec3f9-b2ec-4cb1-8748-9058854dbc68_en?filename=Albania%20Report%202024.pdf

⁽³⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/0154dce1-5026-45de-8b37-e3d56eff7925_en?filename=59_1_58088_coun_chap_albania_al.pdf