
European Union. Mons. Frendo (Tirana): “Albania is a European country. EU accession is an historic opportunity”

“A fruitful meeting during which I reiterated that EU enlargement is not only a necessity but a unique and historic opportunity of shared political and economic interest”

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[“Whoever enters our country is touched by its core values - openness, hospitality, respect -. In Brussels I reminded my interlocutors of the great importance we ascribe to the family, while in other EU countries it is under attack. Then there is respect for the elderly. Many European peoples must learn this concern for the elderly from the Albanians. They are not a burden for us but a resource.”](#)

[Other points discussed with Commissioner Virhelyi include relations with Islam: "We know that some people are concerned about Albania's entry into the EU because it is a country with a Muslim](#)

majority, 57% according to the latest census", said Msgr Frenco. But

we must not make the mistake of identifying Islam with terrorism. The State of Albania is not Islamic, it's a secular State,

that respects all religions as equal in dignity. Islam in Albania cannot be compared to the situation of other Muslim countries, let it suffice to mention the peaceful coexistence within our national borders. **And I am not talking about tolerance, but about harmony.** Freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom to defend human dignity, democracy, are spoken of as European values. All these values already exist in Albania. I have held numerous conferences," the prelate recalls, "in which I spoke of the need for reforms, including electoral reform, the fight against corruption and organized crime. That is why we should be seen as an example for the whole region. To some extent Albania's accession to the EU could encourage our neighbouring Balkan countries, with which we have good relations, to make the necessary efforts to facilitate the start of their respective negotiations."

For the President of the Albanian bishops, EU membership also means "monitoring necessary reforms to sustain the rule of law and promote public confidence. Entering the EU, I repeat, is for us an historic opportunity that must be seized."

"The first person who spoke about enlargement in the year 2000 was Romano Prodi. In a famous speech he referred to Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and even Albania. We have come a long way, and there is much more to be done. I trust that no one has ever regretted the process of European integration".



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