



Greek Public Opinion and Attitudes on Albania, Albanians and Greek-Albanian Relations

ELIAMEP - South East Europe Programme, in cooperation with the **Konrad-Adenauer Foundation - Office for Greece and Cyprus** and the **Public Opinion and Market Research Unit of the Research Institute of the University of Macedonia**, designed and implemented a Pan-Hellenic public opinion survey on Greek-Albanian relations in a random and representative sample. The survey was implemented between 15-21 April 2024 in a sample of 1165 people, 17 years old and older.

The scientific coordinators of the research were **Ioannis Armakolas**, Associate Professor at the University of Macedonia and Senior Research Fellow and Head of the South-East Europe Programme of ELIAMEP, and **Giorgos Siakas**, Assistant Professor at the Democritus University of Thrace and Research Director of the Public Opinion and Market Research Unit of the University of Macedonia.

Main conclusions:

The results of the public opinion survey conclude that, compared to previous surveys, there is stagnation or strain on bilateral and political issues. The survey also reflects the strongly negative attitude and concern of the Greek public opinion in relation to the Beleri issue and the rights of the Greek minority. On the contrary, compared to previous surveys, there is a significant improvement in the indicators recording social and economic relations between Greece and Albania and between Greeks and Albanians, as well as in the image of Albanians in Greek public opinion.

More specifically:

- There is an improvement in the image of Albania in Greece, but negative opinions remain in the majority. Regarding bilateral relations, there is a slight deterioration, but neutral opinions prevail.
- Both on the issue of Beleri and on the respect of the rights of the Greek minority in Albania and on the rule of law in the neighbouring country, the opinions of public opinion in Greece are particularly negative for the Albanian side. Public opinion recognises that third countries have had a rather neutral stance on the issue of Beleri.
- Very positive views, which are constantly improving, exist on social and economic relations between the two sides. There are overwhelmingly positive views on Albanian immigration to Greece.
- Greek public opinion is rather ambivalent on the issue of Albania's EU membership.



Greek Public Opinion and Attitudes on Albania, Albanians and Greek-Albanian Relations

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ON GREEK FOREIGN POLICY: *FOCUS ON THE EU, PROBLEMS WITH NEIGHBOURS*

Greece should cultivate relations with which countries:

Respondents suggest that Greece should cultivate closer relations in the future with EU countries (55%), followed by the US (20%). About 1 in 10 believe that Greece should cultivate closer relations with Russia, a figure that over time has stabilized at 14%, up from 24.5% in 2017.

Sense of threat:

When it comes to the country that poses the biggest threat to Greece, respondents say it is Turkey. The percentages of those who see Turkey as a threat have decreased compared to 2019 and 2021. The sense of threat from Albania is almost zero (0.5%).

Attitudes towards neighbouring countries:

The most positive view is found for Serbia and to a lesser extent for Bulgaria, while negative views are found for Turkey, Albania and North Macedonia. Views on Israel are divided.

Attitudes towards the Prespa Agreement:

The survey shows a clear deterioration in attitudes towards the Prespa Agreement, with the proportion of positive and somewhat positive judgments declining to 28.5% in 2024, down from 35.5% in 2019. It is worth noting that the survey was conducted before the elections in North Macedonia and the infamous statements of the newly elected President and future Prime Minister of the country.

2. THE BELERI CASE AND JUSTICE IN ALBANIA: *AGGRAVATING FACTOR*

Awareness of the case:

Almost one in two (47%) say they are very or fairly aware of the Beleri case.

Support for Greek positions on the case:

In general, respondents are of the opinion that third countries and the EU have taken a largely neutral stance on the issue. More specifically, 56% of respondents felt that the EU took a neutral stance, while the percentages of neutral stance were 43.5% for Germany, 39.5% for France, 50.5% for the US and 45.5% for Russia. Only 3% of respondents considered that Russia supported Greek positions on the Beleri issue, while the highest percentage of support was considered to have come from France, with 21% of respondents considering that it supported Greece on the Beleri issue.



Greek Public Opinion and Attitudes on Albania, Albanians and Greek-Albanian Relations

Importance of the Beleri case:

Around 2/10 (18.5%) say that the Beleri issue is the most important issue in relations between Greece and Albania, while two out of three (66%) believe that there are other more important issues.

The media coverage of the Beleri case:

One in two respondents (50%) consider that there was little or no coverage of the Beleri issue, while the percentage of those who consider that the coverage was satisfactory or great reaches 37.5%. Almost two out of three respondents (63%) believe that the media coverage in Greece emphasized the Greek perspective, and only one out of ten (12%) believe that the media coverage in Greece was objective.

Perceptions of justice in Albania:

The vast majority of respondents (more than 8/10) have a negative or rather negative view of justice in Albania. More specifically, 56% of respondents consider that the judiciary is not independent and impartial, while 25% consider that it is probably not independent and impartial. However, 42% of respondents seem to be aware that the EU has given the green light to start accession negotiations, following satisfactory progress in the reform of the rule of law.

3. GREEK-ALBANIAN RELATIONS AND BILATERAL ISSUES: *PROBLEMS REMAIN*

Attitudes towards Albania in general:

Positive views towards Albania increased to 19.5%, up from 15.5% in 2019. The number of neutral and negative judgments remains much higher: 42% neutral and 37.5% negative.

Perceptions of bilateral relations:

There is little strain on perceptions of bilateral relations between Greece and Albania. The percentage of those who think relations are bad increased to 23%, up from 18% in 2019. The percentage of those who consider relations good decreased accordingly. The highest percentage, one in two or 48%, considers bilateral relations to be neutral (neither good nor bad).

Perceptions of the importance of good relations with Albania:

However, high percentages of those who believe that it is important for Greece to maintain good relations with Albania: almost one in two (46.5%) consider it very important to have good relations, while one in three (33%) think it is somewhat important. Just one in five (20%) consider it somewhat or not at all important for Greece to have good relations with Albania.



Greek Public Opinion and Attitudes on Albania, Albanians and Greek-Albanian Relations

Attitudes on the issue of the Chams:

Information on the issue of the Chams has declined, from 58.5% in 2019 to 47.5% in 2024. Among those who have some relevant information, there is a clear decrease in the percentage of those who consider the issue of the Chams to be an obstacle to the development of bilateral relations. The percentage of those who see the issue as an obstacle decreased from 68.5% in 2019 to 55% in 2024.

Attitudes on the issue of respecting the rights of the Greek minority in Albania:

As in previous surveys, the majority of respondents believe that the Albanian government does not respect the rights of the Greek minority in Albania. More specifically, 7 out of 10 respondents (70%) consider that they are not respected. In the 2019 survey the percentage was higher, at 78%. The negative view on the respect of the rights of the Greek minority is high in most demographic groups in the survey, with the exception of the 17-34 age group.

Attitudes towards the issues of Northern Epirus:

There is also a decrease in information about the issues of Northern Epirus: from 40% in 2019 to 33.5% in 2024. Information is particularly low in the 17-34 age group, while it is significantly higher in the 55+ age group and among respondents who self-identify as right-wing or centre-right. Among respondents with some information on the issue, there is a slight dismissal of the issue as an issue of polarisation between Greece and Albania. More specifically, the percentage of those who see the issue as a pending issue in Greek foreign policy or as a major priority in bilateral relations decreased from 44% in 2019 to 41% in 2024. There has also been a marginal increase in the percentage of those who consider the issue part of Greek history (38%) and Northern Epirus merely part of Albanian territory (13%).

4. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS: *SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT*

Opinion about Albanians:

There is a ten-percentage point increase in positive attitudes towards Albanians in general. A percentage of 57% have a positive opinion, while in 2019 the percentage was 47.5%. Negative attitudes are now only at 6.5%.

Albanian immigration and economic development of Greece:

More than 3 out of 4 respondents (77.5%) believe that Albanian immigrants have contributed to the economic development of Greece. The percentage is 13% higher than in 2019. Positive judgments extend across all demographic groups in the survey.



Greek Public Opinion and Attitudes on Albania, Albanians and Greek-Albanian Relations

Albanian migrants as a potential threat to Greece:

More than 8 in 10 respondents (82.5%) reject the view that Albanian migrants pose a threat to Greece. The corresponding percentage in the 2019 survey was 74%. The view that Albanian migrants do not pose a threat extends to all demographic groups in the survey.

Integration of Albanian migrants' children into Greek society:

Almost 9 out of 10 respondents (87.5%) consider that Albanian migrants' children are fully integrated into Greek society. This opinion theme extends to all demographic groups in the survey.

Which country has benefited from bilateral economic relations:

There is a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who see mutual economic benefits for both countries from the economic relations developed over the last thirty years. In 2024 this figure is 53%, compared to 34% in the 2019 survey. This is a 19-percentage point increase in the view that both countries have had benefits. In previous surveys there was a widespread perception that Albania benefited more than Greece.

5. ALBANIA'S EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: AMBIVALENT ATTITUDES

Support for Albania's EU membership:

The percentages for and against are split, with a short head for negative attitudes, i.e. those who personally do not support Albania's EU membership. Younger age groups, respondents with a higher level of education and those who classify themselves as centre-left appear significantly more positive on the prospect of Albania's EU membership.

Estimation of the timing of Albania's EU accession:

More than half of the respondents (53%) believe that Albania will become an EU member in up to ten years - more specifically 15.5% "see" accession in 1-5 years and 37.5% in 5-10 years. Only about 1 in 10 (11.5%) think that Albania will never become a member of the Union.

Desire for the timing of Albania's EU accession:

More than one in two respondents (55.5%) would like to see Albania's accession within the next ten years - 30% in 1-5 years and 25.5% in 5-10 years. This high percentage of high desire for membership has increased by 5.5% compared to a similar survey in 2019. And it is noteworthy that the percentage of strong desire for integration in the next decade reaches 67% among respondents of very high educational level, among young people aged 17-34 and among centre-left voters. The percentage of respondents who would not want Albania to join the EU is only 17.5%.