

**Question for written answer E-000544/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Desecration of Panagia Soumela Monastery by the Turkish authorities

One of the historic monuments most revered by Pontic Greeks, the Panagia Soumela Monastery, which has been put forward for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List, has now been desecrated by the Turkish authorities, who are allowing it to be used as a place of revelry, complete with a DJ playing electronic music.

While Turkish authorities claim to be seeking to attract tourists to the monument, their actions are an insult to the religious beliefs of millions of Orthodox Christians, for whom the Panagia Soumela Monastery has for 16 centuries been their hallowed shrine.

At the same time, Turkey's Minister of Culture has reported that '77 relics from the Panagia Soumela Monastery' have been identified at home and abroad and is now seeking their return to Turkey.

In view of this:

1. Is the Commission planning to make recommendations/representations to the Turkish authorities protesting at the desecration of this monument?
2. Following its provocative decisions to convert into mosques the premises occupied by Hagia Sophia in Trabzon and Hagia Sophia and the Chora Church in Istanbul, how will it make it clear to Turkey that respect for monuments on its territory that form part of our cultural heritage is a basic condition for continued EU accession negotiations?
3. Will it make representations to the Turkish authorities with a view securing the replacement of the relics currently in storage on the premises of the Ankara museum and at Hagia Sophia on the site of the monastery, which now functions as a museum?