

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT EU-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS

#easternpartnership



The European Union's relations with Azerbaijan are based on the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in force since 1999. In February 2017, the EU and Azerbaijan began negotiations on a new framework agreement with Azerbaijan designed to give new impetus to political dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation. Azerbaijan is a strategic energy partner for the EU and plays a pivotal role in bringing Caspian energy resources to the EU market.

STRONGER ECONOMY

- ✓ The EU is Azerbaijan's **first trading partner and biggest export and import market**. It is also Azerbaijan's largest foreign investor, both in the oil and non-oil sector.
- ✓ The EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement enables gradual approximation of Azerbaijan's legislation and procedures with EU and international trade-related laws and standards.
- ✓ In Azerbaijan, the EU has assisted **13,000 companies** with **funding, training, and export** support to new markets through the EU4Business initiative. The EU supports the government in improving the country's business and investment climate.
- ✓ The EU also supports Azerbaijan's economic diversification agenda notably through support to education and regional development.

STRONGER CONNECTIVITY

- ✓ Azerbaijan is a strategic energy partner for the EU, currently **supplying around 5% of the EU's gas demand**.
- ✓ Azerbaijan will bring Caspian **gas resources** to the EU market through the Southern Gas Corridor.
- ✓ In 2016, the EU launched a new regional programme, **EU4Energy**, which supports Eastern Partnership countries, including Azerbaijan, in achieving their energy policy objectives and improving their energy efficiency.
- ✓ Azerbaijan benefits from its favourable location at the crossroads of transport connections linking North and South, and East and West. It has invested in important infrastructure projects such as the **Port of Baku and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway**. The EU provides technical know-how for instance to the Port of Baku and its free-trade zone.

STRONGER GOVERNANCE

- ✓ Azerbaijan actively cooperates with the EU via Twinning projects which bring together public sector expertise from EU Member States and beneficiary countries. Over the past 10 years, more than **25 ministries and public institutions** in Azerbaijan have taken part in almost 50 Twinning projects and as a result have benefited from EU technical know-how and from the practical experience of EU civil servants. This is contributing to developing and improving legislation in line with EU standards.
- ✓ Justice sector reform is one of the priority sectors for EU assistance to Azerbaijan. The goals are to **support alternative dispute resolution**, help **fight corruption**, and **provide legal aid and better access to justice** for citizens and businesses.
- ✓ The EU continues to stress the importance of **defending human rights** and **ensuring civil society** and **freedom of media, expression, and assembly** in Azerbaijan. The EU sees this as an essential part of EU-Azerbaijan relations and an integral part of putting citizens' interests at the heart of EU-Azerbaijan relations.

STRONGER SOCIETY

- ✓ The EU-Azerbaijan **Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements** entered into force in 2014, making it easier and cheaper for citizens of Azerbaijan, in particular frequent travellers, to acquire short-term visas that allow them to travel throughout most EU countries. In addition, for example, visas for Erasmus+ students are cost-free.
- ✓ Supporting **skills development** is a priority for EU assistance to Azerbaijan, with a particular focus on vocational education and training, helping the country to have a better match between the skills of the labour force and the needs of employers.
- ✓ The EU's Erasmus+ programme gave almost **1,300 students and academic staff** from Azerbaijan the opportunity to study or teach in the EU countries and nearly **700 Europeans** to go to Azerbaijan between 2015 and 2018. In addition, over **2,800 young people and youth workers** from Azerbaijan took part in short-term exchanges, mobility, training and volunteering projects.

IN FIGURES

The EU is the first trading partner, making up
36,2%
of Azerbaijan's total trade in 2017.

Almost
50
Twinning projects in 10 years:
34 completed, 11 ongoing,
1 in preparation.

Since 2009,
€207 million
of EU-backed loans have been provided for
11,000
Azerbaijani companies.

IMPORTANT ENERGY PARTNER

The EU is an important customer for Azerbaijani oil, and oil transited through Azerbaijan. The Southern Gas Corridor is a strategic initiative to bring gas from the Caspian Sea to the European markets and is a key tool for enhancing the security of energy supplies in Europe. The infrastructure that will bring gas from the Caspian basin, notably from the Shah Deniz II field, will build on an extension of the existing South-Caucasus pipeline from Azerbaijan via Georgia to Turkey; the TransAnatolian pipeline crossing Turkey and connecting Georgia with Europe; and the Trans-Adriatic pipeline transporting gas from the Turkish border to Italy via Greece and Albania. A giant offshore gas field in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea, Shah Deniz II, will provide an initial ten billion cubic metres of gas per year to European markets by 2020.

MULTICULTURALISM

In December 2016, an International Conference on 'Interreligious tolerance and the role of media' was held in Baku, and visits to the EU institutions in Brussels by the leaders from various religious communities in Azerbaijan were organised in September 2017 and June 2018. This was followed by the annually held 'Imagine Euro Tolerance Festival' in Baku in October 2017 and 2018, aimed at promoting the values of intercultural dialogue and tolerance through different expressions of art. A Conference on Inter-faith Dialogue and Anti-Radicalisation was held in April 2019 in Baku.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains an obstacle to stability and prosperity in the region. The EU, including through its Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, supports and complements the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group to facilitate the resolution of the conflict. The EU also promotes confidence- and peace-building activities across the conflict divide, notably through the implementation of the programme European Partnership for the peaceful settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK).