



## PRESS RELEASE

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### EU signs readmission agreement with Azerbaijan

**On 28 February, the European Union (EU) and Azerbaijan signed an agreement on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation. The agreement is a part of a wider package including a visa facilitation agreement with Azerbaijan, already signed in November 2013, which is paving the way for easier travel and people-to-people contacts between the EU and Azerbaijan. The EU and Azerbaijan welcome the signing of the documents and look forward to their speedy ratification and entry into force. It is expected that both, Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements, will enter into force in the second half of 2014. *"The signature of the readmission agreement is a very concrete step forward in strengthening and deepening EU-Azerbaijani relations. Together with the visa facilitation agreement this agreement is of great importance for both sides and will strengthen our cooperation in the field of mobility and the fight against irregular migration,"* said Head of EU Delegation to Azerbaijan Malena Mard.**

### Background

The negotiations for both the Visa Facilitation Agreement and Readmission Agreement took place in 4 official rounds of negotiations held in Baku and Brussels between 7 February 2012 and 5 July 2013. The signing of the Readmission Agreement marks the end of a successful and positive negotiation process.

The Visa Facilitation Agreement which was signed in 2013 will make it easier, cheaper and quicker for citizens of the EU and Azerbaijan to obtain short stay visas and cover simplified procedures for processing short-stay visas i.e. for intended stays of no more than 90 days in a 180-day period for the Schengen area. The Visa Facilitation Agreement brings very concrete benefits to all visa applicants: a 10-day deadline for the processing of visa applications will be set and the visa fee will be reduced from €60 to €35. Certain categories of applicants will even benefit from free of charge visas, for instance members of official delegations, students, journalists, children, pensioners, disabled persons, participants of scientific, cultural, artistic activities as well as sport events. The application process will be easier for many categories of citizens (close relatives, students, persons travelling for medical reasons, representatives of civil society organisations, official delegations, business people, journalists and so forth) who will have to present fewer documents to justify their purpose of travel. For some categories of persons the agreement specifies also the criteria for issuing multiply-entry visas valid from one to up to five years.

The readmission agreement sets out clear obligations and procedures for the authorities of both Azerbaijan and the respective EU Member State as to when and how to take back people who are illegally residing on their territories. These obligations cover nationals from Azerbaijan, the EU Member States and those from third countries and stateless persons, provided the latter two categories have a clear link with the requested state (e.g.



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The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of more than 60 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders".



visa or resident permit), or transited through the territory of the requested State before travelling directly to the other party's territory. The Readmission Agreement contains the necessary safeguards with regard to data protection and the protection of fundamental rights. Full respect of Human Rights as provided by the European Convention of Human Rights will be guaranteed during the application of the Readmission Agreement. The Agreement takes into account that Azerbaijan and the Union do not share an external border.

The two agreements will enter into force once both Parties complete their internal ratification procedures. This involves, on the EU side, the European Parliament which will have to give its consent. Most likely both agreements will enter into force in the second half of 2014, which means that Azerbaijanis will be able to travel more easily to the EU in a safe and secure environment, while the efforts to clamp down on irregular migration will be maintained.

Photos from the event

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/council/photographic-library?command=VIEW&BID=170&dateEvent=28/02/2014&rubrique=5322&id=&lang=fr>



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