

# EC/Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

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The foundations need to be laid for partnership with Azerbaijan, while ensuring that this Caucasian country respected human rights. This was the position taken by the committee, which proposed that the European Parliament assent (by majority vote) to the partnership and cooperation agreements between the European Communities and their Member States and the three Transcaucasian states. The rapporteur, Mr Panayotis LAMBRIAS (PPE, EL) proposed this decision, while highlighting the fact that the situation in the region gave cause for concern and calling on the Union to remain vigilant with regard to respect for human rights in this country. Mr. LAMBRIS also considered that sanctions should be envisaged in the event of failure to respect human rights and called on the European Commission to be extremely vigilant on this matter. The rapporteur justified his call for a positive vote on the partnership agreement by stating that it would help these countries implement the political and economic reform needed in order to come into line with European standards. Some members had stressed the need for a European profile in the Transcaucasian countries, while others had expressed reservations on a positive vote, citing the problems of the recognition of minorities, human rights, what they consider to be the occupation of part of Azerbaijan by Armenia and the "lack of democratic legitimacy" of president Chevarnadze.