

**Question for oral answer O-00063/2015
to the Council**

Rule 128

Elena Valenciano

on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Subject: Sports and human rights, including in the context of the Baku European Games

The importance of large sporting events, and of sports in general, goes beyond the exclusive focus of sports fans. Sports and large sporting events have a significant potential to contribute substantially to the protection and promotion of human rights. Ensuring full respect for human rights, and encouraging responsible behaviour and transparency, is a shared responsibility of sport federations, host cities and countries, as well as of corporate sponsors of such events.

Large sporting events offer host governments an opportunity to take important measures to promote development and human rights. Local and international media have a special responsibility and role to play, and journalists, including those from the 28 EU Member States, should be granted open and unhindered access to the host countries.

Sporting events can be used by host governments, including authoritarian regimes, to boost their global standing and the personal prestige of their leaders. Upcoming international sporting events, such as the European Games in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, will represent a vital and sensitive choice for the EU. World leaders are always invited to the opening ceremonies, as this represents an opportunity for autocrats to legitimise their power and improve their image in the eyes of domestic and international public opinion.

As regards Azerbaijan in particular, most of the country's high-profile human rights defenders, journalists and other independent voices have been imprisoned in the run-up to the inaugural European Games. The Azerbaijani Government is determined to use the games to boost the country's global reputation.

1. What is the position of the Council and the High Representative on the relations between sports and human rights, bearing in mind that respect for human rights and democracy is a core value of the EU? Shouldn't the Council use large sporting events, including the upcoming Baku Games, as unique opportunities for the EU and its Member States to stand up collectively for human rights and promote universal values?
2. Will the Council and the High Representative urge the International Olympic Committee, the European Olympic Committees and other large sports federations to include the respect for human rights in the list of key requisites for hosting international sporting events, and to include these requisites among the core governance principles of sports federations and their decision-making processes?

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