

Question for written answer E-008913/2016
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: Azerbaijan

The EU and the Council of Europe recently presented the mid-term results of their projects with Azerbaijan. In the last two years EUR 4.7 million were invested in projects on freedom of expression, the fight against corruption, the judiciary and the implementation of ECtHR cases. During this period the government of Azerbaijan suppressed criticism through the employment of politically motivated prosecutors and the detention of journalists, opposition leaders, activists and human rights defenders. Despite the release of some of those arbitrarily imprisoned, the systemic nature of the repression has not changed.

In view of Azerbaijan's unwillingness to reform its institutions and its systematic repression of dissenting voices, it is clear that the cooperation has not led to much progress in the areas concerned. On the contrary, EU funding seems to have served as a tool for the authorities to further legitimise their actions and carry out their repressive policies.

1. How does the Commission evaluate the cooperation with Azerbaijan in view of the developments of the last two years and the overall dire human rights situation in the country?
2. Will the Commission continue to engage only with the Azerbaijani authorities on matters dealing with the rule of law and human rights, as restrictive legislation in the country does not allow the EU to fund independent civil society?