

Azerbaijan

EU engagement to date

The EU Readmission Agreement with Azerbaijan entered into force on 1 September 2014. Since then five meetings of the Joint Readmission Committee took place to assess the implementation of the Agreement, the last one in September 2019 in Baku.

A EUR 700 000 EU funded project is underway to develop a RCMS, foreseen to be concluded by end of 2021.

Cooperation on readmission

In 2019, 1 385 Azerbaijani nationals staying illegally in the Member States were issued return decisions and 1 315 effectively returned to Azerbaijan resulting in a **return rate** of 95%. Member States submitted 995 readmission requests to Azerbaijani authorities, who issued 534 travel documents resulting in an **issuance rate** of 54%.

A total of 13 Member States standing for 96% of return decisions issued reported having approached the authorities of Azerbaijan for readmission matters related to its nationals (identification, travel documents or readmission requests) in 2019.

For 11 of them the relevant provisions of the existing **EU-Azerbaijan Readmission Agreement** are often or always respected by Azerbaijan.

Three Schengen Associated States report having **bilateral agreements/arrangements** in place with Azerbaijan, whose relevant provisions are often to always respected.

Almost all of the responding Member States assess the overall cooperation with Azerbaijan in the **identification procedure** as very good or good.

This is reflected in eight Member States having a functioning established routine with diplomatic missions.

Evidence accepted includes not only valid or expired passports, but also information extracted from the VIS, as well as other identity documents (ID cards, birth/marriage certificates, driving licences, military ID cards/army booklets, formerly delivered ETD, as well as their photocopies), all being accepted often, very often or always. Three Member States stated that biometric evidence is accepted.

Azerbaijan conducts consular interviews upon Member States request, with satisfactory results. Only one Member State assessed the results as unsatisfactory. Interviews are generally conducted only for undocumented cases.

Only two Member States reported that interviews are requested also when sufficient evidence is provided.

According to three quarters of responding Member States, the **issuance of travel documents** always takes place in a timely manner. Even if possible under the agreement, the use of EU

travel document is rarely attempted, as Azerbaijan issues travel documents in a timely manner to all identified nationals irrespective of individual circumstances.

Returns by **charters flights** are accepted by Azerbaijan, although most Member States have not availed of this option. For returns by **scheduled flights** a visa is requested for escorts, however no Member State reported difficulty obtaining it.

In general, the most Member States have assessed the **overall cooperation on return and readmission** as good, as improved or as stable. No Member State reported poor cooperation or deterioration.

With a total of 1 385 Azerbaijani nationals ordered to leave in 2019, Azerbaijan ranks 36th amongst visa-bound third countries whose nationals have been issued return decisions in the Member States. Overall, a third of the Member States interact on readmission with Azerbaijan – the rest having few or no cases – with well-established readmission practices that are very effective. The Readmission Agreement provisions (and the equivalent provisions of the bilateral arrangements) are well respected for all Member States concerned. Identification processes are conducted successfully, including through interviews, and issuance of travel documents is timely. Charter flights are accepted and no obstacles imposed for returns by scheduled flights. While the return rate is in 2019 at 95% and no issues of effectiveness have been signaled, the new RCMS platform to be launched in 2021 has the potential to diminish the workload per case for practitioners in both the EU Member States and Azerbaijan.