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Committee on Foreign Affairs

2013/0420(NLE)

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DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, of the other part, on a Framework Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the general principles for the participation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Union programmes
(05616/2014 – C8-0043/2014 – 2013/0420(NLE))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

Rapporteur: Anneli Jäätteenmäki

Symbols for procedures

- * Consultation procedure
- *** Consent procedure
- ***I Ordinary legislative procedure (first reading)
- ***II Ordinary legislative procedure (second reading)
- ***III Ordinary legislative procedure (third reading)

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the draft act.)

CONTENTS

	Page
DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION.....	5
SHORT JUSTIFICATION.....	6

DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, of the other part, on a Framework Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the general principles for the participation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Union programmes (05616/2014 – C8-0043/2014 – 2013/0420(NLE))

(Consent)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft Council decision (05616/2014),
 - having regard to the Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, of the other part, on a Framework Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the general principles for the participation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Union programmes (05618/2014),
 - having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 212 and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C8-0043/2014),
 - having regard to Rule 99(1), first and third subparagraphs, Rule 99(2), and Rule 108(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0000/2015),
1. Gives its consent to conclusion of the Protocol;
 2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of Azerbaijan.

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The objective of the Protocol is to lay down financial and technical rules enabling Azerbaijan to participate in certain European Union Programmes open to third countries. The specific terms and conditions for the participation of Azerbaijan in each particular programme will be then determined in agreement between the Commission and the competent authorities in Azerbaijan.

The gradual opening of certain Union programmes to the neighbourhood countries was outlined by the Commission already in 2006 and set as one of the components of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The Council endorsed this approach in 2007 and issued directives for the Commission to negotiate Framework Agreements with the partner countries that would facilitate this participation. This approach was further endorsed in the 2011 Review of the ENP, and it is also one of the elements of the Eastern Partnership for enhancing bilateral cooperation. In October 2012, Azerbaijan expressed its interest to participate in the Union programmes. Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have already concluded such Protocols.

The EU- Azerbaijan PCA has entered into force on 1 July 1999. Since 2010, the EU and Azerbaijan have been conducting negotiations for new and upgraded contractual relations, as per objectives of the Eastern Partnership that Azerbaijan is part of. Unfortunately, these negotiations have come to a stall in 2013. In the meantime, on 1 September 2014 the EU- Azerbaijan Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements came into force. Azerbaijan is also an important energy partner for the EU. However, the importance of EU-Azerbaijan relations is not limited to energy security, and the relevance of this partnership should be considered in the context of all aspects of cooperation envisaged in the framework of Eastern Partnership. The Parliament has expressed concerns in the last months about the increasing difficulties civil society actors and organisations face. Rule of law, human rights and democracy remain core principles on which relations of the EU with third countries should be based on. In this context, the framework agreement under consideration aims to promote cooperation in sectors and foster people-to-people contacts which should be beneficial for the society.