

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Special Permanent Council No 1057
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EU Statement on the OSCE Project Coordinator in Baku

Last Friday, the Secretary General informed Participating States about the decision of the Government of Azerbaijan to terminate as of 4 June the Memorandum of Understanding with the OSCE on the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Baku.

The announcement came as a complete surprise, as there were no reasons given in the Note Verbale from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, nor has there been any advance notice of the intention of the Government of Azerbaijan to that effect. Azerbaijan did not consult with participating States prior to that decision. In addition, we do not understand why the Government of Azerbaijan is in such a haste to terminate the Memorandum of Understanding. And why has Azerbaijan imposed such a short period of time for closing the Office of the Project Co-ordinator in Baku? We recall that the OSCE's Chairman-in-Office paid a visit to Baku only three days prior to this announcement and met with the President and the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, as well as with the OSCE Project Co-ordinator's staff.

We expect a convincing explanation. We believe the decision is not consistent with the mandate for the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Baku that was adopted by consensus last year. We would also like to point out that the mandate of the Project Co-ordinator in Baku was designed in response to a request by the Government of Azerbaijan which had expressed the wish to change the mandate of the then OSCE office in Baku. This change only entered into force on 1 January 2014. That mandate provides that the initial period of the mandate only comes to an end at the end of this year. Thus the mandate remains in force. However, Azerbaijan - if going ahead with the termination of the Memorandum of Understanding - would render it impossible to implement it.

Azerbaijan has made important progress in areas such as relating to economic stability and development. Many challenges, however, remain for the full

implementation of its OSCE commitments and the mandate of the Project Co-ordinator is designed precisely to support Azerbaijan in achieving the necessary reforms and modernization, including in the development of democratic institutions, the rule of law, and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, in our view, the mandate is not completed.

The decision is irreconcilable with the principles of cooperation and confidence building, principles which are at the heart of the OSCE. Closing the Office of the Project Co-ordinator in Baku is a serious step backwards in the cooperation of Azerbaijan with the OSCE.

An OSCE field presence is one of the most effective ways to support participating States with implementing their OSCE commitments. The EU strongly believes that discussion of any OSCE field presence and its mandate should take place within the normal cycle of decision-making and within the established bodies and working methods of the Organisation. The EU therefore deplores the decision of the Government of Azerbaijan to terminate the Memorandum of Understanding and requests Azerbaijan to reconsider it with the goal of enabling the Project Co-ordinator to continue their activities without interruption.

The Candidate Countries MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

* Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.