

# AZERBAIJAN

## NATIONAL PLATFORM IN FOCUS: 2013-2014



In the past year the Azeri national platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum engaged in an active dialogue with the EU structures, published a number of papers about the Eastern Partnership and the EU integration of Azerbaijan and organized capacity-building events for the civil society organizations in Azerbaijan. In light of the increased government crackdown on civil society in Azerbaijan, Steering Committee of the EaP CSF have raised the question if the National Platform can function amid the political climate in the country when much of the platform's leadership is in exile, in prison or under investigation.

## COOPERATION WITH THE EU STRUCTURES

The Azeri national platform has actively participated in the discussions and meetings with the EU institutions and its representatives. Members of the platform attended the consultations and thematic meetings held under initiative of the EU Delegation in Azerbaijan, held two meetings with the Ambassador of the European Union to Azerbaijan Roland Cobia, during which they discussed the latest developments in the field of human rights in Azerbaijan. The members of the platform have also met with the previous EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Štefan Füle to discuss Azeri EU integration process.

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and the members of the national platform has launched a campaign aimed at immediate and unconditional release from the prison of Anar Mammadli, an active player in the fields of democracy promotion, election monitoring and protection of human rights, and other human rights defenders and civil activists, such as Leyla Yunus, Arif Yunus and Rasul Jafarov. On the initiative of the Forum, Anar Mammadli was awarded the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize 2014 in honor of his extensive civil society action and work in the defense of human rights by the Council of Europe.



## RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION

The Azeri national platform has developed a research paper on the accession of Azerbaijan to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The paper attempted to explain the main functions of the WTO, the implications of the accession for Azerbaijan, advantages and disadvantages of the membership and reasons of failure to join the organization for 13 years.

The platform has published and distributed the brochures on Eastern Partnership and cooperation of Azerbaijan with the EU. It reached more than 1000 stakeholders including EU institutions, universities, libraries, think tanks, government agencies and international institutions. The platform has also organized a number of trainings on advocacy, campaigning and better communication for the civil society organizations.

The Azeri national platform has initiated statements on violations of fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan, against violence and increase of political repression in the country, and detention of a number of members of the National Platform.

The representatives of the Azeri national platform delivered a powerful speech on the importance of the EU engagement in the regional security, human rights and common approach to EU-EaP energy security during the Eastern Partnership Informal Ministerial meeting in September 2014 and emphasized the importance of civil society in driving democratic reforms and promoting government accountability in the Eastern Partnership countries.