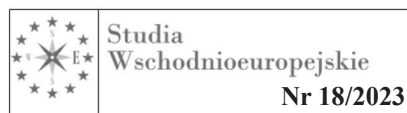


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Azerbaijan-Poland relations - favorable platform for cooperation

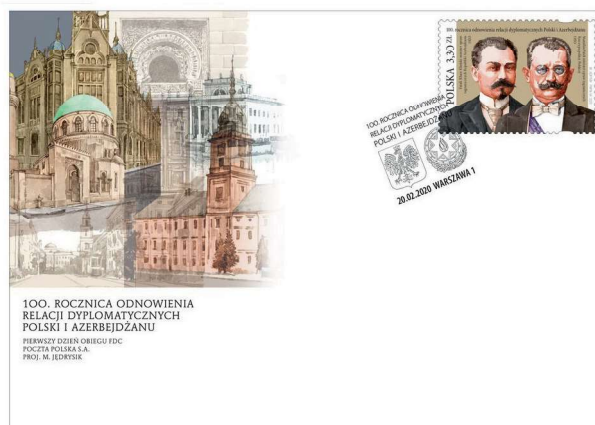
Despite the remoteness of the geographical location of Poland and Azerbaijan, the states have been close at the diplomatic level for decades. Over centuries, Poland has taken an active part in cooperation with Azerbaijan, contributed to the development of its industry and culture. On February 21, 2023, Poland and Azerbaijan will celebrate the thirty-first anniversary of the establishment of official diplomatic relations. However, in fact, cooperation between two states is a centuries-old history.¹ Poland-Azerbaijan relations date back to the 15th century, when King Casimir IV Jagiellonchik received a delegation sent by the ruler of Azerbaijan, Uzun Hasan Ak Koyunlu, in Krakow. On February 13, 1920, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Stanislaw Patek, sent a telegram to his colleague in the government of Azerbaijan, in which he declared that the Republic of Azerbaijan was recognized by Poland as a free and independent state.

In honor of this event, Poczta Polska issued the stamp ‘100th anniversary of the resumption of diplomatic relations between Poland and Azerbaijan’ in 2020, as well as an envelope depicting works of architecture typical for the capitals of both countries.(img.1) ‘We are proud that the stamp we created will become a part of the history of both nations,’ commented Andrzej Bodziany, Vice President of the Management Board of Poczta Polska².

The independence of Azerbaijan and Poland at the same time has made the reforms in the economy and the implementation of systematic economic policies. Both Azerbaijan and Poland have embarked on a path of successful development and have solved most of the post-independence problems. Of course, both Poland and Azerbaijan have made significant progress in liberalizing society and the economy. The embassy of Poland opened in

¹ Bilateral Relations: The Republic of Poland: Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. URL: <https://mfa.gov.az/en/category/avropa/polsa>

² Poczta Polska upamiętnia 100. rocznicę odnowienia relacji dyplomatycznych pomiędzy Warszawą i Baku: Poczta Polska. URL: <https://media.poczta-polska.pl/pr/486083/poczta-polska-upamietnia-100-rocznice-odnowienia-relacji-dyplomatycznych-pomiedzy-warszawa-i-baku>



Pic.1. Envelope, stamp and special cancellation stamp of the series “100th anniversary of the resumption of diplomatic relations between Poland and Azerbaijan”

Azerbaijan on August 23, 2001. Later, on August 30, 2004, the opening of the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Poland took place.

Both countries are full members of the Council of Europe and OSCE. During his visits to Poland, the ex-president of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev noted that Azerbaijan highly appreciates Poland’s position in NATO’s Peace Partnership Program and considers it its partner in Europe.

Referring to the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, he drew the attention of the Chairman of the Seimas to the fact that Armenia occupied the territories of Azerbaijan and violated international law and received support from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Bronisław Geremek, and the country itself in voting on this issue at OSCE meetings³.

Azerbaijan is becoming an increasingly important political and economic partner of Poland in the South Caucasus region, said Elnara Mammadova, director of foreign trade representation of the Polish Investment and Trade Agency in Baku. Considering the potential of the Azerbaijani market, in July, 2018, a trade representative office was opened in the capital. In May, 2019, an Azerbaijani-Polish business forum was organized with the participation of the presidents of both countries. Approximately 100 representatives of Polish and Azerbaijani companies took part in the forum. During the forum, seven memorandums of

³ Azerbaijan - Poland relations [Электронный ресурс]: „Heydar Aliyev Heritage” International Online Library. URL: <https://lib.aliyevheritage.org/en/7202360.html>

cooperation were signed, which will play a positive role in expanding trade and economic cooperation between the countries.⁴

Poland, which has a large potential in terms of territory and population in Europe, plays a key role as an important economic partner for Azerbaijan. However, at the same time, political relations between Azerbaijan and Poland are at a higher level and are developing dynamically, in contradistinction to economic relations. This, at the end of 2022, was announced by Maciej Falkowski, Head of the Bilateral Cooperation Department of the Department of International Cooperation and Trade of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of Poland. In his opinion, the current trade turnover does not fully reflect the capabilities of partner countries⁵. An additional incentive for the development of economic relations may be the Azerbaijani-Polish business forum held in Baku on October 20, 2022, organized by the Export and Investment Promotion Agency (AZPROMO) together with the Polish Investment and Trade Agency (PAIH). Within the forum, memorandums of understanding on mutual cooperation were signed between AZPROMO and PAIH, as well as between Baku Steel Company and Polish companies Konstal, Zystal Marcin Zyska, Touye Group and Warstal⁶.

In September 2022, Ambassador of Poland to Azerbaijan Rafal Poborski met with the head of the Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Agency AZPROMO Yusif Abdullayev. At the meeting, the possibilities of cooperation in the field of supporting entrepreneurs operating in the markets of both countries, organizing business missions, promotional events and other events aimed at expanding Polish-Azerbaijani trade and investment cooperation were discussed.⁷

Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, a significant increase in Polish-Azerbaijani trade was recorded in 2020. The value of goods exported from Poland to Azerbaijan in 2020 exceeded \$113 million (up 36%), while Azerbaijani exports to Poland reached \$6.5 million (up 23%)⁸. There is also an upward trend in bilateral trade in 2021 as well.

Poland considers Azerbaijan as a potential market and gateway to Central Asian, Indian and Iranian markets for the export of machinery, electronic equipment, vehicles, furniture

⁴ Польша считает Азербайджан важным экономическим партнером [Электронный ресурс]: Media. az. URL: <https://media.az/economy/1067746262/polsha-schitaet-azerbaydzhan-vazhnyum-ekonomicheskim-partnerom/>

⁵ Польша рассчитывает на развитие экономических отношений с Азербайджаном. [Электронный ресурс]: Интерфакс-Азербайджан. URL: <http://interfax.az/view/878996>

⁶ В Баку прошел Азербайджано-польский бизнес-форум [Электронный ресурс]: Azerbaijan State News Agency. URL: https://azertag.az/ru/xeber/V_Baku_proshel_Azerbaidzhano_polskii_biznes_forum-2343332

⁷ Spotkanie z szefem Agencji Promocji Eksportu i Inwestycji Azerbejdżanu AZPROMO

⁸ Польша намерена активизировать сотрудничество с Азербайджаном [Электронный ресурс]: Day. Az. URL: <https://news.day.az/economy/1340322.html>

and plastics. Poland is the seventh largest supplier of goods to Azerbaijan after Germany, Italy, Great Britain, France, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. The main imports from Azerbaijan to Poland are propylene, fruit juices and vegetables, hazelnuts, kerosene, building materials. So, at the end of 2021, the amount of imports from Azerbaijan to Poland amounted to PLN 30,926.5 thousand (Img. 3). At the same time, exports amounted to 386,906.5 thousand PLN, which is more than 10 times higher than the volume of imports. Azerbaijan, in turn, supplies Poland mainly with energy resources, namely oil and oil products.⁹

Polish President Andrzej Duda also noted in his addresses that Poland wants to establish a direct rail link with Azerbaijan, passing through Ukraine and Georgia, in order to have wider access to Iran and India and connect to wider trade networks. Azerbaijan is ready to change the rules of the game in the field of European energy security thanks to its huge reserves of oil and gas at the bottom of the Caspian Sea.

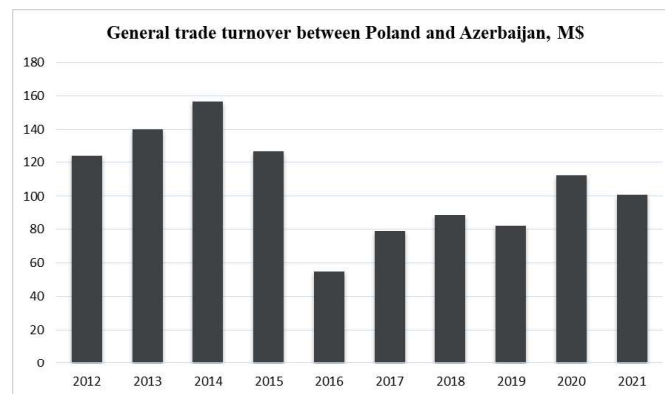


Fig. 2. General Trade turnover between Poland and Azerbaijan in millions \$ (2012-2021)¹⁰

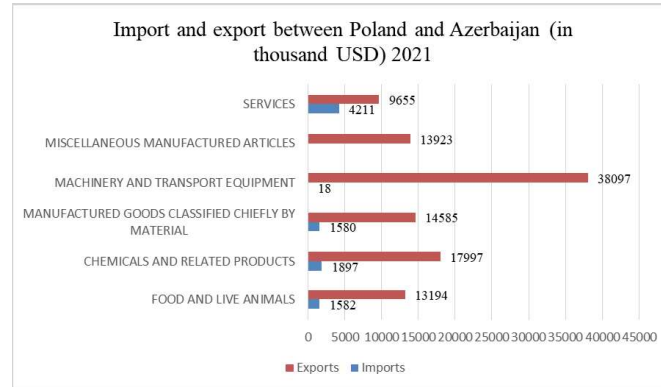
The \$45 billion Southern Gas Corridor project aims to transport Azerbaijani natural gas from the largest offshore gas field in the Caspian Sea, known as Shah Deniz, to European consumers via Georgia and Turkey. After the launch of the corridor, European countries, including Poland, will receive 16 billion cubic meters of gas per year.¹¹

In December 2022, Baku hosted the Polish-Azerbaijani Forum on Innovation and Investment in Startups, organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Baku, the

⁹ Rocznik Statystyczny Handlu Zagranicznego 2022. URL: <https://stat.gov.pl>

¹⁰ Министерство экономики Азербайджанской Республики

¹¹ Poland, Azerbaijan Aim To Expand Trade, Transport Ties [Электронный ресурс]: CASPIANNEWS URL: <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/poland-azerbaijan-aim-to-expand-trade-transport-ties>



Pic. 3. Import and export between Poland and Azerbaijan 2021

Azerbaijan Small and Medium Business Development Agency, the Startup Hub Poland Foundation and the IdealHub Innovation and Technology Center. During the event, the results of the V4-Azerbaijan Tech Bridge (V4ATB) program, which has been implemented in Azerbaijan at the initiative of the Polish Embassy in Baku since the beginning of 2022 by a consortium of partners from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Azerbaijan, were presented. The project received financial support from the International Visegrad Fund. The final of the program will take place in 2023 as part of the V4-Azerbaijan Startup Summit in Baku¹².

After 11 months of 2021, Polish-Azerbaijani trade reached USD 96.8 million (decrease 13% y-o-y), of which Polish exports recorded a decline of 15% y-o-y, reaching USD 89.3 million. In contrast, Azerbaijani imports of goods to Poland recorded a 20% increase in the same period, reaching \$7.5m. In 2020, trade between Poland and Azerbaijan amounted to USD 119.5 million (an increase of 35% y/y), including a 35% increase in Polish exports (about \$113.1 million), and imports reached \$6.5 million (an increase of 22.7% y/y)¹³. 12 January 2022 Azerbaijan has joined the programme Poland - Business Harbour. The programme, which was established in 2020, was initially aimed at Belarusian companies and IT professionals who were given the opportunity to move to Poland on favourable terms. The positive effects of the programme led to a decision to expand its scope of activity - attracting foreign specialists from other industries, such as engineers, to our country. This

¹² Startup Hub Poland URL: <https://startuphub.pl/v4atb/>

¹³ Poland strengthens economic relations with Azerbaijan [Электронный ресурс]: Website of the Republic of Poland. URL: <https://www.gov.pl/web/development-technology/poland-strengthens-economic-relations-with-azerbaijan>

resulted, among others, in extending the list of recipients of the Programme with companies and citizens from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. The Declaration on the Roadmap for Strategic Partnership and Economic Cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Poland signed on June 2nd, 2017 in Warsaw instilled new dynamism in bilateral partnership.¹⁴

It identified the main areas of cooperation, including agriculture, transport, energy, pharmacy, chemical industry, household appliances, shipbuilding, as well as infrastructure, information technology, communications, tourism, and ecology.

To expand information about the Polish-Azerbaijani historical ties, the Azerbaijani Embassy in Poland published more than 60 titles of books about Polish-Azerbaijani relations, as well as about the history of culture and modern Azerbaijan, periodic leaflets informing about the ties between nations. In agreement with the government structures of Poland, three monumental monuments were erected in Warsaw, Gniezno and Krakow. More than 30 memorial plaques dedicated to the Poles who have contributed to Azerbaijan have been installed at universities and lyceums in Poland. Classes on teaching the Azerbaijani language and culture are held at Warsaw University, and the Scientific Center of Azerbaijani Studies has also been established.¹⁵ In 2019, within the official visit of the Polish President Andrzej Duda to Baku with the participation of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, memorial plaques in memory of Polish architects were unveiled. And one of the central streets of Baku received the name 'Polish Architects Streer' at all.

In addition to political, cultural and economic cooperation, contacts between the societies of Poland and Azerbaijan are developing well. Today, many Azerbaijanis study and work in Poland, creating a living bridge between the countries. Almost 1.5 thousand students of Azerbaijani citizens study in Polish universities. In recent years, this number has increased fivefold. Just over last year, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Baku issued more than 1,200 visas for those who travel to Poland for the purpose of education, and 1,300 visas for those applying for work.¹⁶ Since 2017, the Youth Council of Polish Azerbaijanis

¹⁴ Joint Declaration of the President of the Republic of Poland and the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan [Электронный ресурс]: Oficjalna strona Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. URL: https://www.prezydent.pl/storage/file/core_files/2021/8/5/ba3635f692e195ed8cf679bc4388d347/azerbejdzan_30_angielski.pdf

¹⁵ Joint Declaration of the President of the Republic of Poland and the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan [Электронный ресурс]: Oficjalna strona Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. URL: <https://warsaw.mfa.gov.az/az/news/3159/gasanov-azerbaydzhan-i-polsha-bratskie-narody-foto>

¹⁶ 30. rocznica nawiązania stosunków dyplomatycznych pomiędzy Polską i Azerbejdżanem [Электронный ресурс]: Service of the Republic of Poland. URL: <https://www.gov.pl/web/azerbejdzan/30-lat-stosunkow-dyplomatycznych-polski-i-azerbejdzanu>

has been functioning in Poland, under which there are associations of Azerbaijanis from Warsaw, Wrocław, Katowice and Łódź. At the same time, according to the Polish Community Association, thousands of Poles live in Azerbaijan.

In order to promote the tourist attractiveness of Poland for Azerbaijanis, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Baku organized a meeting with the participation of representatives of LOT Polish Airlines, the Polish Tourism Organization, the Polish Chamber of Tourism and Polish travel agencies. During the event, a memorandum of cooperation was signed, providing for joint actions aimed at increasing the flow of tourists between Azerbaijan and Poland. Since May 2022, LOT Polish Airlines has opened direct flights on the Warsaw-Baku route.¹⁷

At the moment, both countries are also actively involved in supporting Ukraine in the fight against Russian aggression. Poland became one of the first to provide powerful support to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Poland received about 5 million Ukrainians who were forced to leave Ukraine to escape the war, and now it is doing everything so that they do not feel like refugees. Since the beginning of the war, Poland has provided more than 10 billion zlotys (2.1 billion euros) in aid to Ukraine. At the same time, the largest share in this amount is the value of donated weapons - about 7 billion zlotys.¹⁸

Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Azerbaijan has sent Ukraine more than 1.5 thousand tons of humanitarian cargo worth \$30 million. The cargo includes medicines, food products with a long shelf life, as well as clothing. Like assistance from other countries, the cargo is sent by air to Warsaw, and after that, thanks to the Polish-Ukrainian customs, it centrally enters Ukraine. Also, since the massive attacks on the Ukrainian energy system, Azerbaijan has transferred 45 power transformers and 50 generators.

On May 5, 2022, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Baku, together with the Embassies of France and Lithuania, organized a charity event in Baku, the purpose of which was to raise money for Ukraine. The event was attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps, local authorities, media and business. The collected funds were transferred to a special account opened by the Ukrainian Embassy in Baku in a local bank.¹⁹

¹⁷ Польша и Азербайджан увеличат взаимный турпоток в связи с открытием прямого авиасообщения между двумя странами. [Электронный ресурс]: Trend News Agency. URL: <https://www.trend.az/business/tourism/3602727.html>

¹⁸ Pomoc, którą Polska przekazała Ukrainie. Dworzycy podał kwoty. Polska Agencja Prasowa. URL: <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1403987%2Cpomoc-ktora-polska-przekazala-ukrainie-dworzycy-podal-kwoty.html>

¹⁹ Przyjęcie dobroczynne dla Ukrainy. Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej URL: <https://www.gov.pl/web/azerbejdzan/przyjecie-dobroczyne-dla-ukrainy>

If to analyze and delve into the historical, political and economic relations between Poland and Azerbaijan, we can state a steady trend in the development and strengthening of relations. It should be noted that Russia's war in Ukraine will radically change many geopolitical ties and relations around the world, and for relations between Poland and Azerbaijan, this indicates that economic, political and social cooperation between the countries will only improve and strengthen. Over the past few years, we have seen great changes that will only grow and escalate over time.