

COMPENDIUM SHORT PROFILE: AZERBAIJAN

(based on the complete country profile of Yashar Huseynli: <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/azerbaijan.php>)

1. Facts and figures

Political system:	Presidential republic
Year of membership to the Council of Europe:	25 January 2001
Year of membership to UNESCO:	1992
Population:	9 593 038 (2018)
Population density:	108 inhabitants/km ² (2015)
Official language(s):	Azerbaijani
Non-nationals of total population:	8.4 % (2009)
Share of population using the Internet	61.0% (2015)
Public cultural expenditures per capita:	25 EUR
OECD PPP Recreation and Culture (=100%):	37%
CUPIX - Cultural Price Index (=100%)	35%
Accession to Key Cultural Conventions:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>European Cultural Convention</i> (1955): 25/4/1997 • <i>European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages</i> (1992): not yet ratified • <i>UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions</i>: 15/02/2010

2. Historical perspective

General context

Azerbaijan's cultural policy today is, first and foremost, the policy of a country which has regained its state independence for the last two and half decades of its existence. Its political transformation, which brought radical organisational, economic and social changes, had an immediate impact on culture and cultural trends.

The greatest achievement of the last years has probably been the birth of a new social, intellectual and cultural self-consciousness. Fundamental social and cultural changes, globalisation, new cultural priorities, the irruption onto the cultural scene of mass culture and the culture industries, the communications explosion, new approaches to preserve and transmit artistic heritage, and a new awareness of culture's vital role in development – are factors which have contributed to new concepts of culture and national cultural policy.

3. Overall description of the system

General context

The **cultural policy system in Azerbaijan is very state-supportive** in all respects, with the state taking the main decisions, providing financial support and coordinating the activities of the various partners involved in culture, in particular the regional and local authorities and professional organisations. **This approach was necessary** in order to protect culture and the arts, as well as secure artists and cultural workers, **in the transition period**.



At the same time, considerable **societal changes during recent years have led to the development of a new model of cultural policy**. The national cultural policy, following rapid economic development, has a good opportunity to flourish in the near future, combining flexible management at central level with activeness and initiatives at local level, an increase in the state cultural budget, together with improvements in fundraising and marketing skills of independent cultural managers, entrepreneurs and producers.

The understanding of an official national definition of culture comes from the **Law on Culture (2012)**, Article^o1, which considers culture as "a set of features that defines material, moral, intellectual and emotional peculiarities, including literature and arts, of society or social groups, and covers the lifestyle of the people, the co-existence rules and a system of moral values".

As outlined in the Constitution and in the new *Law on Culture*, the national cultural policy is based on the principles of equal opportunities to create and use cultural values and to preserve the heritage in Azerbaijan. Every person has the right to create, use and disseminate cultural values, irrespective of their social and material status, nationality, race, religion and gender. The Law guarantees freedom of intellectual and creative expression and provides a legal basis for the development of national culture as a constituent part of world culture.

According to the "Culture Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan" (14 February 2014) which has been developed to streamline with European cultural policy principles, the **main cultural policy objectives** comprise the adjustment of culture policy mechanisms to actual requirements:

- protection of cultural heritage,
- support and development of creative activity with the focus on the integrity of the people,
- promotion of identity and diversity, and participation in cultural life.

Cultural policy **objectives are focussed on the:**

- development of legal guarantees,
- implementation of modern methods in culture and arts administration,
- diversification of financing sources,
- enhancement of information provision,
- human resources development,
- modernisation of the material and technical bases, and
- development of international cooperation

Division of tasks

The Constitution, approved by general referendum on 12 November 1995, provides the principle of division of powers: Milli Medjlis (Parliament) exercises legislative power; executive power belongs to the President; and law courts exercise judicial power.

Milli Medjlis – a one chamber parliament comprising 125 deputies, elected by direct elections for a 5 year term. The Culture Committee drafts legislation for culture.

Judicial power in Azerbaijan is implemented through the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, ordinary and other specialised law courts.

The **President of the Republic of Azerbaijan** is the Head of the Azerbaijan state. The President is elected for a 5-year term by way of general, direct and equal elections, with free, personal and secret ballot. The President appoints the Prime-minister, by consent of the

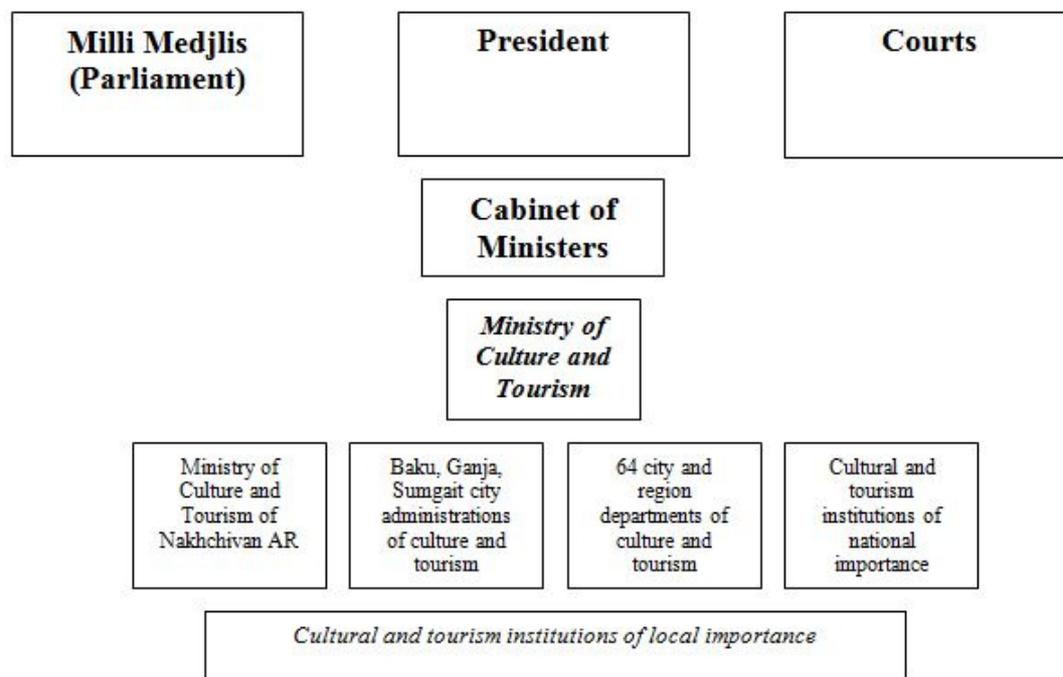
Parliament. For implementation of executive powers, the President establishes the Cabinet of Ministers, which is subordinated and reports to the President.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan is an organ of central executive power, realising state policy and adjustments in the fields of cultural policy, cultural heritage (intangible cultural heritage, historical and cultural monuments, museums and libraries), professional arts (theatre, music, and fine arts), cultural industries (book publishing and cinematography) and tourism (internal, external, licensing, marketing, etc.).

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (NAR), city administrations of culture and tourism in Baku, Ganja, Sumgayit, as well as 64 towns and districts departments of culture and tourism, are responsible for local executive cultural and tourism policy issues.

Main national players:

Chart 1: State cultural policy administration in the Republic of Azerbaijan



Source: The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2016.

Financing of culture

- Economic development in Azerbaijan influences a **continuous increase in the level of public culture expenditure**.
- **Public culture expenditure** at all levels of government per capita in 2015 amounted nearly to 27 AZN (25 EUR), which corresponded up to 1.4% of overall expenditure per capita.
- The **total consumption expenditures of households per capita per month** were 234.9 AZN in 2014, including 10.3 AZN consumption expenditures for recreation and culture.

Public culture expenditure at all levels of government per capita, in EUR, 2000-2015

	2000	2005	2010	2011	2013	2015
Azerbaijan	2	11	31	39	38	25

Public expenditure for culture, arts, cinema and monuments restoration by level of government

(the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and its regional branches, in AZN, 2011-2015)

Level of government	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Central	66 898 850	67 119 894	71 656 076	215 023 908	127 473 009
Local	113 258 982	111 477 068	125 110 449	136 246 409	138 559 143
Total	496 323 542	453 335 162	343 440 374	351 583 051	266 032 152

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2016.

4. Main cultural policies and priorities

Latest developments:

The establishment of the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre in 15 May 2014 testifies to the country's commitment to principles of tolerance. Year of 2016 was declared the Year of Multiculturalism in the country what is aimed on preserving, developing and promoting multiculturalism traditions, noting that located at the crossroads of different civilizations, Azerbaijan is recognized worldwide as a country which has centuries-old national and cultural traditions, and where representatives of various nations and confessions live in peace, mutual understanding and dialogue.

The 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) which was held in Baku, Azerbaijan (25-27 April 2016) can be mentioned as an example of international and even global cultural activity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Global Forum, during which 40 discussions and panels were conducted, brought together more than 4 300 participants representing 147 countries, including Heads of State and Government, political officials, civil society representatives, religious and youth leaders, who exchanged their perspectives under the main theme on "Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and A Goal." Among the major outcomes from the Global Forum Baku 2016 was the unanimous adoption by delegations of the Baku Declaration, a political document that will guide future efforts towards achieving the goals of UNAOC - a body mandated to promote harmony among nations.

5. International cooperation

General context and main actors

The **Ministry of Culture and Tourism** drafts and implements bilateral and multilateral foreign cultural policy, in coordination with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, which is the central executive body in Azerbaijan that is responsible for realisation of all international relations and cooperation issues.

Cultural Centres: Embassies of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Paris (France) and Vienna (Austria)

Multilateral cultural co-operation with international organisations: UN, UNESCO, Council of Europe, EU, WTO, OIC, ISESCO, TURKSOY, BSEC, CIS, GUAM, IFESCCO and others.



European cooperation

Azerbaijan has been invited to enter into intensified political, security, economic and cultural relations with the EU, regional and cross border co-operation and shared responsibility in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The EU-Azerbaijan Action Plan enhances cultural co-operation, by investigating the possibilities for co-operation in the framework of EU programmes in the field of culture. It also involves exchanging views on the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and promoting the ratification and implementation of the text.

Besides these developments, Azerbaijan collaborates within Eastern Partnership Programme, a project which was initiated by the European Union, and includes Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and South Caucasus states. The Twinning project of EU for the benefit of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan aimed on cultural sector policy and governance reform plus institutional development of cultural heritage management is realising in partnership with The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism of the Italian Republic.