



Group of States against Corruption
Groupe d'États contre la corruption

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

FIFTH EVALUATION ROUND REPORT

SUMMARY

**Preventing corruption and promoting integrity
in central governments (top executive functions) and
law enforcement agencies**

AZERBAIJAN

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The publication of Evaluation and Compliance Reports shortly after their adoption is a long-standing practice among GRECO member States. This serves two important purposes: ensuring overall transparency of the GRECO process and facilitating the implementation of recommendations at domestic level by raising awareness of GRECO's findings across society.

The Fifth Round Evaluation Report on Azerbaijan was adopted by GRECO at its 93rd plenary meeting (20-24 March 2023) and the authorities were invited to authorise, as soon as possible, its publication, to translate it into the national language and make the translation public. Since then, confidentiality of the report has not been lifted.

At its 102nd plenary meeting (27 March 2026), GRECO decided that, pursuant to Rule 35, paragraph 2 of the Rules of Procedure, and in the absence of authorisation from the authorities to publish the entire report, a summary of the report be made public within six months from its adoption. Accordingly, this summary is made public on 1 June 2026.

The following contains the executive summary and the recommendations and follow-up of the Fifth Round Evaluation Report on Azerbaijan¹.

¹ GrecoEval5Rep(2022)5.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report evaluates the effectiveness of the framework in place in Azerbaijan to prevent and combat corruption among persons entrusted with top executive functions (the President, the Prime Minister, ministers and senior officials in central executive bodies, hereafter “PTEFs”) and members of the Police (Ministry of the Interior staff with law enforcement functions). It aims at supporting Azerbaijan in building a solid foundation to prevent corruption through strengthening transparency, integrity and accountability in public life, in line with GRECO standards.

2. Azerbaijan’s anti-corruption framework is based primarily on the Law on Combating Corruption, in force since 1 January 2005, which contains provisions defining corruption and corrupt behaviour, preventing corruption, promoting integrity in public service, incompatibilities and restrictions in public service and establishing different types of liability for violations. The adoption of this Law created the basis for the setting up of a specialised anti-corruption public body, the Anti-Corruption Commission, which however needs to be strengthened in its institutional set up to ensure discharging of its broad functions efficiently.

3. The executive power in Azerbaijan is exercised by the President through the Presidential Administration and various executive bodies, including the Cabinet of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister. To provide a viable and effective anti-corruption response, a number of key issues need to be addressed as regards PTEFs in Azerbaijan. The integrity framework does not cover most of PTEFs: there is no code of ethics in place applicable to them, no awareness-raising on integrity matters, nor any established mechanism for confidential counselling on ethical issues. No declarations regarding financial interests of PTEFs are submitted or verified, in spite of a requirement in law. Even though various consultations and meetings of PTEFs with third parties seeking to influence decision-making do take place, there are no rules on the interaction of PTEFs with lobbyists. Introducing in law and implementing in practice transparency rules as regards all members of the executive, including the President, Vice-Presidents, the Prime Minister and all other senior officials in the executive are essential steps towards accountability of the executive vis-à-vis the public. Finally, effective criminal justice response to corruption offences involving all PTEFs should be provided to all such offences. In this regard, the procedure, as well as restrictive conditions for lifting immunity of some top officials must be reviewed.

4. As regards law enforcement bodies, the Minister of the Interior, who is also the Head of the Police, is directly subordinated to the President, i.e. the executive, making the Police prone to political influence. The operational independence of the Police should be strengthened to enable a more efficient and effective law enforcement action against corruption. No dedicated anti-corruption strategy for the Police is in place, and no comprehensive mapping of corruption risks in various police structures has been carried out in recent years. Greater transparency and objectivity are needed in the procedures and practice of promotions in the Police. Even though a Code of Police Ethics is in place, it does not cover all relevant integrity matters, and no adequate training on integrity, or confidential advice is available for police officers. Issues such as private donations to the Police, as well as gifts and advantages offered to police officers, obligation to report integrity-related misconduct, and post-employment restrictions need to be regulated in detail. Finally, a comprehensive whistleblower protection mechanism, going beyond the framework of criminal proceedings, needs to be adopted in law and implemented in practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

1. In view of the findings of the present report, GRECO addresses the following recommendations to Azerbaijan:

Regarding central governments (top executive functions)

- i. that in respect of persons with top executive functions (i) a clear regulatory framework, available to the public, be introduced governing their recruitment/appointment; (ii) rules on vetting based on integrity criteria be established (paragraph 29);
- ii. that continuously updated information on the number, names, functions and salary scales of all persons with top executive functions are disclosed in a way that provides for easy public access on-line (paragraph 32);
- iii. that (i) anti-corruption policy be established and implemented, specifically targeting all persons in top executive functions on the basis of a prior risk assessment, and be made public; (ii) the Anti-Corruption Commission (or another body) be made responsible for reporting to the public on the implementation of anti-corruption policy and authorised to make recommendations to relevant state bodies (paragraph 38);
- iv. that (i) a code of ethics for all persons with top executive functions be adopted and complemented with appropriate guidance regarding conflicts of interest and other integrity-related matters (e.g. gifts, outside activities, contacts with lobbyists and third parties, post-employment restrictions, confidential information etc.); and (ii) the code of ethics be coupled with a credible and effective mechanism of supervision and enforcement. It is understood that this code of ethics should also apply to the President and the Vice-Presidents (paragraph 43);
- v. that (i) the legal framework of the Anti-Corruption Commission be revised in order to provide it sufficient operational independence; (ii) its Members be appointed for a fixed term of office through merit-based and transparent procedures; and (iii) the Anti-Corruption Commission be provided with adequate human and financial resources to effectively discharge of its duties (paragraph 49);
- vi. (i) developing mechanisms to promote and raise awareness among all persons with top executive functions of integrity matters (and the future code of ethics), including through integrity training at regular intervals; (ii) establishing a dedicated confidential counselling function to provide these persons with advice on integrity, conflicts of interest and corruption prevention (paragraph 53);
- vii. (i) making the necessary amendments to the legislation governing access to public information so as to enshrine the principle of transparency of public authorities and to

guarantee in practice the general right to access public information, including documents; (ii) systematically publishing *ex officio* information of public interest on the websites of the Presidential Administration, the Cabinet of Ministers, ministries and other central executive bodies; and (iii) strengthening the efficiency of the oversight and appeal mechanism including by accelerating appeal procedures when access to public information has been refused (paragraph 62);

- viii. that the transparency of draft laws emanating from the President and other central executive bodies be enhanced by (i) requiring public consultation procedures, within adequate statutory timelines, before their submission to the Milli Majlis; and (ii) publicly providing the “legislative footprint” (reflecting interventions having influenced the drafting process) (paragraph 69);
- ix. that (i) detailed rules be introduced on the way in which persons with top executive functions interact with lobbyists (registered or not) and other third parties seeking to influence the public decision-making process; and (ii) sufficient information about the purpose of these contacts be disclosed, such as the identity of the person(s) with whom (or on whose behalf) the meeting(s) took place and the subject matter(s) discussed (paragraph 72);
- x. supplementing the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan with the indicators of relevant budgetary allocations and allow the Chamber of Accounts to cover the Anti-Corruption Action Plan in its annual reports on the spending of the budgetary funds (paragraph 77);
- xi. that (i) a definition of (real, potential and perceived) conflicts of interest be established; and (ii) guidance on managing such situations be provided, including a requirement of *ad hoc* disclosure of conflicts of interest when they occur (paragraph 81);
- xii. that substantial and procedural rules on incompatibilities and ancillary activities be established in respect of persons with top executive functions (paragraph 84);
- xiii. that clear and comprehensive rules be drawn up on gifts and other benefits for persons with top executive functions, requiring recipients to declare gifts and other benefits, and making such information public in a timely manner (paragraph 90);
- xiv. that (i) rules on post-employment restrictions be developed and applied in respect of persons entrusted with top executive functions, including by introducing cooling-off periods as appropriate and (ii) an effective enforcement mechanism be established in this regard (paragraph 94);
- xv. establishing in law that declarations regarding financial interests of all persons entrusted with top executive functions systematically be made public (paragraph 97);
- xvi. (i) to ensure that all persons entrusted with top executive functions declare, in practice, their income, assets, property, interests and liabilities, as required by law; (ii) to consider including financial information on spouses and dependent family members in such declarations (it being understood that the latter information would not necessarily need to

be made public); (iii) to ensure that such declarations are subject to substantive verification and enforcement (paragraph 100);

- xvii. reviewing the legislation for lifting the immunities of the President, Vice-Presidents and the Prime Minister to provide for proceedings based on objective criteria in a manner not hampering or preventing criminal investigations and prosecution for possible corruption-related offences (paragraph 108);

Regarding law enforcement agencies (Police and Border Guard)

- xviii. that (i) sufficient operational independence of the Police vis-à-vis the Ministry of the Interior be provided in law and ensured in practice, and (ii) the Police, as a main rule, not be subject to instructions in individual cases outside those envisaged under criminal procedural legislation, and any individual instruction be properly documented in writing (paragraph 114);
- xix. that (i) a broad analysis be carried out of the legal framework and practice of non-budgetary (including private) funding to the Police and that, in light of its findings, clear rules be established to discontinue such practices and/or, as a minimum, to eliminate the risks of conflicts of interests and corruption in this respect; (ii) information regarding non-state funds received by the Police, indicating the nature and value of each donation, as well as the identity of the funding source, be systematically gathered and published (paragraph 117);
- xx. that dedicated measures be taken to promote gender balance and strengthen the representation of women at all levels in the Police, including in senior positions (paragraph 119);
- xxi. increasing the transparency of the Police by: (i) ensuring that reports on the results of the Police's activities and decision making, budgets, administrative proceedings, statistics, regulations and information of public interest, are published and made easily accessible, including on-line; and (ii) ensuring that all requests for information addressed to the Police are responded to on substance and in full conformity with the established time limits (paragraph 121);
- xxii. that (i) a comprehensive risk assessment of corruption-prone areas and activities be undertaken in the Ministry of the Interior to identify problems and emerging challenges, and (ii) a dedicated anti-corruption strategy be adopted for the Police on the basis of the results of the risk assessment (paragraph 128);
- xxiii. that (i) the Police Code of Ethics be updated to cover in detail all relevant integrity matters (e.g., conflict of interest, gifts, contacts with third parties, outside activities, the handling of confidential information) and supplemented with a manual illustrating all issues and risk areas with concrete examples; (ii) a revised Police Code of Ethics and a manual be made an integral part of police training and be made public (paragraph 134);
- xxiv. that (i) compulsory training for new recruits and serving police officers be organised regularly on the basis of the revised Police Code of Ethics; (ii) a system of trained persons of

trust, separate from functions of disciplinary supervision, be established in the Police in order to provide confidential advice on ethics and integrity matters to all police officers (paragraph 138);

- xxv. **enhancing the objectivity of promotion procedures in the Police by providing that they are based on merit pertinent for the police profession and conducted through transparent competitions as a rule (paragraph 146);**
 - xxvi. **that law enforcement officers be subject to integrity checks (vetting) prior to their appointments and promotions, as well as at regular intervals throughout their career (paragraph 147);**
 - xxvii. **developing specific post-employment restriction mechanisms for preventing and managing conflicts of interest after officers leave the Police to work in the private sector (paragraph 158);**
 - xxviii. **establishing a robust set of rules and guidelines on gifts and other advantages for police officers, including obligation to report and, as appropriate, register gifts and other advantages (paragraph 160);**
 - xxix. **(i) implementing in practice the obligation of police officers (annually for higher rank officers) to declare financial interests when taking up their duties and at regular intervals thereafter, and (ii) ensuring regular in-depth verification of financial interest declarations (paragraph 165);**
 - xxx. **that a requirement be established for police officers to report integrity-related misconduct they become aware of in the service (paragraph 171);**
 - xxxi. **(i) introducing in law a dedicated whistleblower protection mechanism in the Police; and (ii) ensuring its implementation through dedicated training within the Police (paragraph 175).**
2. Pursuant to Rule 30.2 of the Rules of Procedure, GRECO invites the authorities of Azerbaijan to submit a report on the measures taken to implement the above-mentioned recommendations by 30 September 2024. The measures will be assessed by GRECO through its specific compliance procedure.
 3. GRECO invites the authorities of Azerbaijan to authorise, at their earliest convenience, the publication of this report, and to make a translation of it into the national language available to the public.

The adoption of the present summary does not in any way substitute for the publication of the full 5th Round Evaluation Report. GRECO therefore invites the authorities of Azerbaijan to authorise its publication as soon as possible.