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AZERBAIJAN, THE DOOR TO ORIENT BETWEEN TRANSITION, GLOBALISATION AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Now is near Baku and not so far to Italy the Azerbaijan. After three years, with exchanges between the University Sophia Antipolis of Nice, the University Pierre Mendes of Grenoble, the University of Genoa and the University Rassoulzadé of Baku, the Tempus Tacis project is closed.

The Azerbaijan is a new Republic, not really knew in Italy. For many Italian people is only one of “east country” of Soviet Union. Before the Nagorny – Karabakh war, the struggle for independence and democracy and the signing of the oil contract, and few people knew where Azerbaijan was and those did and regarded it as just another part of Soviet Union. In effect many colleagues of European Universities can find Baku and Azerbaijan on a map but know little about it, they might know of the Russian and Turkish influences or those of Asia and Europe but fail to distinguish which are prevalent. Azerbaijan is an ancient country situated on the south-western shores of the Caspian.

In 1828 Azerbaijan was divided into Southern (Iranian Azerbaijan) and Northern (the current Republic) Regions by Iran and Russian Federation. Azeris now have their own state, the Azerbaijan Republic, covering some 85,000 sq. Km. With a population of 7,4 million people. The population grows at an annual rate of 1% and the land mass changes with vagaries of the Caspian water table. Baku, the capital has a population of more than 2 million people and today is an international city.

The past of Azerbaijan has been closed book for seven decades and it is only now, as independent people, that we are able to decide their destiny shaping an identity in the modern world. The Tempus Tacis project involved this world, where their education system desires to enter in the global system and determines the course of our own freedom, there is always the nagging doubt that another “Big Brother” or distant capital will control the fate of the Azeri people.

Today the Azerbaijan, like other new “Independent States” (CSI), lives the most important phenomenon of the current period: the intensification of world economy globalisation, which is characterised through the amplification of bundles between national economies, as a result of diminution and elimination of obstacles between them.

Also in Azerbaijan, as an unchallenged reality of our days, has major implications for world economy, in general, and for the destiny of each national component part, in particular. The world practice shows that the economic progress of the countries depend more and more of their participation to the world economic circuit. It is know that the globalisation is manifested in all the domains of economic activities, reflecting especially, in the growth of the role of international trade, in the production process and of creation of work-places, in the internationalisation of investments and productions, as well as in integration of financial markets. Azerbaijan lives this reality of globalisation because has the rights to one part of Caspian Sea. The Caspian Sea has been divided in the way for 19 years – so that the Azerbaijan had about 80,000 sq. Km of the Caspian floor, and recent negotiations has confirmed the principle of the division of the Caspian Sea into such economic zones, in respect of ecological questions, it is only reasonable that in the future a joint committee, involving all the states that border the Caspian, should be established to oversee the entire regional ecosystem and environment.

Also the end of the cold war gave a strong impulse to globalisation, offering to Azerbaijan the possibility to occupy their full places in the oil economy and then in the world economic strategy. Azerbaijan is developing country and an important contribution in globalisation has his integration in the

world economy. In this sense the external opening of the developing countries economy, which was manifested starting with the middle of 80-s, constitutes a major factor for the globalisation process.

The participation of Azerbaijan, like a transitional country, in the globalisation process constitutes a sine qua non condition for their economic process, which could lead to the overtaking of economic advanced countries. This participation marks an amplification tendency. The countries from the East of Europe engaged in the process of reforms register lately a growth of their exports that outruns the average of world exports. In general, in the domain of foreign trade the transition would mean the passing from a policy of imports substitution to a policy of exports promoting.

Also foreign direct investments in Azerbaijan increased quickly reaching after the 1995, there were done a succession of important domestic measures concerning the integration of this post-socialist country in the world economic context. We can mention:

1. The effectuation of privatisation for the development of private sector;
2. Making efforts for the assurance of macroeconomic stabilisation, an indispensable premise to benefit by the globalisation advantages;
3. Adoption of domestic reforms concerning the opening of the economies to the foreign countries (reduction and elimination of barriers from the way of foreign trade, liberalisation of all kinds of foreign investments facility of techniques import);
4. Approaching of their foreign trade to that of the developed countries, etc.

But the full integration of Azerbaijan in economy is stopped, in the one hand, by some obstacles, on the other hand, it unfolds very unequally.

The competitiveness and development of Azerbaijan exports are, like others post-socialist countries, affected by a succession of factors, through which we can mention:

1. Low productivity;
2. The use of worn out equipment;
3. Low quality of manufactured goods, which doesn't always correspond to international standards;
4. Penury of financial resources for export production modernisation;
5. Insufficiency of information concerning the foreign commodity markets;
6. Insufficiency of information in Azerbaijan about the transitional countries markets.

In Azerbaijan important effort are done for the outrunning of these obstacles. The success in this fight depends very much on the foreign support. It is obvious that even from the start of this release of radical reforms, the level of development of this country was not uniform and in addition the process of radical reforms is irregular. As a result, the group of post-socialist countries stratified in advanced in the process of transition (PECO) and countries less advanced like Azerbaijan (and others CIS countries).

Now that's why it is required a well balanced treatment of transitional countries. It is also imposed the development of international co-operation concerning the supporting of the countries that are on the outskirts of the global economy, for their integration in this economy and to benefit by its advantages.

Our Tempus – Tacis at the University Rassoulzadé of Baku can (and want) to be a foreign support create by the European Union for the integration and development of the East European countries. The Azeris are individualists but anyone would be and impressed to see their solidarity in the face of a common danger and their sympathy to those in trouble. They are optimists, confident about their ability to resolve all the problems that society throws at them. A new era has come and they will never miss an opportunity to create a future ensuring the dignity of every citizen, in Italy, in France, in Azerbaijan and everywhere.

Integration is not to change a identity. Azeris tried to invent a new history, ethnic identity and culture for Azerbaijan. Our support no want to have limit, our support is important in a globalisation context but no want to change their system of life and their identity and it is necessary to see only into exchanges of experiences, will be needed for an infrastructure to be built which safeguards democratic development and economic liberalisation, to start from education reform.

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