

Project title	Azerbaijan Investment Climate Project
General information	Region: Azerbaijan Duration: 2008 to 2012 Budget: USD 4.91 million (SECO: USD 4.35 million; BP: USD 0.46 million; IFC: USD 0.1 million)
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional partner: Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Taxes, Ministry of Justice, President Administration Office • Implementing partner: International Finance Corporation (IFC)
Project objectives	The project objective is to facilitate the growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Azerbaijan through the removal and simplification of business procedures and administrative barriers.
Background	A vibrant and diverse private sector is the basis for sustainable economic development, which countries like Azerbaijan are often struggling with because of their overdependence on natural resources. Azerbaijan has begun making progress on economic reforms, but entrepreneurs are still facing many barriers in areas such as permits, licensing, inspections, foreign trade, and access to finance. This stifles both the growth of existing businesses as well as overall entrepreneurship in Azerbaijan. The project is addressing these challenges.
Project activities	<p>The following activities are carried out under the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining a selected number of administrative procedures (licensing requirements, inspections, permits systems) to remove key regulatory barriers to business entry and operations • Monitoring the business environment through surveys of the SME sector • Increasing legal awareness of entrepreneurs through an outreach campaign and advocacy work to ensure understanding and sustainability of reforms
Project results	<p>The following results were achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One stop-shop online business registration set up that saves the private sector up to USD 10 million per year, and will also have an impact on boosting women registered in businesses and removal of disparities between the regions and the capital • Permit portal established that contains a database of 250 business permits and related regulatory documents improving transparency of obtaining permits • Inspection registry set up • Developed a SME portal for the private sector that will serve as an information source on regulatory procedures, business processes as such as permits, licenses, import/export procedures, inspections, business registration, preparation of business plans