

Baku – the sporting capital of Europe

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Modern sport, which represents a social and psychological phenomenon, has also become an important factor in economic life. It is well known that sport nowadays is an extensive and lucrative industry. At the same time, sport has long been an important political factor. The international sports calendar is quite busy, and “red cells” in it, of course, belong to Olympic Games. Also quite popular are regional events with an Olympic status – Asian Games and Pan American Games held since 1951. There have also been games covering other parts of the world, except for Europe.

The decision to conduct the first European games was adopted at the 41st General Assembly of the European Olympic Committee in Rome on 8 December 2012. As a result of a secret ballot, 38 out of 48 countries voted in favor of holding the first European games in Baku, Azerbaijan.

On 12-28 June 2015, Europe held its first sports games in Baku. These 17 summer days were written in the history of the Old World by Azerbaijan. It is the young state of Azerbaijan that marked the start of a new sporting movement on a regional scale. And Azerbaijan has proved that it is capable of organizing the most representative international competitions.

The first European games have become a source of pride for every Azerbaijani. Visitors from different European countries came to Baku to get acquainted with Azerbaijani culture, music and cuisine. They were delighted with the excellent organization and hospitality and went home enchanted by indelible impressions of the country they probably had a vague idea of before. They have discovered Azerbaijan. And it is a great victory of Azerbaijan.

For 17 days, more than 6,000 athletes from 50 European countries competed in 20 sports in an atmosphere of friendship and mutual respect. Such an environment is an integral part of any sporting event, because true sport is a competition in skill. It is alien to ill-will and hostility.

In this contest of skill and perseverance, Azerbaijan won 21 gold, 15 silver and 20 bronze medals, finishing second among 50 countries participating in the Games. It is a huge success and a tangible result of focused work on the development of sports the country has carried out in recent years. Thus, in the 24th year of its independence, Azerbaijan hosted an event of historic significance. For these 17 days of June, Azerbaijan was the focus of attention of European sport fans and beyond. Everyone has been convinced that Azerbaijan is a country not only of oil, but also of high culture and hospitality.

This edition of *IRS-Heritage* contains an article on this bright event – the Baku-2015 European Games. So stay with us.