

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001502/24
to the Commission
Lynn Boylan (The Left)
(8 August 2024)**

Subject: Barriers to visa services for non-EEA citizens living in Ireland

Given Ireland's position outside of the Schengen Area, citizens of countries outside the European Economic Area (EEA) with permanent resident permits in Ireland are obliged to apply for visas to travel to other EU Member States. This impacts people who would like to travel for business trips or academic conferences, as well as those travelling for tourism.

In recent months, a problem has been identified with visa services in Member State embassies in Ireland. Waiting times for a visa appointment are exorbitantly long. This is partly due to private operators which illicitly access visa appointments and then resell them. Given that this activity affects the embassies of many Member States, it may warrant coordination at EU level.

1. Does the resale of visa appointments by third parties present a security concern for the granting of Schengen-area visas?
2. Has the Commission taken any steps to date to prevent third parties accessing and reselling visa appointments?
3. What coordination measures could be taken between Member States to limit illicit third-party resales of visa appointments?

Submitted: 8.8.2024

**Answer given by Ms Johansson on behalf of the European Commission
(3 October 2024)**

The Visa Code ⁽¹⁾ provides under Article 9(2) that, as a rule, appointments for lodging a visa application shall take place within a period of two weeks from the date when the appointment was requested.

In line with the Visa Code, Member States may entrust external service providers with the task of collecting data and applications.

It appears that the slots for appointments for third-country nationals wishing to request a visa in Ireland are released in batches and are booked almost immediately due to high demand from applicants. The surge in traffic and rapid booking of slots can overload websites.

The management and operation of the visa appointment system falls under the responsibility of individual Member States.

The Commission is in close contact with Member States to try to address this issue, in particular by providing funding through the Border Management and Visa Instrument, to finance additional staff in consulates.

Recently, the visa fee has also been increased from EUR 80 to EUR 90, which should bring additional resources to Member States to reinforce their visa processing capacities.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EC) 810/2009 of the European Parliament and the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas.