

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001170/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Hannah Neumann (Verts/ALE), Lena Schilling (Verts/ALE), Thomas Waitz (Verts/ALE)
(19 March 2025)

Subject: Issuance of visas, circumvention of sanctions and transnational repression by Iranian networks in the EU

Research by *Der Standard* (13 March 2025) reveals that high-ranking representatives of the Iranian regime obtained Schengen visas through the Austrian consulate in Tehran, brokered by Blue River Holding GmbH in Vienna. The company, formerly a licensee of Spar International, was allegedly involved in sanctions evasion, money transfers and technology transfers to Iran.

New evidence points to a link between Iranian business networks and European actors that influence financial flows and visa issuance. A Viennese lawyer is said to have acted as the trusted representative of a regime-related network. Reports suggest that economic channels in Europe are being used to facilitate sanctions evasion, transnational repression and potentially security-threatening activities.

1. What specific scrutiny mechanisms has the Commission put in place or evaluated at EU level in the last 12 months to ensure Schengen visas are not being used to facilitate the smuggling-in of Iranian regime actors or economic networks that may be supporting transnational repression?
2. Which EU authority or mechanism has specifically examined whether Blue River Holding GmbH and its affiliated actors were involved in violating existing Iran sanctions, and if no such examinations have taken place, why not?
3. What specific findings does the Commission have regarding the use of economic and corporate structures within the EU by Iranian actors to finance, conceal or support transnational repression against Iranians in exile?

Submitted: 19.3.2025

Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission
(12 June 2025)

The Commission actively monitors the implementation of the Visa Code⁽¹⁾ by Member States. The main tool for this purpose is the Schengen evaluation mechanism, which is complementary to national monitoring mechanisms set out by Member States.

No specific Schengen evaluation has taken place in the consulates of Member States in Iran since international travel restarted post-COVID.

The Visa Code requires Member States to conduct thorough security checks before issuing visas. The Commission encourages Member States to conduct particularly thorough assessments of visa applications that involve individuals linked to regimes under EU sanctions. The operational responsibility for visa issuance lies with Member States.

Member States and their national competent authorities are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of EU sanctions.

The Commission, as guardian of the treaties, monitors and supports the Member States to ensure a uniform implementation of EU sanctions, however, it is not competent to handle individual cases.

The EU has a comprehensive policy approach towards Iran and will continue to use all tools at its disposal to address all issues of concern with Iran.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code), OJ L 243, 15.9.2009, p. 1-58, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/810/oj>.