(English version)

Priority question for written answer P-003747/26
to the Commission
Billy Kelleher (Renew)
(17 September 2026)

Subject: Irish citizens forced to use non-Schengen queues at EU airports

Since the introduction of the EU's entry/exit system (EES), non-EU citizens entering the Union must undergo biometric checks, such as the scanning of fingerprints and the use of facial recognition software.

EU citizens from all the 27 Member States are, under the legislation ([1]), exempt from this process.

Non-EU visitors are currently facing long queues at airports in the EU as a result of the new system.

At many airports, such as Venice, Gran Canaria and Prague, Irish citizens are being treated as non-EU citizens despite holding EU passports, because Ireland is not part of the Schengen area.

In many cases, Irish citizens must queue up for hours, often missing their flights, only to be waived through without having to undergo biometric scanning.

1. What guidance has the Commission provided to Europe's airports and Member State border forces to remind them about the requirement of treating all EU passport holders equally?

2. Will the Commission remind airports and Member State border forces that even when entering from a non-Schengen country, EU citizens, such as those from Ireland, should be treated like every other EU citizen?

3. Is funding available for separate border checks for EU citizens entering from non-Schengen countries?

Submitted: 18.9.2026

Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission
(27 October 2026)

Article 10(2) of the Schengen Borders Code ([1]) read in conjunction with its Annex III provide that persons enjoying the right of free movement under EU law, including EU citizens and therefore also Irish citizens, are entitled to use the 'EU, EEA, CH' lanes.

Irish citizens do not fall within the scope of the Entry/Exit System (EES), which applies to third-country nationals. This has been widely communicated through the Commission's public information materials, including the EES website and leaflets distributed to Member States, carriers and airports.

The rules governing the organisation of lanes at border crossing points are by no means linked to the EES. In this context, it is also important to point out that under the Schengen Borders Code, the organisation and conduct of checks at the external borders crossing points fall within the responsibility of the Member State concerned.

The Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (BMVI) ([2]) supports European integrated border management at the external borders, including border checks, as well as for the setting up, operation and maintenance of the EES.

Eligible actions include adaptations to infrastructure and premises, including those related to the operation of the EES at border crossing points, procurement of equipment, including hardware, and operating support.

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[1] Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2017 establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) to register entry and exit data and refusal of entry data of third-country nationals crossing the external borders of the Member States and determining the conditions for access to the EES for law enforcement purposes, and amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement and Regulations (EC) No 767/2008 and (EU) No 1077/2011 (OJ L 327, 9.12.2017, p. 20, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/2226/oj).

([1]) Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code). OJ L 77, 23.3.2016, p. 1-52. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/399/oj/eng.

([2]) Regulation (EU) 2021/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy. OJ L 251, 15.7.2021, pp. 48-93. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1148/oj/eng.