

ForMin Aurescu on US visa requirement for Romanians: Refusal rate at 9-10%, while limit is 3%

Foreign Affairs Minister Bogdan Aurescu explained on Prima TV private television broadcaster on Sunday that Romanians still need visas to travel to the US, as the refusal rate for Romanian citizens stands at 9 - 10 % of the total number of visa applications, while the US legislation provides for a 3% refusal threshold.

While attending a TV show on Prima TV on Sunday, Aurescu was asked about the reasons why Romanians still need visas to travel to the US, although the European legislation provides reciprocity between the EU and the US in this area.

"It is, basically, the result of a US legislation, which is quite strict and which, as you know, provides a series of requirements. We have fulfilled all these requirements provided by the US legislation, except for the one referring to the refusal rate. The cap for refusal provided by the US legislation, that is transposed as a percentage of number of visas not granted when applied for this short stay visa in the US, that cap is 3% of the total number of requests. At the moment, we are not meeting this cap. (...) At the moment, we stand at round nine or ten percent. Therefore, this situation is not to be imputed to the Romanian or the US authorities, as it refers exactly to the situation of the Romanian citizens applying for a visa, each one of them, failing to meet the requirements," said Aurescu.

The Minister pointed out that he discussed on this topic with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and announced an information campaign for Romanian citizens who wish to travel to America, so as to make this high refusal rate drop.

"In the discussion we had, a very good and very long talk we had, of almost 40 minutes, with Secretary of State Blinken, which took place after one week before we had physically met at the NATO meeting of foreign ministers in Brussels, in March, we have discussed this topic and we established that we'll work together, in the period immediately ahead, to precisely determine the reasons for which let's say 9 -10 percent of the visas required by Romanian citizens are refused. Depending on this, we can draw up very carefully and exactly an information campaign that we wish to launch in the coming period, a joint Romania - US information campaign, so as to raise the awareness of Romanian citizens who wish to apply for a short stay visa in the United States on the visa requirements. (...) Then, if each Romanian citizen knows exactly whether they fit these parameters or not, they should know not to apply for such a visa if it stands no chance of being approved. (...) This way, the refusal rate will drop. This refusal percentage is provided by law adopted by the US Congress," Minister Aurescu said.

According to him, there have been initiatives in the US Congress to introduce exceptions from the rule of granting visas to citizens coming from states that are allies of the US, however they have proved unsuccessful.