

Press release

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Long waits or no appointments at all – the Global South is significantly disadvantaged in the German visa system

How fair are the chances of getting an appointment at German missions abroad in a global comparison? A new analysis shows that people from poorer countries have to wait significantly longer for visa appointments than applicants from wealthier countries. More than 16,000 appointment requests were evaluated for this purpose.

There are major global differences in waiting times and probabilities of getting a visa appointment at a German embassy or consulate. Structural factors, such as a country's economic power, are clearly related to availability. The poorer the country, the longer applicants have to wait for an appointment – and the lower the chance of getting one at all.

This is the result of the most comprehensive comparison of appointment availability and waiting times to date, carried out by researchers from the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM), the European University of Flensburg and the European University Institute in Florence. According to them, applicants from many countries in the Global South are thus subject to 'time penalties' that can affect their chances of labour migration, study visits, family visits or holiday trips. The data clearly shows that borders exist not only around territories, but also on a temporal level.

For the analysis, 16,182 computerised appointment requests were evaluated at 130 German diplomatic missions in 109 countries. The queries were carried out between November 2023 and September 2024. The data was then linked to factors such as per capita gross domestic product, trade relations with Germany, political stability and internet usage.

KEY FINDINGS

- In **44.1%** of all cases, **no appointment** was available.
- **Significant differences in waiting times:** the time between booking and appointment ranged from 0 days to 98 days, the latter being the case for individual appointments in Angola or Oman.
- On average, **per capita gross domestic product** is clearly correlated with appointment availability and waiting times. Lower economic power means lower chances of getting an appointment and longer waiting times between successful booking and appointment.
- The **chances of getting an appointment** ranged from 0.7% (Uganda) or 1.3% (Pakistan) to 100% (e.g. Tunisia, Venezuela).
- **Longest average waiting times in Africa:** The missions in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Antananarivo (Madagascar) and Kinshasa (DR Congo) in particular had long average waiting times until the next available appointment. By country, Burkina Faso (75.7 days), Madagascar (71.3 days) and Cyprus (60.7 days) were at the top of the list. The latter could be related to applications from third-country nationals, as Cyprus is located on a highly frequented refugee

route in the Mediterranean. In 17 countries, waiting times exceeded one month. Long waiting times also mean lower chances of getting an appointment on average.

- **Shortest average waiting times in Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean and Oceania:**

Waiting times for an appointment were particularly short at missions in Singapore (2 days) and Cuba (2.7 days).

- Economic relations with Germany also play a role. Countries that maintain close **trade relations** have shorter waiting times.

- **Linguistic similarities** have a strong influence: the more people in a country can communicate with the German population, the greater the chance of finding a free visa appointment at that country's diplomatic missions abroad.

- **Differences according to visa type:** Appointments for short-term visas have longer waiting times than those for long-term visas. The reason for this could be that tourist visas are in greater demand than immigration visas.

- **Influence of the day of the week:** Waiting times for available appointments are shortest when the query is made on a Monday. However, Mondays also offer the lowest chance of being able to book an appointment.

- **Differences between embassies and consulates:** The chances of getting an appointment are greater at embassies. However, the average waiting times for available appointments are shorter at consulates.

The researchers interpret these patterns as an indication that the resources of German missions abroad are unevenly distributed and politically prioritised – and that this perpetuates global economic inequalities. Official data on the staffing levels or budgets of individual embassies, as well as on actual appointment requests, were not available to the researchers.

Prof. Dr. Emanuel Deutschmann, author of the study and junior professor of sociological theory at the European University of Flensburg: *"The extremely unequal chances of obtaining a visa appointment in a timely manner are unfair, lead to frustration and are rightly perceived as discriminatory by those affected. Even if it remains unclear whether the longer waiting times in the Global South are a side effect of understaffing and excessive demands or the result of a deliberate policy of deterrence and exclusion, the consequences are clear: Germany's reputation as a country of immigration and a tourist destination is suffering, urgently needed skilled workers are being deterred, exchange and cooperation are being restricted, and global inequalities are ultimately being reproduced and reinforced."*

Dr. Niklas Harder, co-author of the study and co-head of the Integration Department at DeZIM: *"Waiting times for appointments at German missions abroad are the first hurdle on the way to Germany. Our research shows that the country of origin determines how high this hurdle is. Good migration policy requires transparency and equal opportunities for all motivated immigrants, regardless of their country of origin. A publicly accessible platform with current waiting times, for example as part of the Foreign Office's international portal, would be useful here. Transparency is also the basis for discussing the question of how the different waiting times arise."*

METHODOLOGY

Between November 2023 and September 2024, data on 16,182 appointment requests at 130 German embassies and consulates was collected using a Python script. This covered 86.5% of all countries with German diplomatic missions abroad. Every six days, the script recorded whether appointments were available and how long the wait would be for the next available appointment. It was not possible to record possible waiting times until a visa was successfully issued after the appointments. Appointments were requested for all types of visas available at the respective diplomatic mission (including Schengen, work, family reunification and student visas). Diplomatic missions that do not offer an open appointment search but suggest appointments on request were not included.

The paper '[A Time Penalty for the Global South? Inequalities in Visa Appointment Wait Times at German Embassies and Consulates Worldwide](#)' has just been published in the journal 'Political Geography'.

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ABOUT DEZIM

The German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) conducts research on integration and migration, consensus and conflict, social participation, and racism. It consists of the DeZIM Institute and the DeZIM Research Community. The DeZIM Institute is based in Berlin-Mitte. In the DeZIM Research Community, the DeZIM Institute joins forces with seven other institutions conducting research on migration and integration in Germany. The DeZIM Institute is funded by the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMBFSFJ).