

Digital Borders: What's Changing for Non-EU Travelers

Detailing Europe's
New Entry/Exit System
(EES)



Starting October 12, 2025, manual border checks will be replaced with a fully digital, biometric process. This shift is more than just a technological upgrade; it represents a fundamental change in how the Schengen Area, a region of 27 European countries, manages its external boundaries. The new Entry/Exit System (EES) will enable free movement across the region by removing internal border controls and passports. Over the next six months, every external border will be equipped to record traveler data in a centralized European Union (EU) database, ushering in a new era of border security.



Navigating new procedures at the border

Upon their first entry after the system's rollout, travelers will be required to enroll four fingerprints and a facial image at an automated kiosk or booth, replacing the traditional manual passport stamp with a digital record. Their passport will be scanned, and all relevant personal data, including full name, date of birth and nationality, will be securely stored in a central EU system for up to three years in accordance with data protection regulations.

Travelers who already hold a short-stay Schengen visa will not need to provide fingerprints again, as these are already stored in the Visa Information System (VIS). In some cases, travelers may be able to register certain details in advance through a self-service system or a mobile application, if available at their point of entry or departure, which can help expedite the process. However, as the EES is rolled out and systems stabilize, travelers should expect some variability in their border experience, particularly at airports and land crossings where wait times and procedures may differ.

Weighing the impact of EES

As with any major change, the EES brings both opportunities and obstacles. Here's a quick look at what organizations and their employees can expect, including both the benefits and hurdles during the transition.

Pros	Cons	Actions
Faster, secure checks	Initial delays, longer wait times	Build in additional buffer time for itineraries, meeting start times, and airport connections to reduce the impact of potential delays
Automated compliance	Privacy concerns (biometrics)	Ensure travelers are informed about how their biometric data is collected and processed under EU regulations, understand their rights, and that legal and compliance teams are engaged to address any questions
Less paperwork	Need for updated policies/training	Review travel policies, develop FAQs, and establish a point of contact to support employees with EES-related issues

Building confidence in compliance

To navigate these changes smoothly, businesses should:

- **Identify impacted travelers:** Review which employees will need to register biometrics and who may already have data on file from previous visas.
- **Monitor compliance:** The EES automatically tracks time spent in the Schengen zone, flagging overstays. Integrating this awareness into travel approval workflows can prevent accidental breaches.
- **Update travel policies:** Refresh internal documentation and guidance, ensuring employees know what to expect at the border and what documents to carry.
- **Train and support employees:** Some may find biometric collection intrusive or confusing. Providing clear FAQs and a point of contact for travel issues will help ease the transition.
- **Address privacy:** Update privacy notices and coordinate with legal teams to acknowledge the new process and its implications.

Anticipating the next wave of change

The EES is just the beginning. By late 2026, the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) will add another layer of pre-authorization for visa-exempt travelers. Companies should track ETIAS updates and plan to incorporate these requirements into travel booking systems.

Leading with preparation

Leading organizations are already mapping out which travelers and routes will be most affected, updating travel tools and launching awareness campaigns. Piloting new procedures with frequent travelers and gathering feedback will help refine policies and minimize disruption.

Moving forward with confidence

The EES represents a new compliance reality for global mobility. Companies that act early by updating guidance, training their workforce, and embedding compliance controls will be best positioned to protect traveler experience and minimize operational friction.

Exploring more on EES and ETIAS

For ongoing compliance and policy development, employees and managers are encouraged to review our [Immigration Master Class Series](#) which cover EES/ETIAS implementation and business travel compliance. Additionally, at our insideMOBILITY® event, attendees explored strategies through real-world scenarios and collaborative discussions. See how they tackled the challenges in our blog: [4 Collaborative Approaches to Immigration and Tax — At the Table with Mobility](#).

