



ETIAS - The Pre-Travel European Travel Information and Authorisation System

Immigration & Business Travel

Updated - April 2024

VIALTO
PARTNERS

Frequently Asked Questions

This document is designed to support businesses with employees who undertake business travel to Schengen countries to better understand the impact of the new ETIAS system on their company and employees. As more information is released, Vialto Partners will update the content and provide technical assistance to any employer requiring greater assistance with their mobility programme.

What is ETIAS?

ETIAS stands for European Travel Information and Authorisation System. It is a digital pre-travel authorisation that gives an individual 'permission to travel' to the Schengen zone. Pre-travel authorisations are not new and are currently live in several countries around the world, the most obvious being the United States of America and its Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and Australia's Electronic Travel Authority (ETA).

Who will need to apply for ETIAS?

Individuals who will require ETIAS are typically referred to as 'non-visa' or 'visa-free' nationals, meaning that they do not require a short-term visa for business activities to travel to the Schengen zone and other participating member states. Those who need to apply for a Schengen C visa to enter the Schengen zone will not need to obtain an ETIAS prior to their travel.

Commercial airlines can deny boarding to individuals without an ETIAS, as this will lead to fines and sanctions for the carrier company. On the contrary, ETIAS will not be needed if crossing into a Schengen zone using a private car or by rail. It will only be required at a later stage if travelling with an international carrier transporting groups by coach.

How long will ETIAS be valid for?

Each ETIAS will have a validity of either 3 years or the date of passport expiry (if earlier). It will be valid for stays of up to 90 days in a 180-day rolling period, being valid for all Schengen countries. It is important to note that this timeframe covers both leisure and business trips, thus employees should track both their holidays and business trips in the Schengen zone accordingly to avoid overstays.

How much will ETIAS cost?

ETIAS will cost 7 EUR for the individuals between the ages of 18 and 70.

Which countries will require the ETIAS to visit?

The ETIAS system will cover all Schengen countries, even if they are not yet fully integrated in the Schengen acquis and still face some internal restrictions. This includes Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Please note that not all EU countries are part of Schengen (e.g. Ireland), and some non-EU countries do belong to the Schengen zone.

Why is the European Commission introducing ETIAS?

ETIAS has been in the making since 2016. Since the terrorist attacks in France and Belgium, the need for improved security measures to enter Schengen became a priority. ETIAS aims at gathering relevant information on travellers to ensure any security concerns are identified before they are permitted to enter the Schengen zone. It will also allow Schengen countries to share a centralised system for issuance and monitoring of Schengen travels.

When will ETIAS be rolled out?

ETIAS was intended to initially launch in early 2022. Due to the Covid-19 and the Ukrainian crisis, this date has been delayed several times, with a current expected implementation in May 2025.

How will this impact your business traveller programme?

An estimated 30 million 'visa-free' individuals travel to the Schengen zone every year. All of these visitors will now require either an ETIAS before arriving at a Schengen border.

Completing the application should take around 10 minutes, and an approval or rejection should be received within 96 hours or less from submission. However, a small percentage of applications may take up to 4 weeks, should additional information or documentation is required. Given this, to ensure compliance and avoid boarding or entry rejections, businesses and employees need to plan in advance for the specific activities, length of trip and application processing times.

Overstays or performing non-permissible activities under business status can lead to employer and individual sanctions, inclusion in the Schengen Information System and future prohibitions of re-entry.

What actions do I need to take now?

Businesses should review expected volumes of travel to Schengen countries to begin planning how best to manage the new requirements. We suggest that you take the following three steps before ETIAS goes live:

- 1. Map it:** Understand who needs to travel to the Schengen zone and are 'visa-free nationals', how often, and the business activities that will be carried in the country/ies. You may need to expand your current pre-travel arrangements to include the Schengen zone, and update any tools you have that manage business travel and pre-travel authorisations.
- 2. Plan it:** ETIAS is set to be rolled out by May 2025 - so get your business ready to submit pre-travel authorisation applications as soon as it goes live. ETIAS' questionnaires may be long and will ask a whole range of questions, including work, accommodation, and travel history. If your employees have a criminal record and/or have visited countries that are considered a security threat, they may face documentation requests or further questioning.
- 3. Communicate:** Ensure that your employees are updated of these changes, ensuring that they are aware of what is required before they travel to the Schengen zone.

How can Vialto support?

As more information is released by the European Commission, Vialto Partners will update this document. We can also provide technical assistance to employers requiring assistance with their mobile employees.

Our Vialto team can help you navigate complex governmental relations and rapidly changing immigration laws, so that your employees can move quickly and compliantly across borders. Our team provides advisory, compliance, consular and tracking services.

Who at Vialto should I contact for more support?

Vialto Partners has a dedicated ETIAS Team led by Lindsey Barras. If you have any questions or queries please reach out to us:

- **Lindsey Barras** - Immigration Partner and ETIAS Lead: lindsey.h.barras@vialto.com
- **Scherezade Maestre** - Senior Manager Business Travel & Global Immigration and ETIAS specialist: scherezade.maestre@vialto.com

Vialto Partners ("Vialto") refers to wholly owned subsidiaries of CD&R Galaxy UK OpCo Limited as well as the other members of the Vialto Partners global network. The information contained in this document is for general guidance on matters of interest only. Vialto is not responsible for any errors or omissions, or for the results obtained from the use of this information. All information is provided "as is", with no guarantee of completeness, accuracy, timeliness or of the results obtained from the use of this information, and without warranty of any kind, express or implied, including, but not limited to warranties of performance, merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose. In no event will Vialto, its related entities, or the agents or employees thereof be liable to you or anyone else for any decision made or action taken in reliance on the information in this document or for any consequential, special or similar damages, even if advised of the possibility of such damages.

© 2024 Vialto Partners. All Rights Reserved.