VIALTO
PARTNERS

# ETIAS

## The European Travel Information and Authorisation System

## Business Travel

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is ETIAS?

ETIAS stands for European Travel Information and Authorisation System. It is a digital pre-travel authorisation that will give an individual 'permission to travel' to the Schengen Area and Cyprus. 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 Area and Cyprus. Those who need to apply for a Schengen C visa to enter the Schengen Area 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. However, train operators will not verify whether their passengers hold a valid ETIAS. International coach operators will have three years to comply with the requirement to verify travellers' ETIAS. Regardless of the means of transport used by travellers, ETIAS checks will always take place at the border.

## How long will ETIAS be valid for?

An ETIAS travel authorisation will have a validity of either 3 years or until the date of passport expiry (if earlier). It will be valid for stays of up to 90 days in a 180-day 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 Area to avoid overstays.

## How much will ETIAS cost?

ETIAS will cost 20 EUR for the individuals between the ages of 18 and 70. For those under 18 or over 70, the application is free.

## Which countries will require the ETIAS to visit?

The ETIAS system will cover all Schengen countries. This includes Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, 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.

It will also cover Cyprus, which does not yet benefit from border-free crossings but is in the process of fully joining the Schengen Area.

Please note that not all EU countries are part of Schengen (e.g. Ireland), and some non-EU countries do belong to the Schengen Area.

## 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 travelers 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. This date has been delayed several times, with a current expected implementation timeline for the last quarter of 2026. The final go-live date will depend on the successful implementation of the Entry/Exit System, which has been on a phased approach to implementation since 12 October 2025.

## What's the difference between the ETIAS and the EES (Entry/Exit System)?

The Entry/Exit System (EES) is an automated system that records the entry and exit of third-country nationals at the EU's external borders, tracking the duration of their stay. While ETIAS focuses on pre-travel screening for visa free nationals, EES monitors border crossings in real-time to ensure compliance with visa regulations.

The EES system will be used at entry and exit checkpoints in the Schengen Area to ensure that both visa nationals and ETIAS holders are respecting their Schengen allowance, documents are valid and have not been forged and there are no security concerns with the travellers.

## How will this impact your business traveler 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. The European authorities have now interconnected their EU-wide systems (SIS, ECRIS-TCN, VIS, and EES) as well as certain national systems with their labour, social security and immigration systems. Therefore, every trip into the Schengen Area will be closely monitored.

## 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 Area and are 'visa-free nationals', how often they need to travel, 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 Area, and update any tools you have that manage business travel and pre-travel authorisations.

2.  **Plan it**: ETIAS is set to be rolled out in the last quarter of 2026. It is important to get your business ready to submit pre-travel authorisation applications as soon as it goes live. ETIAS questionnaires may be lengthy and will ask a 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 Area as well as to Cyprus.

## How can Vialto support?

Vialto Partners can provide advisory services, assistance and technological tools to manage business travelers and their requirements when traveling to the Schengen area.

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 also provides advisory, compliance, consular and tracking services.

## Who at Vialto should I contact for more support?

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

**Lindsey Barras** — Immigration Partner and ETIAS Lead

**Scherezade Maestre** — Director Business Travel and Global Immigration and ETIAS specialist