

A person in a light-colored coat and dark pants is walking away from the camera, pulling a large, light-colored rolling suitcase. The scene is set at sunset or sunrise, with a warm, golden glow. Other people are visible in the background, also walking. The image is partially covered by a blue geometric shape in the top left and a white diagonal shape in the bottom right.

 QUICK GUIDE

The European Entry-Exit System and European Travel Information Authorisation System





► Executive Summary

— In today's rapidly changing world, where the movement of people across borders has become more fluid than ever, the European Union is taking significant steps to enhance its security and border control. As part of a larger project driving the interoperability between the EU central information systems, both the Entry-Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) will significantly impact the external borders of the Schengen area.




Understanding these changes is essential for travellers and border authorities around the world. This guide will break down the key aspects of EES and ETIAS, explaining what they mean, how they will affect border crossings, and what stakeholders should prepare for in the coming years.

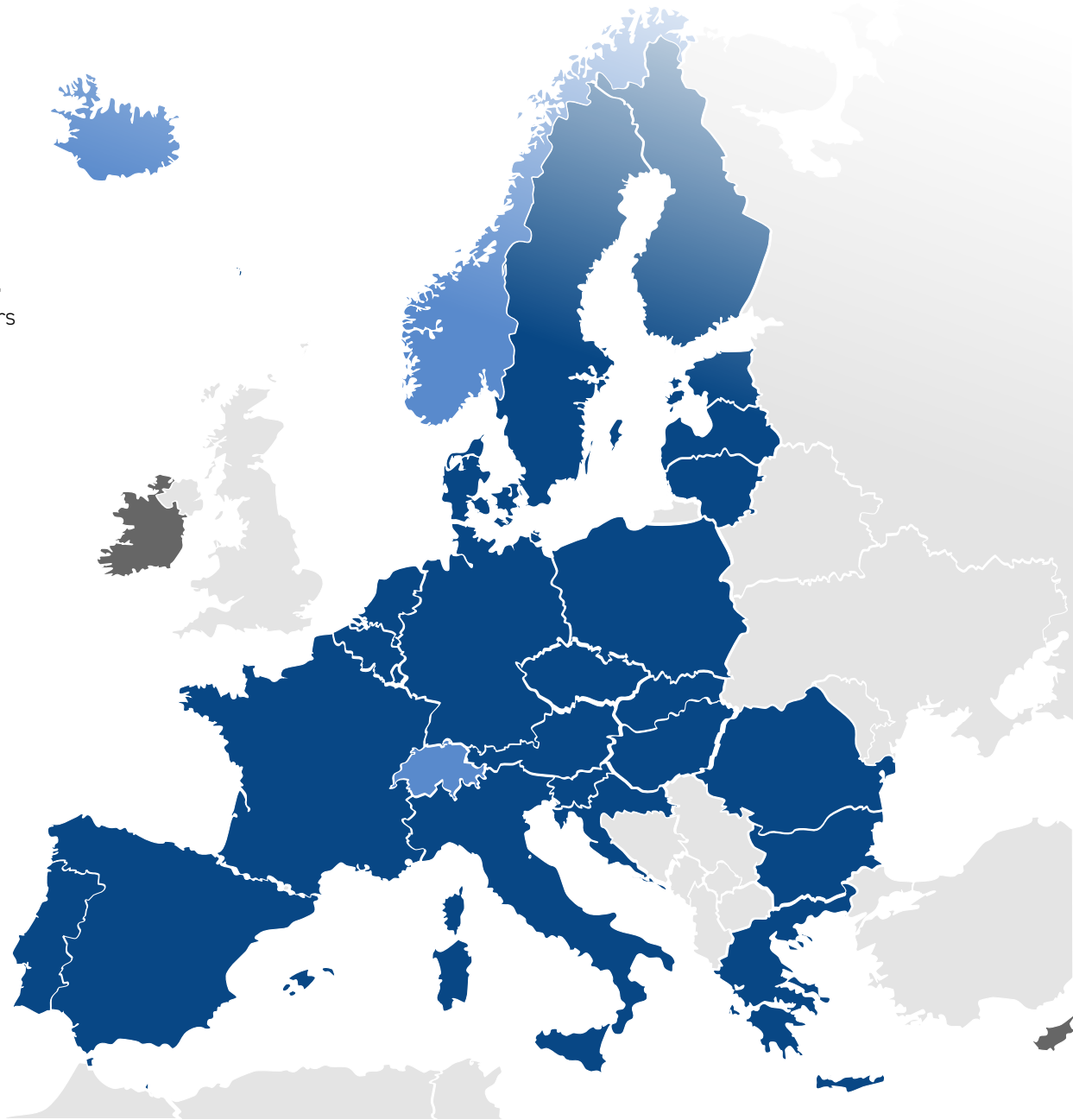




The Schengen area

The Schengen area is part of the EU, where internal borders between the member states have been opened, and the free movement of persons is allowed. Its borders do not fully correspond to those of the European Union itself. Cyprus and Ireland are not part of the Schengen area but are EU member states. Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland are not EU member states but are part of the Schengen zone.

-  EU country members of the Schengen area
-  Non-EU country members of the Schengen area
-  EU country outside the Schengen area





The regulatory work around the EES and ETIAS systems was completed in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Both systems are governed by EU Regulations and started their existence under the European Commission's Smart Borders program.

The EES aims at security improvement and further automation of the external Schengen area borders, mandating a full biometric registration of all non-Europeans crossing those borders while at the same time integrating information from the EU Visa Information System (VIS). ETIAS provides means of pre-screening for visa-exempted travellers, based only on declarative information from the travellers themselves. It will deliver a travel authorisation with a validity of three years and will be used as input for the border authorities when the traveller arrives at the Schengen border.

During the development phase of the EES, which started in 2019, the European Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems (eu-LISA) and its subcontractors ran into several major issues, of which the Covid-19 pandemic was the first. These setbacks have caused substantial delays in the delivery of the EES components, causing several postponements in the system's launch, which was initially scheduled for 2021. Although, after a long period of uncertainty around the timing of the project, the entry into operations date of the system has now been set at October 12, 2025.

*EES is now
expected in 2025,
with ETIAS to follow
six months later.*

Covid-19 pandemic was the first.

The launch of ETIAS depends on the launch of the EES, and earlier attempts to decouple the introduction of both systems failed on a political level. As such, ETIAS has been equally postponed and is set to be launched one year after the EES.





▶ **What will change
at the borders?**



The impact at the external Schengen area borders will mostly be visible with the introduction of the EES. The changes are limited to non-EU citizens, aiming to facilitate their border crossing while increasing the overall security involving their (short-term) stay in the area.

Nothing changes for EU citizens. They can use a manual border control booth or an e-gate if the latter is present at the border control post and will undergo the usual checks by the border authority.

Non-EU citizens (also called third-country nationals or TCNs) fall into three major categories:

01



Travellers who need a visa to enter the Schengen area for a short stay

(max. 90 days)

02



Travellers who are exempted from such visas for a short stay

(max. 90 days in any given 180-day period)

03



Travellers who visit for a longer stay

(more than 90 days)

The EES focuses on the first two categories. Long-stay travellers are excluded from the system, as they must request either a long-stay visa or a residence permit, which is a more stringent procedure.



Short-stay third-country nationals will be subject to more extended checks than before: they will need to register their biometric information (facial image and four fingerprints) with their passport data. To do so, self-service kiosks will be placed at significant entry points, where an automated procedure will guide them through the collection of the required data.

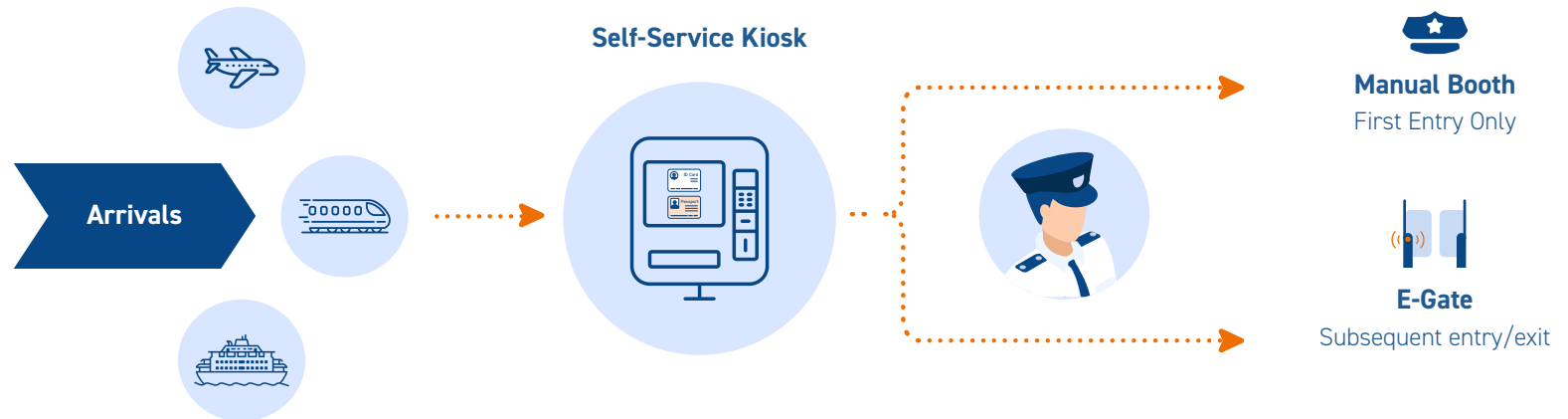
At their first entry, newly registered travellers will still need to pass by a manual booth for completion of the border checks, after the kiosk enrolment. The registration of the traveller data remains valid for three years, after which it will need to be updated.

During that period, on exit or on subsequent entry, travellers will be able to use an e-gate to facilitate their border crossing, as long as they first verify their identity at a kiosk again on entry.

If travellers cannot or prefer not to use a self-service kiosk, they can still queue for the manual booths to do the complete registration there. The objective of the system – next to improving security – is to speed up the overall border crossing time and reduce the time spent before a manual booth.

From law enforcement side, refusals of entry into the Schengen area will also be stored in the EES, and this for a period of five years. Since a timestamp will be stored for every entry and exit of a person, it also becomes a lot easier to detect overstayers: persons staying in the area for a period longer than they are allowed to. Such an overstay can result in a refusal of entry on a subsequent visit.

In short, the EES aims to facilitate border crossing for bona fide third-country nationals and to introduce more ways to detect and refuse those not playing by the rules.





**What about
ETIAS?**



ETIAS will not be directly visible for travellers at the border – unless they need one and don't have it. It is a preparatory step that will need to be taken by the second category of non-EU travellers in the list above. Those in need of a visa – for short or long stay – are not concerned by ETIAS.

60+
countries

3 years
validity

Fully online

Citizens from over 60 countries exempted from a short-stay visa will need to apply for an ETIAS travel authorisation well in advance of travelling to a country in the Schengen area. While most applications will be processed automatically within minutes, a manual decision can take up to four days, and in exceptional cases where more information is needed from the traveller, it can take up to 14 or even 30 days and possibly involve an online interview.

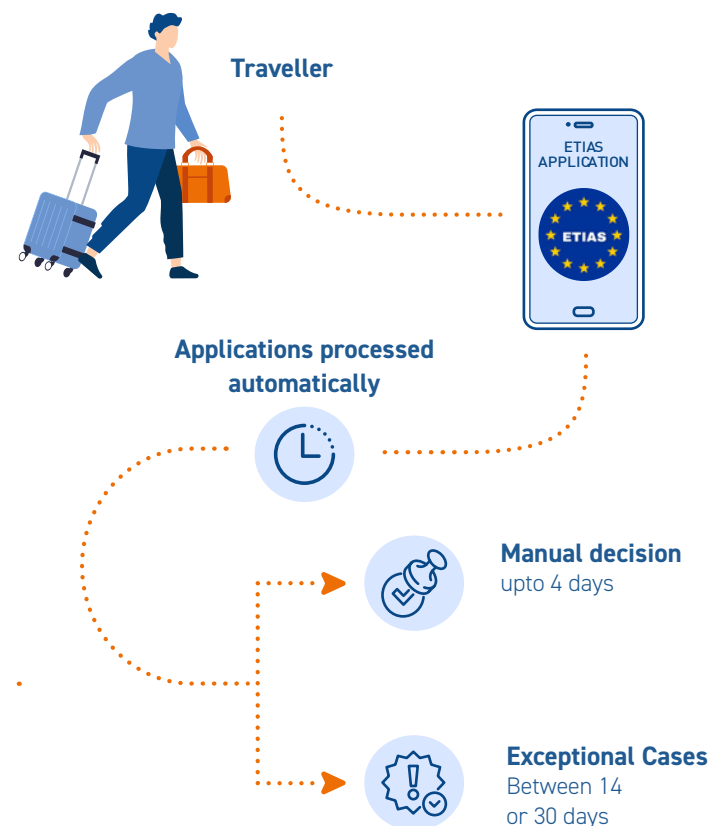
This stepped approach is aimed at allowing persons who could not be authorised automatically to have every possibility to explain their reasons for requesting the travel authorisation and why they believe they should be allowed to travel to the Schengen area. This way, a maximum number of bona fide travellers will be authorised, while fraudsters could be unmasked and refused even before travelling.

The application process is fully online, using the official ETIAS website or the official ETIAS mobile application. Travellers will also have the option to have someone else represent them for the application. This could be a travel agent, a family member or an external party.

Several of these external parties have already prepared or

launched their websites, which offer full treatment of the application process. It remains to be seen whether this will lead to a potential new form of fraud.

The authorisation is valid for three years, or until the travel document (usually a passport) that was used during the application process expires – whichever comes first. The ETIAS authorisation is linked to the travel document. The same document must be used when crossing the border to retrieve the corresponding authorisation.





**Progressive
introduction**





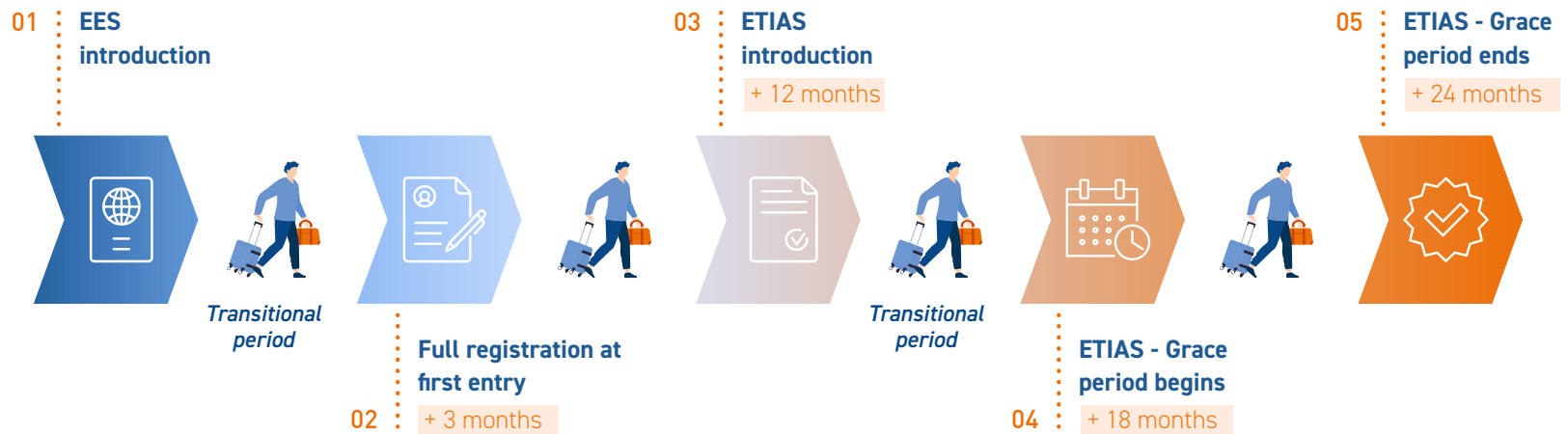
The introduction of both new systems happens in several steps. It will all start with the activation of the EES in all external Schengen border control posts (BCPs). This will introduce the self-service kiosks and the collection of biometric data.

During the first months of operation, the load on the BCPs will be exceptionally higher since all concerned travellers must be registered in the EES at their first entry. To manage the queues that this will undoubtedly produce, the start-up of the system will see an optional registration of biometric data at the first entry. The complete registration can be postponed to the following exit, where queues will be less influenced by the biometric data collection. This will most certainly only happen during those timeframes where the queues are exceptionally long, and full registration will be carried out when there is less pressure at the border.

Once this transitional period is over – theoretically starting the 91st day after the entry into operations – all biometric registrations will take place as prescribed by the EES Regulation.

One year after the starting signal of the EES, the ETIAS travel authorisations will be introduced. Again, there will be a stepped introduction. First, a transitional period of at least six months will be applied, during which travellers falling in this category will be informed about the need for the authorisation but will not be refused at the border for the lack thereof.

After that, a grace period of another six months will follow, during which ETIAS authorisations will be mandatory, but first-time travellers, since the end of the transitional period, will still be allowed to enter without the authorisation. Once that period is over, not having an ETIAS authorisation will result in a refusal at the border.





► Future outlook

Although plagued by many issues during the development, both on the side of eu-LISA and in the Member States, the system is finally headed for a launch in 2025. The increased security is welcomed by law enforcement and migration agencies, leaving ample margin for respect for human rights for those in need.

*secure
traveller's
journeys at
every stage*

The improved border automation facilities open the door to the use of several new technologies, including digital travel credentials (DTCs) and digital visas that will ultimately replace paper passports and visa stickers altogether. The roadmap to get to that point is one of many years to come, but technological advancements will ultimately allow an almost seamless border crossing and above all, they will secure travellers' journeys at every stage.



A background image showing a close-up of two hands shaking in a firm grip, symbolizing a business deal or agreement. The hands are wearing dark blue suit sleeves. The background is a blurred cityscape with tall buildings under a bright sky. The image is framed by a large blue diagonal shape on the left and a smaller orange diagonal shape on the right.

► How Zetes can help?

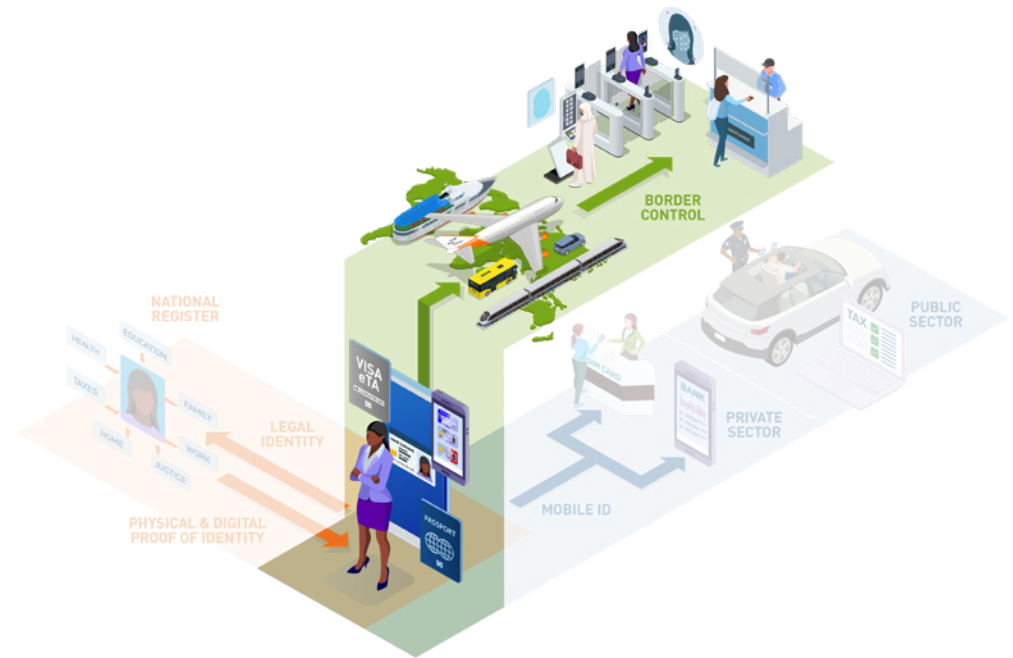


The implementation of **EES** and **ETIAS** introduces both challenges and opportunities for border authorities. Managing biometric registration, pre-screening processes, and automated decision-making requires an intelligent, integrated approach to ensure security without compromising efficiency.

This is where Zetes Border Control comes in. As a modular and fully integrated solution, Zetes Border Control enables seamless compliance with EES and ETIAS regulations while enhancing automation, intelligence-led decision-making, and real-time monitoring.

With the future of border management shifting towards touchless processing, digital travel credentials, and advanced automated decision-making with a human in the loop, Zetes Border Control provides the necessary foundations to ensure secure, efficient, and future-proof border operations.

By choosing Zetes, border authorities can modernise their infrastructure, comply with evolving regulations, and deliver a smoother, more secure travel experience.



It provides:

- Pre-screening and traveller data management, ensuring accurate and secure information handling before arrival.
- Biometric verification and automation via self-service kiosks and e-gates to facilitate faster processing.
- Integration with national and international databases, thus enabling more efficient border security.
- Scalable and adaptable solutions, ensuring governments can tailor the system to their needs.

Let's get in Touch

There is always a Zetes office close to you.

Check out our international network at

www.zetes.com



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