



Are you aware of the new Entry/Exit System being introduced for travel into and out of the Schengen area? This new system of using biometrics and facial recognition for border crossing just began rolling out in mid-October.

Here's a detailed overview of the Entry/Exit System (EES) being introduced across the Schengen Area, plus what travel advisors should know and communicate to their travelers to ensure smooth trips.

1. What is the Entry/Exit System?

- The EES is a new EU-wide digital border-control/monitoring system for non-EU / non-Schengen nationals making short stays (i.e., up to 90 days in any 180-day period) in the Schengen external-border area.
- It replaces the manual passport-stamp system with electronic registration of entries, exits and refusals.
- Data recorded: traveler's travel-document details, biometric information (facial image for all, fingerprints for many), date & place of entry and exit.
- The system is being rolled out from 12 October 2025, with full implementation expected by 10 April 2026 (or thereabouts) at all external Schengen borders.
- Applies to non-EU/EEA/Swiss/long-term-residency travelers (i.e., "third-country nationals") about short stays. https://www.jobbatical.com/blog/eu-entry-exit-system-2025-how-it-works?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Key purpose: to better track time spent in the Schengen Area (i.e., compliance with 90/180 rule), help prevent overstays, enhance border security, standardize procedures across Schengen external borders.

Why it matters

- For travelers from the U.S., U.K., Canada (visa-exempt or short-stay) the EES means that instead of just getting a stamp and moving on, they will have their biometric data recorded and their days counted precisely.
- From an operations standpoint: although this should eventually speed up border checks (once registration is done), initial visits under the EES may involve *longer* processing time (fingerprinting/photograph) and therefore slightly slower border crossing.
- Also, because the rollout is phased, some airports/seaports/land borders may have the new system in place, while others still use manual stamping—so there might be inconsistency for travelers depending on entry/exit point.

Important operational details

- Biometric data: On first entry after EES implementation you'll provide a facial image for everyone; for many you'll provide fingerprints (for example in visa-exempt cases).
- Once registered, subsequent entries (within the valid period of the biometric registration) should be quicker (e.g., facial recognition rather than full registration).
- The system automatically calculates how many days you've been in the Schengen Area and how many days remain, supporting enforcement of the "90 days in any 180-day period" rule for short stays.
- Data retention: Generally, the data is stored for 3 years; if the traveler has overstayed or is flagged, data can be kept 5 years.
- Exemptions: Citizens of EU/EEA/Switzerland, those with long-stay visas or residence permits are typically exempt from this registration.
- Border types: The system covers external Schengen borders – airports, seaports, land crossings.
- Because of the transition and phased roll-out, travelers may encounter hybrid situations (some borders using EES, some still stamps) and some potential for queues/delays during implementation.

Implications & risks for travelers

- Overstays or non-compliance are more likely to be detected: the system aims to ensure the "90/180" rule is correctly enforced.
- Longer first-time border processing: may need extra time when arriving (especially at major hubs) so advise to allow more buffer.

- Travel advisors should also be aware that “where you enter” and “where you exit” matters – the place of exit will be logged, so an exit from a different country than entry (even if Schengen internal borders) may matter if the border point is external.
- Data protection/privacy: The EU emphasizes compliance with data-protection (GDPR type) standards. https://www.uspassport.com/post/navigating-the-new-eu-entry-exit-system-ees?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- The system alone does not replace visa/entry requirements or work authorizations – travelers still need to satisfy all usual entry criteria (e.g., reason for travel, accommodation, funds, travel insurance, etc.).

So what exactly is the Schengen area?

The Schengen Area is a zone of European countries that have abolished passport and other border controls at their mutual borders, allowing for free and unrestricted movement of people across member states — as if it were a single country for travel purposes. As you’ll see below, not all EU countries are in the Schengen area.

Within the Schengen area:

- There are no routine passport checks between member countries.
- Travelers can move freely from one member country to another without border stops.
- However, controls are maintained at the Area’s external borders (i.e., when entering or leaving from a non-Schengen country).

There are currently 29 countries in the Schengen Area:

1. Austria
2. Belgium
3. Croatia (*joined 2023*)
4. Czech Republic
5. Denmark
6. Estonia
7. Finland
8. France

9. Germany
10. Greece
11. Hungary
12. Italy
13. Latvia
14. Lithuania
15. Luxembourg
16. Malta
17. Netherlands
18. Poland
19. Portugal
20. Slovakia
21. Slovenia
22. Spain
23. Sweden

Non-EU Members of Schengen

1. Iceland
2. Liechtenstein
3. Norway
4. Switzerland

Soon to Join / Associated Members

- Cyprus is expected to join in 2025, with land and sea borders joining first, and airports later.
- Bulgaria and Romania began partial participation in 2024 (air and sea borders), with full land border inclusion pending.

A few EU countries are not yet fully part of Schengen:

- Ireland – opted out and maintains its own border policy.

- Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania – joining in stages as above.
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2. What Travel Advisors Need To Know & Relay to Their Travelers

Here are the most important points for travel advisors, and what should be communicated to travelers. You might also create a checklist for clients.

Key points to relay

1. Who is affected

- Non-EU nationals (third-country nationals) on short stays (≤ 90 days in any 180-day period) in the Schengen Area.
- This includes visa-exempt travelers (such as U.S., Canadian, U.K., Australian visitors) *and* travelers holding short-stay Schengen visas.
- Not required (or at least different) for EU/EEA/Swiss citizens, long-stay or residence-permit holders. https://etias.com/articles/eu-entry/exit-system-everything-travelers-need-to-prepare-for?utm_source=chatgpt.com

2. What changes

- On first entry after the system is live at a border, travelers will undergo a biometric registration (facial photo + potentially fingerprint scanning) at an external Schengen border point.
- After registration, for subsequent entries the controls will rely more on facial recognition and the digital record rather than full manual stamping.
- Passport stamps may still be used temporarily at some borders during transition, but the goal is to phase out stamping in favor of EES by full rollout.
- The system will record your entry date, exit date, location, plus biometrics and travel document details.
- It automatically tracks your number of days in the Schengen Area under the 90/180 rule. So staying beyond your allowance is more easily checked.

3. When & where

- The official launch date: 12 October 2025. Full implementation targeted by around 10 April 2026.

- Because rollout is phased, some entry points may already have EES, others still manual. Travel advisors must check which borders/airports/ports are live in the country/region travellers are using.
- It applies at external Schengen borders: airports, sea-ports, land crossings. Internal Schengen borders (between member states) are *not* the entry/exit tracking points for EES.

4. How can travel advisors prepare travelers?

- Advise arriving early at the border/airport to allow some extra time for biometric registration if it is first entry after EES launch.
- Make sure passport is valid and that travel documents match the details that will be recorded (name, date of birth, etc).
- Ensure they understand the 90-day in 180-day rule: they should track how many days they spend in Schengen and ensure they exit in time. The EES makes this tracking more exact.
- Advise that later entries may be quicker once registered. But if they have a long stopover, multiple entry/exit via different states etc, they should plan accordingly.
- Document advice: although EES doesn't require advance application or fee (in most cases) – unlike the forthcoming European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) – travelers should still carry paperwork for reason of stay, return ticket, funds, travel/health insurance, as usual.
- Remind travelers that if they overstayed or fail to register (or refuse biometrics) they may face denial of entry, fine, or future travel complications.
https://www.bothworldstravel.com/post/new-entry-exit-system-ees-for-europe-what-u-s-travelers-need-to-know?utm_source=chatgpt.com

5. Impacts for the travel-advisor business / planning

- When planning itineraries that cross Schengen external borders (entry/exit), you need to account for the possibility of slightly longer border formalities at entry under EES, and differences in implementation across countries.
- For multi-country trips that include non-Schengen countries (or external Schengen entries/exits) advisors must ensure that travelers know which entry/exit border point triggers EES registration.

- For clients who travel repeatedly to Europe, register once and returning visits should be quicker — you might emphasize the benefit of planning future Europe travel accordingly.
- Advisors should keep up-to-date on national implementation statuses of EES at particular airports/ports/land crossings (since some may still be transitioning).
- For group travel (cruises, tours) you may need to coordinate with the operator/port to ensure they know EES procedures (especially if arriving via non-typical modes e.g., cruise or ferry).
- Ensure that clients are aware there are two separate systems coming: EES (entry/exit biometric tracking) now, and ETIAS (pre-travel authorization) later. Confusion between the two is common.

6. Common pitfalls / what to monitor

- Border queues: Even though system is designed to speed things up, first-time registration might slow down the process.
- Wrong assumptions: Some travelers may assume “I’m visa-exempt so nothing changes” — but yes, they still will be subject to EES registration if they enter the Schengen Area for short stay.
- Overstay risks: Because the tracking is near-automatic, advisers should ensure clients track their days carefully. Past reliance on manual stamp and self-counting is being replaced by machine tracking.
- Data accuracy: Mistakes at registration (e.g., wrong document details, misspelling) might create future complications (e.g., linking biometric data to wrong person) — so advise travelers to check details at first registration point.
- Land/sea crossings: Some travelers enter/exit via ferry or land borders; these may have different pace/implementation of the EES kiosks. Adventure travel, overland itineraries, should flag this.
- Hybrid systems: Because implementation is phased, some travelers may encounter old stamping in some countries and new EES in others — possibly confusing. Advisers should prepare clients by explaining “this difference may happen”.

Sample checklist for advisors to send to clients

Here's a draft checklist you can adapt and share with your travelers:

- Passport valid and in good condition (no damage, expiry well beyond travel dates).
- If a first visit after 12 Oct 2025 to Schengen external border, expect to provide facial image and possibly fingerprints at border control.
- Allocate extra time at border (arrival) for registration (especially at airports/ports which are newly live under EES).
- Track your total number of days in Schengen: you have up to 90 days in any 180-day period (for short-stay travelers).
- Ensure travel/health insurance is in order and you can show proof of funds/accommodation/return ticket if asked.
- Understand that some airports/ports may still stamp passports while others already have EES — your experience may vary depending on where you enter.
- If you are a repeat traveler to Schengen: your biometric registration (“once”) may allow smoother entries later — plan accordingly.
- For multi-country trips crossing in/out of Schengen: check that you are exiting properly and counted correctly.
- If you change your passport (e.g., old one expires), you'll likely need to register biometrics again.
- For group or cruise travel: check with the operator/port whether the arrival/departure point is live under EES and what extra procedures apply.
- Advise children/families: note differences (for example, children under certain age may be exempt from fingerprints but still photographed) Travelers should check national specifics.
- Keep copies of arrival/departure documents/records in case you need to demonstrate compliance with stay limitations.

For additional information:

<https://travel-europe.europa.eu/en/ees>