

EES: New EU border checks for Brits this Easter

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Brits reminded to be aware of the EU's new Entry/Exit System (EES) when travelling to the EU this Easter and to follow travel operator guidance.

Ahead of the Easter holidays, Brits are being advised to be aware of extra border checks - the EU's Entry Exit System (EES) - and allow additional time at the border when travelling to the EU.

The EU has been gradually introducing new border checks, EES, since October last year. This replaces physical passport stamps.

These border checks create a digital record of when non-EU residents travel to the Schengen area for a short stay (up to 90 days in a rolling 180-day period) and when they leave. It has been introduced to strengthen border security and detect overstayers.

EES is operational in 29 European countries - all EU member states except Ireland and Cyprus, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

It means that each time a non-EU resident enters or exits the Schengen area, their biometrics and passport details will be digitally recorded.

From Friday 10 April, EES is set to be fully implemented at all EU airports and ports.

British travellers do not need to do anything in advance. Everything takes place at border control on the day of travel, free of charge.

To register for EES for the first time, a photo of your face will be taken and your passport scanned. Adults and children aged 12 and over will also have their fingerprints scanned.

For travellers using Eurostar at St Pancras, Eurotunnel LeShuttle at Folkestone, or the Port of Dover (known as "juxtaposed ports"), EES registration takes place before leaving the UK. Otherwise, registration happens on arrival in the destination country.

EES checks should take only a few minutes per person, although longer waits at border control are possible, including for your journeys back to the UK.

As with all journeys, travellers should follow their travel operator's guidance and allow time to complete these checks, particularly if they have connections or onward transport booked.

Although EES is EU-managed, the UK government has provided £10.5 million to help minimise disruption at juxtaposed ports, equating to £3.5 million per port.

Minister for Border Security and Asylum, Alex Norris, said:

The EU's Entry Exit System will be a significant change for Brits travelling this Easter.

Always check with your transport operator in case extra time may be needed, both for your return to the UK and travelling to the EU.

We continue to engage with the European Commission on taking steps to help minimise disruption for Brits as much as possible.

The government has also provided more than £10 million for Eurostar, Eurotunnel and the Port of Dover for those needing checks before departure.

Although EES requires checks on each entry and exit to the Schengen area, once registered, future visits will be more straightforward.

Once registered, travellers will only need to scan their passport and confirm their identity by having either a photo taken or a fingerprint scan.

Registration is valid for three years, or until the passport expires, whichever is soonest.

Last September, the government launched public communications on the new checks, with messaging being shared on UK government social media channels as well as by transport operators and travel websites.

Up-to-date information is available on GOV.UK and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development's Office Travel Aware pages.

Brits who are legally resident in Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland or the EU are exempt, so long as they present their residency documents at border control. This includes Withdrawal Agreement residents.

UK-EU dual citizens using their EU passport are also exempt from EES.

The full list of exemptions is available on the EU's Travel to Europe website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ees-new-eu-border-checks-for-brits-this-easter>