

Transport Industry Statement: Urgent Action Needed ahead of the EES Implementation

The undersigned organisations, representing the majority of transport and mobility infrastructure stakeholders impacted by the Entry/Exit System (EES), call for urgent action by both the European Commission and the Schengen Member States ahead of the planned start of EES operations in Autumn 2024. The transport industry is increasingly concerned about several unresolved issues critical to the effective implementation of the EES that must be addressed to avoid significant disruptions to our operations and mobility in Europe – and thus ensure a smooth and safe experience for travellers entering the Schengen area.

During several previous stakeholder meetings with the European Commission and the agencies FRONTEX and eu-LISA, we emphasised a series of pressing challenges that require urgent attention and coordinated action from both the European Commission and Member States to ensure a smooth start of EES operations without unnecessary disruptions at Border Crossing Points (BCP). These issues include:

Date of the start of operations:

- The European Commission must set a definitive date for the operational launch of the EES only once all Member States have confirmed their full technical and operational readiness at all BCP.
- A sufficient buffer period—outside of peak travel season—must be allowed for stakeholders to finalise their preparations. The definitive launch date should be set at a bare minimum of three months in advance before the entry into operations of the EES for said preparations to be completed in time.
- Member States' technical and operational readiness should be measured against harmonised and objective criteria before any such decision is made.

Ensuring Full Readiness at BCP:

- The European Commission should provide clear guidance and oversight to ensure harmonised and timely end-to-end testing with passengers across Member States.
- In the event that Member States are not adequately prepared, the European Commission should collaborate closely with them to develop and implement contingency plans promptly and in a harmonised fashion.

Mitigating Impact on Passenger Processing Times at the Border and on Operations

- Expedited action is needed to finalise and deploy the crucial pre-registration app at the national level well in advance of the EES operational start.
- A well-structured transition period of at least 12-18 months after the start of operations should be established. Such a period should enable Member States, in a coherent manner, to create a certain, gradually increasing portion of the EES records with biometric data either on entry or exit. Likewise, it should enable those carriers which have not been able to be effectively ready for the go live, to be exempt from liability schema while they reach full readiness.
- Measures must address the need to avoid double-verification at the border, which is essential for both efficiency and the passenger experience, and should be clearly defined with enough time for implementation before the start of operations.
- Speed up the process for launching a robust public communication campaign, which is already delayed. Progress on the availability of a 24/7 default phone line support for carriers to assist travellers for the launch of EES. The absence of these measures will seriously degrade traveller experience and carriers' operations.

The undersigned associations believe that the above-mentioned actions are absolutely necessary to mitigate any potential negative impact of the EES rollout, avoiding disruptions at BCP which could wreak havoc on border security, the passenger experience, the transport sector, and the image of the European community and its institutions.

We urge the European Commission and Member States to act promptly on these issues and inform us of their follow-up actions to ensure the successful implementation of the EES and the overall efficiency of European border operations.



The International Air Transport Association

