

OTAS BRIEF · TB-003

Working in Europe after the new border checks: EES, the 90/180 rule and ETIAS delays

Operational

Tactical

Strategic

By OTAS Insights · Published by OTAS Live Ltd · UK passport holders, all UK nations

Correct as of 20 October 2026

Since 10 April 2026, the EU's Entry/Exit System (EES) has recorded every short-stay entry and exit of UK passport holders across the Schengen area, and it counts your 90 days in any 180 automatically [1][2]. ETIAS, the EU travel authorisation, is not yet in operation and has no start date [3]. Neither one is a work permit. Event crew working in Europe still need to check each country's own work rules, which differ [4][9][10][11][12].

Key takeaways

- **EES is live:** fingerprints and a photo on your first entry, and no more passport stamps. It is free [1][2][6].
- **The 90/180 rule is now counted by the system:** one total for all Schengen countries, with overstays recorded automatically [2].
- **ETIAS has not started:** no applications are being taken. Any site selling it now is not official [3][6].
- **Work rules are national:** France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands each have different exemptions for artists and crew [9][10][11][12].
- **Do this now:** track days for every touring crew member, check each country's work rules and keep passports in date.

Why this matters for event professionals

Touring crews, production teams and performers often cross several Schengen borders in a season. Days add up across all of them. Before EES, overstays were found by checking passport stamps by hand. Now the system calculates them, and it records an overstay [2]. A crew member who runs out of days mid-tour is a real risk to a show.

This Brief applies to British citizens travelling on a UK passport, from any part of the UK. The rules are set by the EU and by each destination country, not by UK law, so they are the same in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. If you also hold an EU or Irish passport, different rules may apply, so check before you travel.

The Entry/Exit System

eu-LISA, the EU agency that runs EES, says all Schengen countries had deployed it at their external borders by 10 April 2026, after it started in October 2025 [1]. What it means for UK travellers:

- On your first entry, the system stores 4 fingerprints and a facial image if you do not need a visa [2]. GOV.UK says there is no cost for EES registration [6].
- The EU says the fingerprints of children under 12 are not currently scanned [2]. The FCDO's France page says children aged 11 or younger will not have fingerprints scanned but can be photographed [8].
- Manual passport stamping ended on 10 April 2026, when the automated calculator started [2].
- If you leave from the Port of Dover, Eurotunnel at Folkestone or Eurostar at St Pancras, GOV.UK says EES checks are done before you leave the UK [6].
- EES does not apply to travel to Ireland or Cyprus, which are not in the Schengen area [6].



The 90/180 rule, now counted for you

UK passport holders can visit the Schengen area without a visa for up to 90 days in any 180-day period, for tourism and certain other reasons such as business meetings and cultural or sports events [7][8]. The EU says the 90 days are counted as a single period across all the countries using EES [2]. Days in Cyprus are counted separately [7].

If you overstay, the FCDO says you may be banned from entering Schengen countries for up to 3 years [8]. The European Commission's short-stay calculator lets you check your days [5].

ETIAS: not yet

ETIAS will be a travel authorisation for visa-exempt travellers to enter 30 European countries. The official EU site says it is "currently not in operation", that no applications are being collected and that the EU will give the start date "several months prior to its launch" [3]. When it starts, it will cost EUR 20 and be valid for three years or until your passport expires, whichever comes first [4].

Two points for event teams:

- **Old guidance:** GOV.UK's EES page, last updated on 10 April 2026, still says ETIAS is expected "From Autumn 2026" [6]. The official EU site gives no date [3]. Travel Weekly reported on 13 October 2026 that ABTA said "there is now no official launch date" [13].
- **Scam sites:** GOV.UK says any website selling ETIAS now is doing so fraudulently [6]. ABTA said more than 150 websites were offering it, Travel Weekly reported [13].

Working is different

Neither EES nor ETIAS gives permission to work. The ETIAS FAQ says that if you wish to work in one of the countries requiring ETIAS, you will need a work visa, and that ETIAS is for activities such as attending a business conference or meeting [4]. But each country sets its own exemptions, and some cover event work. GOV.UK's country pages list, for example [9][10][11][12]:

- **France:** artists and their technical production team for shows, for no more than 90 days.
- **Germany:** performing in the arts or entertainment where it is of special interest (performers and their assistants), and work at special cultural or musical events or festivals, for less than 90 days in a 12-month period.
- **Spain:** artists and technicians in the audiovisual sector or doing artistic activities for the public, for up to 90 days in a 180-day period, with proof. GOV.UK notes the page is being updated after a Spanish government announcement.
- **Netherlands:** musicians and artists, for a maximum of 6 continuous weeks in a 13-week period.

These are examples, not a complete list. Some exemptions also need the employer to notify the authorities: France, for example, requires a secondment declaration through the SPSI online service for some postings [9]. The France, Germany and Netherlands pages were last updated in April 2024 [9][10][12]. Check with the destination country before each tour.

What to do

Operational: crew and performers

- Check your passport: issued less than 10 years before you arrive, and valid for at least 3 months after you plan to leave [8].
- Keep your own record of days in the Schengen area, and check it with the EU calculator [5].
- Expect longer queues on your first EES entry. Do not pay any website for ETIAS [6].

Tactical: tour, production and crew managers

- Track days for every crew member across the whole tour and their own travel, not just your dates [2][7].
- Check the work rules for each destination country and each role, and keep the evidence each exemption needs [9][10][11][12].
- Build extra time into travel schedules for EES checks, especially at Dover, Folkestone and St Pancras [6].

Strategic: promoters, organisers and directors

- Plan tours so crew stay within 90 days in any 180, or budget for the right visas.
- Decide who owns border and work permission checks for each tour, and who signs them off.
- Watch for the official ETIAS start date, and update crew briefings when it is announced [3].

Action box

Level	Do this
Operational	Check your passport dates, track your own days and ignore anyone selling ETIAS.
Tactical	Track days for every crew member, check each country's work rules and allow time for EES.
Strategic	Plan tours within 90/180, assign ownership of border and work checks, and watch for the ETIAS date.



Frequently asked questions

Do UK crew need ETIAS to work at events in Europe?

Not yet. ETIAS is not in operation and no applications are being taken [3]. When it starts, it will not be a work permit. The ETIAS FAQ says work needs a work visa, although countries have their own exemptions [4][9].

What is the EES and does it cost anything?

The Entry/Exit System records the entry and exit of short-stay visitors, with fingerprints and a photo. GOV.UK says registration is free [1][6].

How does EES change the 90/180 rule?

The rule is the same, but EES now counts your days automatically across all the countries using it, and records any overstay [2].

Do days in Ireland or Cyprus count towards the 90 days?

No. Ireland and Cyprus are not in the Schengen area. Cyprus allows 90 days in 180 separately [6][7].

Can I work in Europe for 90 days without a visa?

Only if the destination country has an exemption that covers your work. Exemptions differ by country and by activity. Check each country's rules [4][9][10][11][12].

When will ETIAS start?

There is no official date. The EU says it will announce the date several months before launch [3].

What we don't know yet

The ETIAS start date. Whether the Spanish exemptions will change after the update GOV.UK mentions. Whether the 2024 country pages for France, Germany and the Netherlands still reflect current national rules.

This Brief is general information, not legal or immigration advice. It applies to UK passport holders. Rules are set by the EU and by each country and can change. Check the official sources below and with the destination country's authorities before you travel.

Interest: OTAS Live Ltd, which publishes EPGN, sells event operations services and works with event professionals who travel for work.

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Work with OTAS

Need help planning crew travel for work in Europe?

[Request a call with OTAS to discuss how we can help](#)

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All web sources were opened and checked on 20 October 2026.

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