

Working in Europe after the new border checks

EES, the 90/180 rule, ETIAS delays and national work rules for UK event crews.
Full report

Operational Tactical Strategic

Correct as of	20 October 2026
Applies to	British citizens travelling on a UK passport, from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland alike
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Read this first. This report is general information for event professionals. It is not legal or immigration advice. Rules are set by the EU and by each destination country and can change. Check the official EU and GOV.UK pages and the destination country's authorities before each tour.



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About this report. It expands OTAS Brief TB-003 with how EES works at the border, how the 90/180 rule is counted, where ETIAS stands, how work exemptions differ in four countries, actions for each level and tools. Section 11 lists what we could not confirm. To ask for this report in another format, use the contact details on the OTAS Insights page.

1 Summary

Europe's borders changed for UK event crews in 2026. Since 10 April 2026, the Entry/Exit System (EES) has been in use at the external borders of every Schengen country. It records the entry and exit of UK passport holders, with fingerprints and a photo, and it counts the 90 days in any 180-day period automatically [1][2]. ETIAS, the EU travel authorisation, is not yet in operation and has no start date [3].

Neither system is a work permit. Whether a crew member can work at an event in a Schengen country depends on that country's own rules, and they differ. France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands each have short-term exemptions that may cover artists or technical crew, with different time limits and conditions [9][10][11][12].

This report sets out what EES and the 90/180 rule mean for touring crews, why some guidance on ETIAS is out of date, how national work exemptions differ, and what to do at each level: Operational, Tactical and Strategic. It is general information, correct as of 20 October 2026, and not legal or immigration advice.

At a glance. EES has been fully in use since 10 April 2026. ETIAS has not started [1][3].

- First entry: 4 fingerprints and a facial image. No cost. No more stamps [2][6].
- 90 days in any 180, counted as one total across all Schengen countries [2][7].
- Overstay: the FCDO says you may be banned from Schengen countries for up to 3 years [8].
- ETIAS: no applications, no date. Do not pay any website for it [3][6].
- Work: check each country's exemptions for each role [9][10][11][12].

2 Who and where this applies to

This report 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 whether you live in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

If you also hold an EU or Irish passport, different rules may apply, so check before you travel.

The destination examples in section 6 are France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands, chosen because they are common touring destinations. Other Schengen countries have their own rules.

3 The Entry/Exit System

3.1 What it is and when it started

eu-LISA, the EU agency that runs EES, said on 10 April 2026 that all Schengen countries had deployed the system at their external borders, ending a 180-day roll-out after it began operating in October 2025 [1]. It replaces manual passport stamping with a digital record of entry, exit and refusal of entry for short-stay visitors [1].

3.2 What happens at the border

- **Biometrics:** if you do not need a visa, the system stores 4 fingerprints and your facial image [2].
- **Children:** the EU says 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].
- **Cost:** GOV.UK says there is no cost for EES registration, and you do not need to do anything before you arrive at the border [6].
- **Stamps:** manual stamping ended on 10 April 2026, when the automated calculator and the list of overstayers started [2].
- **Time:** GOV.UK says EES may take each passenger extra time, so be prepared to wait at busy times [6].
- **Record:** GOV.UK says your digital EES record is valid for 3 years [6].

3.3 UK departure points

GOV.UK says that if you enter the Schengen area through the Port of Dover, Eurotunnel Le Shuttle at Folkestone or Eurostar at St Pancras International, any EES checks are completed before you leave the UK [6].

3.4 Where EES does not apply

The Republic of Ireland and Cyprus are not in the Schengen area, so EES does not apply when travelling to them [6].

4 The 90/180 rule

4.1 The rule

UK passport holders do not need a visa for short trips to the Schengen area if they stay 90 days or less in a 180-day period and visit as a tourist or for certain other reasons [7]. The FCDO's France page lists attending business meetings and cultural or sports events among them, and says the requirements for working are different [8].

4.2 How EES counts it

The EU says the 90 days in any 180 are calculated as a single period for all the countries using EES, and that the system will identify and record an overstay [2]. Visits in the 180 days before you travel count towards your 90 days [8]. The European Commission's short-stay calculator helps you check [5].

4.3 Cyprus

Cyprus allows up to 90 days in a 180-day period without a visa, and time in the Schengen area does not affect it [7].

4.4 Overstaying

The FCDO says that if you overstay the 90-day limit, you may be banned from entering Schengen countries for up to 3 years [8]. The EU says excessive stays are subject to EU and national rules [2].

4.5 Passports

The FCDO's France page says your passport must have a date of issue less than 10 years before the date you arrive, and an expiry date at least 3 months after the date you plan to leave [8]. If you renewed your passport before 1 October 2018, its date of issue might be more than 10 years ago, making it invalid for entry [8].

5 ETIAS

5.1 What it will be

ETIAS will be a travel authorisation for visa-exempt travellers to enter 30 European countries [3]. The EU says it will cost EUR 20 and be valid for three years or until your passport expires, whichever comes first [4].

5.2 Where it stands

The official EU site says ETIAS is "currently not in operation", that no applications are being collected, and that the EU will announce the start date "several months prior to its launch" [3].

5.3 Out of date guidance

GOV.UK's EES page, last updated on 10 April 2026, still says the EU is expected to start ETIAS "From Autumn 2026" [6]. The official EU site gives no date [3]. Travel Weekly reported on 13 October 2026 that ABTA's director of public affairs said "there is now no official launch date for the Etias system" [13]. Crew briefings that give an autumn 2026 date should be updated.

5.4 Scam sites

GOV.UK says any website selling ETIAS at this time is doing so fraudulently [6]. Travel Weekly reported that ABTA said more than 150 websites were offering ETIAS authorisations [13]. The EU says that when ETIAS starts, you can apply yourself or authorise someone such as a travel agency to apply for you [4].



6 Working at events in Europe

6.1 The general rule

The ETIAS FAQ says that if you wish to work in one of the countries requiring ETIAS, you will need to apply for a work visa, and that ETIAS covers travel only to attend a business conference or a meeting. It tells you to contact the consulate of the country you intend to work in [4]. GOV.UK's country pages say each country has its own exemptions, and that what is exempt in one country may not be in another [9][10].

6.2 Four examples

Country	Exemption that may cover event work	Limit
France	Artists and their technical production team for film, audio-visual content and shows	No more than 90 days
Germany	Performing in science, the arts, entertainment or sports of special interest (performers and their assistants), keeping your regular residence in the UK. Working in special cultural or musical events or festivals	Less than 90 days in a 12-month period
Spain	Artists, technicians or professionals working in the audiovisual sector, completing artistic activities for the public, or recording for mass media, with proof	Up to 90 days in a 180-day period
Netherlands	Musicians and artists	Maximum of 6 continuous weeks in a 13-week period

Table 1. From GOV.UK's country pages for work, opened 20 October 2026 [9][10][11][12]. Examples, not a complete list. Each exemption has conditions.

6.3 Notification

Some exemptions need the employer to tell the authorities. GOV.UK's France page says the employer has to submit a secondment declaration using the SIPSI online service at least 1 day before work starts, for the postings it describes [9]. Check what applies to each role.

6.4 How current the country pages are

GOV.UK's France, Germany and Netherlands work pages were last updated on 15 April 2024. The Spain page was last updated on 19 March 2026, with a note that it is being updated after a Spanish government announcement that may affect people providing services in Spain for up to 90 days [9][10][11][12]. Check with the destination country's authorities before each tour.

6.5 Days still count

An exemption from a work permit does not stop the clock. Days worked under an exemption are still days in the Schengen area [2][7].

7 What it means for event operations

- **Days are now visible.** A crew member's total includes their own holidays and other tours. A tour plan that ignores those is not enough.



- **Work rules are the bigger risk.** EES counts days. It does not check whether the work you do is allowed. That is your responsibility, country by country.
- **Briefings may be out of date.** Anything that says ETIAS starts in autumn 2026, or that tells crew to buy ETIAS, needs correcting [3][6].

8 What to do

Operational

- Check your passport dates against the issue and expiry rules [8].
- Keep your own record of days in the Schengen area, including holidays, and check it with the EU calculator [5].
- Carry proof of your role and booking for any work exemption you rely on [11].
- Do not pay any website for ETIAS [6].

Tactical

- Keep a days tracker for every crew member, covering their whole 180 days, not only your tour [2][7].
- Check the work rules for each country and each role, and collect the evidence each exemption needs [9][10][11][12].
- Confirm who makes any employer notification, such as the SIPSI declaration in France, and when [9].
- Add time for EES checks at Dover, Folkestone and St Pancras, and on first entries [6].
- Update briefings that give an ETIAS date [3][6].

Strategic

- Plan tours and crew rotations within 90 days in any 180, or budget for visas where needed.
- Name one owner for border and work permission checks for each tour.
- Get advice for any role or country where an exemption is unclear.
- Watch for the official ETIAS start date and the Spanish update [3][11].

9 Tools

9.1 Crew days tracker

Crew member	Days used in last 180	Tour days planned	Days left after tour
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Table 2. Count all Schengen days, including holidays. Cyprus and Ireland are separate [6][7].

9.2 Before each tour

- ☐ Every passport: issued less than 10 years before arrival, valid 3 months after departure [8].
- ☐ Every crew member's days checked with the calculator [5].
- ☐ Work rules checked for each country and role, with evidence packs [9][10][11][12].
- ☐ Employer notifications made where needed [9].
- ☐ Travel times allow for EES checks [6].
- ☐ Briefing updated: no ETIAS yet, no paying websites [3][6].



9.3 Crew briefing (about 1 minute)

"Before we travel: the EU now records every entry and exit. First time through, they will take your fingerprints and photo. It is free. Your days in Europe are counted automatically, including holidays, so tell _____ if you have been in Europe in the last six months. Do not pay any website for ETIAS: it has not started. Carry your booking letter. Any questions?"



10 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].

11 What we don't know yet

- **ETIAS start date.** No official date on 20 October 2026 [3][13].
- **Spain.** GOV.UK says its Spain page is being updated after a Spanish government announcement [11].
- **Country pages.** The France, Germany and Netherlands pages were last updated in April 2024. We have not checked national government sites directly.
- **Other countries.** This report covers four destinations only.

12 Sources

All web sources were opened and checked on 20 October 2026. Pages on travel-europe.europa.eu were read in a browser because they load their text with scripts. GOV.UK content: contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

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13. Travel Weekly, Abta warns of scam Etias websites as launch date still unclear (13 October 2026). <https://travelweekly.co.uk/news/etias-launch-date-withdrawn-as-eu-delays-rollout>

13 About this report

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