



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Biometric Europe—technology takes over border crossings



On 12 October the European Union will **introduce** a new border control system that will entirely change the way foreign citizens enter and exit the Schengen area.

It is a system called the Entry/Exit System (EES), which **replaces** the current manual stamping of passports and introduces mandatory biometric identification for all citizens from third countries who are not permanent residents of the EU.

The system was developed under the auspices of the eu-LISA **agency** and covers all 25 Schengen area members as well as the associated members Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.

Although Cyprus and Ireland **belong** to the EU, they are not part of the system.

All borders, whether by land, air, or sea, are covered by the EES, which will be introduced gradually over the first six months.

For EU citizens and those resident within the Union, the system does not entail any changes.

But for travellers from the United Kingdom, the USA, Canada, Australia, India, and other third countries, the EES will **become** the new entry procedure.

When **entering** Schengen area, every traveller will have to register all ten fingerprints, a photo of their face, as well as a digital record of their passport details.

This procedure is carried out via automated self-service kiosks or with border officials. The data is stored in the central database for three years.

EES in action

Each time the person **crosses** the border, the system automatically checks the authorised length of stay (90 days within a 180-day period), the time of entry, and any overstay.

The system should enable passengers to be

processed more quickly, but delays and an increased workload at airports and land crossings are to be expected in the initial phase.

A particular problem has already been identified at the France-UK border and at the ports of Dover and Calais, where congestion is expected.

The idea behind the EES is clear: abolish manual passport control, improve the accuracy of residence data, suppress offences relating to length of stay, and improve security in the Schengen area.

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However, the EES is only the first step. ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorisation System), an electronic system for the prior authorisation of entry into the EU based on the American ESTA, is **planned** for next year.

With the introduction of the EES, the EU will have a detailed database on every traveller from third countries: when they entered, how long they stayed, when they left, and whether they complied with the rules.

The system recognises so-called overstayers (those who exceed the permitted length of stay), which will have a direct impact on the decision on future entries. Sanctions may include refusal of entry, a travel ban, or other measures.

EES, third countries, and the future of EU borders

The question arises: What does this system mean for relations between the EU and third countries, particularly those that have intensive relations with the Union?

In the context of post-Brexit Europe, the UK is under particular scrutiny.

Travellers from the UK, who previously had free access, will now be treated like everyone else outside the EU.

This affects not only tourists but also businesspeople, truck drivers, professionals with occasional engagements in the EU, artists, and contractors.

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In addition to the technical challenges, there is also the issue of digital security.

The EES **collects** sensitive biometric data from millions of people, and although it is compliant with the standards of the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation, the European Union regulation that governs the collection, processing, and protection of personal data of natural persons), the risks of misuse, hacking, and data leaks are not negligible.

In recent years, the eu-LISA agency has been criticised for problems with interoperability and security oversight. Trust in the system will depend on transparency, effective oversight, and rapid response to incidents.

Labour mobility

Another aspect concerns labour mobility. For many third-country nationals working in the EU on a seasonal or project basis, any flaw in the system can mean refusal of entry and loss of employment.

Every year, more than 16 million people come

to the EU from third countries, a large proportion of them from partner countries. For these people, a system that incorrectly records a non-existent overstay can have far-reaching consequences.

The EES also **raises** human rights issues. Data protection organisations and migration associations raise the question of proportionality and possible discrimination.

The criticism relates to the scope of the data collected, the possibility of tracking travel patterns, and the creation of digital surveillance of people's mobility.

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For the EU member states themselves, the system also entails a not insignificant logistical effort.

The installation of new kiosks, the training of border officials, and the integration of software and hardware into existing national systems will pose a challenge, particularly for countries with longer land borders such as Poland, Hungary, and Greece.

During the test phase, problems were identified with coordination between the local and central bases, which can lead to downtime and incorrect entries.

A new era for European borders

However, despite the reservations, there is strong support for the system within the European institutions.

The EES is seen as the basis for all future

integrations: digital visas, travel authorisations, and links to systems for combating crime and terrorism.

As the European Commission claims, its application should contribute to greater border security but also to greater efficiency.



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From the perspective of a longer integration, the EES is the first phase of building a single digital EU border area.

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In this respect, the EES is more than a technical system: it is a sign of the redefinition of borders as a concept in the 21st century.

How all this will affect the EU's relations with the world depends on many factors. From the ability to prevent abuses to the ability not to turn the system into a means of control rather than facilitation.

At a time when mobility is increasingly intertwined with issues of security, identity, and rights, the EES is a symbol of a new attitude towards the border: digital, comprehensive, flexible, but also demanding.

This relationship must be monitored, transparent, and based on the values proclaimed by the Union.

October marks the beginning of a new era for

European borders. It will not only measure the efficiency of technology but also the EU's ability to regulate freedom of movement without sacrificing rights and security without violating the dignity of travellers. It will be the true test of European integrity in the digital age.