

# NAVIGATING EUROPE'S NEW ENTRY/EXIT SYSTEM (EES)

What Every Study Abroad Participant Needs to Know | Spring 2026

## What Is the EES?

The Entry/Exit System (EES) is a new digital border management system now fully operational across 29 European countries as of April 10, 2026. It replaces the traditional practice of manually stamping passports with a centralized digital record that logs every entry and exit by non-EU nationals visiting for short stays.

As a study abroad participant traveling on a U.S. (or other non-EU) passport, you will be registered in the EES when you arrive in and depart from the Schengen Area. This applies to all short-stay travelers, defined as visits of up to 90 days within any rolling 180-day period.

## Who Does the EES Apply To?

The EES applies to all non-EU nationals entering the Schengen Area for a short stay, including U.S., Canadian, UK, Australian, and other citizens from visa-exempt countries. **If you are not an EU/Schengen citizen and you are visiting Europe for your study abroad program (up to 90 days), the EES applies to you.**

### Important Note for Long-Stay Visa Holders

If you hold a long-stay visa (Type D) or a residence permit issued by an EU/Schengen country for your study abroad program, the EES does not apply to you. Check with your program coordinator to confirm your visa type before departure.

## What Happens at the Border?

When you arrive at a Schengen Area border crossing point, you will go through a biometric registration process. Here is what the border authorities will collect:

Data Collected	Details
Facial Image	A digital photo of your face, captured at the border or via self-service kiosk
Fingerprints	Scans of your fingerprints (children under 12 are exempt from fingerprinting)
Passport Data	Your name, nationality, document number, and expiry date are recorded
Entry/Exit Dates	The date and place of each entry and exit are logged digitally
Stay Duration	The system automatically calculates remaining days under the 90/180-day rule

### Refusal of Biometrics = Refusal of Entry

If you refuse to provide your biometric data (fingerprints and facial image), you will automatically be refused entry into the Schengen Area. There are no exceptions to this requirement.

## Step-by-Step: Your First EES Registration

Your first border crossing under the EES system will take longer than usual. Budget an extra 30–60 minutes for processing. Here is what to expect:

### Step 1: Join the Non-EU Passport Line

At the airport or border crossing, follow signs for “Non-EU Passports” or “All Passports / EES.” This line may be longer than you are used to during the initial months of the system.

### Step 2: Present Your Passport

Hand your passport to the border officer or scan it at a self-service kiosk (where available). Your passport data will be read electronically.

### Step 3: Biometric Capture

A digital photo of your face will be taken, and your fingerprints will be scanned. This creates your EES file, which is stored for three years.

### Step 4: Answer Entry Questions

You may be asked about the purpose of your visit, where you are staying, how long you plan to stay, and proof of sufficient funds. Have your program enrollment letter and accommodation details ready.

### Step 5: Entry Recorded Digitally

Instead of receiving a passport stamp, your entry is recorded electronically. The system begins counting your days in the Schengen Area from this point.

### Good News: Return Visits Are Faster

After your initial registration, future entries and exits are much quicker. The system already has your biometrics on file and only needs to verify your identity with a quick fingerprint or facial scan. Many airports now have automated e-gates for returning travelers.

## The “Travel to Europe” App

The EU has released an official mobile app called “Travel to Europe” that allows you to pre-register some of your information before arriving at the border. This can help speed up processing.

### How to Use the App

1. Download the app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store (search “Travel to Europe”)
2. Create a journey by selecting your arrival country and border crossing point
3. Scan your passport’s personal details page and chip using your phone’s NFC reader
4. Take a selfie to confirm your identity
5. Answer questions about your travel plans
6. Submit your journey and receive a confirmation (a QR code may be generated for use at the border)

### App Availability Is Limited

As of May 2026, the app is only fully operational for arrivals in Portugal and Sweden. Additional countries may be added over time. Check the official EES website at [europa.eu/ees](https://europa.eu/ees) for the latest list. Even without the app, you can still register at the border – the app is optional.

**Requirements to use the app:** A biometric passport, an NFC-enabled smartphone (Android 10+ or iOS), and a front-facing camera. Pre-registration must be completed within 72 hours of your arrival.

## Understanding the 90/180-Day Rule

The EES automatically tracks your compliance with the Schengen Area’s 90/180-day short-stay rule. This is not a new rule – it has been in place for years – but the digital system now makes enforcement precise and automatic.

### THE RULE:

You may stay up to 90 days within any rolling 180-day period across all 29 Schengen countries combined.

- Days spent in France, Spain, Germany, Italy, or any other Schengen country all count toward the same 90-day total.
- The EES will automatically calculate how many days you have remaining each time you enter or exit.
- Overstaying your allowed period is now digitally detected and can result in fines, entry bans, or deportation.
- Always record your exit. If the system does not log your departure, it will assume you are still in the Schengen Area and your days will keep counting.

## Which Countries Use the EES?

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The EES is operational across all 29 Schengen countries. These include:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

**Not included:** Ireland and the United Kingdom operate outside the Schengen framework and have their own separate border systems. If your program includes travel to the UK, you should be aware that the UK now requires a separate Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA).

## Practical Tips for Study Abroad Travelers

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### Before You Depart

- ✓ Ensure your passport is valid for at least 3 months beyond your planned departure from Europe and was issued within the last 10 years.
- ✓ Download the “Travel to Europe” app and pre-register if your arrival country supports it.
- ✓ Have your program enrollment/acceptance letter, accommodation address, and return travel details easily accessible (phone or printed).
- ✓ Know your program dates and calculate your total days in the Schengen Area.

### At the Airport

- ✓ Arrive at the airport at least 2 hours earlier than you normally would for your first EES registration.
- ✓ On departure from Europe, head to passport control as early as possible after check-in and security.
- ✓ Avoid booking tight connections through European hub airports for your first trip – biometric registration can cause unexpected delays.

### During Your Program

- ✓ Keep your passport in excellent condition – damaged passports can cause issues with biometric scanners.

- ✓ Track your days if you plan weekend trips to non-Schengen countries (e.g., UK, Ireland). Days outside the Schengen Area do not count toward your 90-day limit.
- ✓ If you travel outside the Schengen Area and re-enter, your exit and re-entry will both be logged by the EES.

## Looking Ahead: ETIAS (Coming Late 2026)

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A separate system called the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) is expected to launch toward the end of 2026. ETIAS will require travelers from visa-exempt countries (including the U.S.) to apply online for a pre-travel authorization before departing for Europe.

**You do not need to do anything about ETIAS right now.** It has not launched yet, and you cannot currently apply. We will provide updated guidance when a launch date is confirmed. Be cautious of unofficial websites claiming to offer ETIAS applications — use only the official EU portal when the time comes.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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**Is there a fee for EES registration?** No. There is no charge for registering in the EES system.

**Do I need to register every time I enter/exit?** Yes, every entry and exit is recorded. However, after your first registration, the process is much faster because your biometrics are already on file for three years.

**What if I'm just transiting through a European airport?** If you remain in the international transit area and do not pass through border control, you will not be registered in the EES.

**What if I have a long-stay student visa?** If you hold a Type D long-stay visa or a residence permit from a Schengen country, the EES typically does not apply to you. Confirm your visa type with your study abroad coordinator.

**How long is my biometric data stored?** Your biometric data (fingerprints and facial image) is stored in the EES for three years from the date of your last recorded entry or exit.

**What if the system malfunctions at the border?** Border authorities have contingency procedures, which may include manual passport stamping as a temporary fallback. Follow the instructions of border officers.

**Does the EES track my movements within Europe?** No. The EES only records when you enter and leave the external borders of the Schengen Area. Travel between Schengen countries is not tracked by this system.

## Resources

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- **Official EU EES Information:** [travel-europe.europa.eu/ees](https://travel-europe.europa.eu/ees)
- **Travel to Europe App:** Available on App Store and Google Play
- **Schengen Day Calculator:** [ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/visa-calculator](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/visa-calculator) (use to verify your 90/180-day count)
- **Your MOBT Global Support:** Reach out to MOBT Global at [support@mobtglobal.org](mailto:support@mobtglobal.org) with any questions about your specific visa type or travel plans.

**Questions? [support@mobtglobal.org](mailto:support@mobtglobal.org)**

*Safe travels and enjoy your time in Europe!*