



Disruption risks mounting with full Schengen Entry-Exit System rollout kicking in during Easter travel peak

Brussels, 30 March 2026: Europe's airports and airlines are raising renewed concerns over the operational impact of the Schengen Entry-Exit System (EES) rollout as the transition phase comes to an end right in the travel peak of the Easter holidays.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE, and **Ourania Georgoutsakou, Managing Director of A4E** said: *"Passengers entering the Schengen area are likely to wait even longer at border control during Easter due to the persisting operational challenges around the EES rollout."*

Following the transition to mandatory registration of 50% of Third Country Nationals on 10 March, **the latest data collected from airports across Europe shows a continued deterioration in waiting times at border crossing points located in airports.** Waiting times are now regularly reaching **up to two hours at peak traffic times**, with some airports reporting even longer queues.

This comes despite the continued use by border control authorities of both the partial and full suspension of EES processes at most airports during travel peaks – measures which have proven essential to mitigating queuing times and maintaining operational continuity.

With the next critical milestones approaching – namely the requirement to register 100% of Third Country Nationals as of 31 March, followed by the end of the transition period on 9 April – airports and airlines warn that the situation risks deteriorating further. From that point onwards, Member States will no longer be able to fully suspend the system in response to operational pressures, removing a key safeguard currently used to manage peak demand.

ACI EUROPE and A4E leaders said: *"We reiterate our call on the European Commission and Member States to extend the possibility to fully or partially*

suspend EES – where operationally necessary – during the entirety of the 2026 summer season. This flexibility has proven vital in preventing catastrophic operational disruptions during the progressive rollout of the system. If the technical and operational issues with EES are not resolved, this flexibility should remain available during future peak travel periods, such as winter 2026/2027."

Despite ongoing engagement with authorities, the fundamental challenges previously identified remain largely unresolved. These include **persistent and structural shortages of border control staff, technical and maintenance issues with self-service kiosks (SSKs) and the limited use of automated border control (ABC) gates**, as well as continued **concerns over the reliability of the central EES IT system**. The deployment of the EES pre-registration app by Member States also remains very limited. Currently, only Sweden and – more recently – Portugal, decided to make use of it.

Against this backdrop, Europe's airports and airlines are expressing serious concern not only for the upcoming summer season, but already for these next few weeks. The combination of full registration requirements and reduced operational flexibility is expected to place unprecedented strain on border control operations.

Airports and airlines are therefore:

- Expecting increasing wait times for non-Schengen passengers during Easter, as registration of all border crossings with biometric data becomes mandatory.
- Reiterating their call on the European Commission and Member States to urgently maintain the possibility for full suspension of EES processes, as partial suspension alone will not be sufficient to prevent excessive delays.
- Urging policymakers and administrations not to normalise waiting times of one hour or more at external Schengen borders, which risk becoming systemic and undermine the passenger experience as well as the efficiency of Europe's air transport system.

Airports and airlines reiterate their full support for the objectives of the Entry-Exit System in strengthening border management and security. However, they stress that its implementation must be operationally workable and must not come at the expense of passengers and the smooth functioning of airport operations.

ENDS

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About Airports Council International (ACI) EUROPE

ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 600 airports in 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 95% of commercial air traffic in Europe. In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.

About Airlines for Europe (A4E)

Airlines for Europe (A4E) is Europe's largest airline association. Based in Brussels, A4E works with policymakers to ensure aviation policy continues to connect Europeans with the world in a safe, competitive and sustainable manner. With a modern fleet of over 3,800 aircraft, A4E airlines carried over 798 million passengers in 2025 and served nearly 2,700 destinations across Europe and the wider world. Each year, A4E members transport around 4 million tonnes of vital goods and equipment either by freighters or passenger aircraft.