



William Sandover | VChain and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) <https://www.etiaseurope.eu/>

The European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) is part of an EU intergovernmental legislative initiative created "to enhance the security of Member States by identifying individuals known to the security authorities before they travel into the Schengen area". ETIAS, together with EES (Entry-Exit System) is intended to speed up, facilitate, reinforce and modernise the border control procedures by offering better protections against document and identity fraud.

ETIAS is set to commence in 2020 (there may well be slippage). Each citizen from one of the visa-free countries (currently the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, most of the non-EU Balkans, the UAE and much of Latin America) travelling from outside the Schengen area to a destination within the Schengen area will need to hold a valid ETIAS prior to boarding the aircraft (or ship or international rail service). Once issued, a valid authorisation will allow its holder to stay in the Schengen Area for a period of up to 90 days in any 180-day period. An ETIAS will be valid for 3 years from the date of issuance or until the expiry date of the passport, whichever comes first.

Impact on travel by UK citizens

Once the UK leaves the EU, it is likely that all UK citizens (other than those with dual EU nationality and travelling on an EU passport) will be entitled to visa-free travel into the EU for trips of less than three months (for longer stays they will need a Schengen Visa), but they will require an ETIAS for travel into the Schengen area.

Airline/train/tunnel/ferry operators will be required to verify "that travellers are in possession of a valid travel authorisation". If a passenger is mistakenly allowed on board without an ETIAS, the proposals warn they will (almost certainly) be refused entry: "At the request of the authorities competent to carry out the border checks, the carriers shall be obliged to return the third country nationals to the third country from which they were transported or to the third country which issued the travel document on which they travelled or to any other third



country to which they are certain to be admitted”.

Because we know that a large percentage of passenger entered APIS data does not match exactly the data on the relevant passport, there is a risk that quite a large number of APIS entries will not match an entry in the ETIAS database. In this case, presumably, the carrier will not get a signal to the effect that the passenger has a valid ETIAS and the carrier will therefore need the passenger to resubmit the correct APIS or swipe their passport at the airport in order to confirm the existence of a valid ETIAS. In practice this is what happens today with ESTA for the US and ETA for Canada and Australia.

VChain and ETIAS

By validating the accuracy of passenger-input APIS/iAPI data, VChain should help to relieve this problem.

1. Passengers who are in possession of an ETIAS and whose passport details can be validated by VChain:

a) If they input the correct iAPI/APIS they will be told that their data has been verified; and the carrier will be told if a valid ETIAS is in place and the passenger may board.

b) If they input incorrect iAPI/APIS data they will be told that their data is incorrect and given the opportunity to correct it. Once corrected they will be told that their data has been verified; and the carrier will be told that a valid ETIAS is in place and the passenger may board.

2. Passengers who are in possession of an ETIAS but whose passport details cannot be validated by VChain (because VChain does not have signals from a previously swiped passport) will be told that they need to go to a check in desk to have their passport swiped because this is the only way pre-departure that the carrier can ensure the passengers will not be refused entry on arrival.



a) If they had entered their APIS data correctly, the carrier will already have been told that a valid ETIAS is in place and the passenger may board (and if they decide not to go to a check in desk, they should nevertheless still be able to proceed through conformance).

b) If they had not entered their APIS data correctly, this will be corrected by swiping their passport and a message received that they have a valid ETIAS and may board. If they decide not to go to a check in desk, they will be barred entry airside at conformance because the carrier will not have received a message that they have a valid ETIAS.

3. Passengers who are not in possession of a valid ETIAS could be informed by the carrier of that fact and therefore have the opportunity to apply for an ETIAS before arriving at the airport (thus reducing the incidence of missed flights - likely to be high during the first few months). But they might need to re-submit their APIS data (unless this happens automatically)

Overall, there would be advantage if passengers applying for an ETIAS and whose passport details can be validated by VChain could have the accuracy of their ETIAS application and/or passport data verified by VChain. Otherwise there is a risk that passengers apply for an ETIAS using (slightly) wrong data. An ETIAS then might still be issued (because the individual would not be on any of ETIAS' "watch lists" etc) but they would then be unable to travel because their passport data would not match the ETIAS database.

The same process might also apply to the US and ESTA, although in this case the US authorities would have to agree. In the case of ETIAS, it appears it will be a carrier responsibility only to ensure that the passenger holds a valid ETIAS at the time of boarding.