

Communique to UK service personnel and civil servants deployed and posted to locations in the Schengen Zone: EU Entry and Exit System

You will all be aware of the introduction of the EU Entry and Exit System (EES). The EES is a new electronic border control system for non-EU nationals entering or leaving the Schengen Area. It replaces passport stamping by recording entry/exit dates and biometric data, aiming to improve security, track overstays, and streamline border checks as part of the EU's Smart Borders initiative.

UK Service Personnel assigned under the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) or bilateral defence arrangements (including those working in diplomatic organisations), UK civil servants, and the immediate entitled family members of any of the preceding groups are **EXEMPT from EES requirements for duty travel**. When transiting through the point of departure or arrival, these personnel are advised to follow signage for EU personnel. **DO NOT attempt to register at one of the EES terminals**. If border representatives direct you to do so and will not accept proof of exemption, then please do comply with their instructions and subsequently seek to have your details removed (guidance below).

Please note that these exemptions apply exclusively to duty travel. For personal travel, you must comply with EES requirements, and your details cannot be removed on the basis of these exemptions.

While the EU Commission has [formally confirmed the above exemptions](#), practical application of these exemptions (including determining which documents prove exemption) is determined by each individual EU Member State.

If you have registered incorrectly at an EES terminal since the system went live on 12 October 2025, please request that your details are removed to avoid unnecessary delays or being denied entry at Schengen borders once you cross the 90/180 day threshold.

Further guidance will be shared well in advance. In the meantime, please disregard any EES references related to SBA postings.

We are currently developing country-specific guidance. **At present, we can provide guidance for Gibraltar, Germany and France.** For all other countries, please refer to the general guidance outlined above. Personnel posted to the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) in Cyprus are not affected and EES will only apply if Cyprus joins the Schengen Area.

The MOD has established a Taskforce to:

- Formalise which documents EU Member States will accept as proof of exemption.
- Formalise means of removing details from the EES system.
- Address individual cases.

UK Service Personnel and Civil Servants are able to travel under the NATO Travel Order. We recognise there is ambiguity for some immediate family members and contractors, and we are investigating this as a matter of urgency.

We understand that many of you have arranged local solutions for yourselves and your immediate family members as an interim measure.

Please carry on using these if they are working until formal arrangements are in place. Updates on progress will be distributed through the relevant Defence Attaché (DA), National Support Element (NSE) or the website through which this document is hosted.

If you have questions, issues or concerns, please contact the Taskforce using [this link](#).

Q&A

What documents should I use to demonstrate exemption?

The MOD Taskforce is seeking to formalise per country which documents are required to prove an individual's exemption.

Personnel should carry:

- Valid passport
- NATO travel orders and any MOD assignment documentation
- MOD-issued ID (if applicable)
- Host nation ID (if applicable)
- NATO SOFA Cards, Certificates, Stamps or other documentation as per local arrangements
- Any additional valid documents supplied by local agencies/authorities – necessary stay permits/host nation residence permits/cards if issued (varies by location)

Immediate eligible family members should carry:

- Valid passport
- Individual NATO Travel Order
- Host nation ID (if applicable)
- NATO SOFA Cards, Certificates, Stamps or other documentation as per local arrangement
- Any additional valid documents supplied by local agencies/authorities – necessary stay permits/host nation residence permits/cards if issued (varies by location)
- Proof of association with Service Person

Does EES apply when I am travelling for personal reasons?

When traveling for non-duty reasons, all personnel may be subject to EES checks at borders.

The 90/180-day rule applies unless exempt by residency or NATO SOFA status.

If you're posted in one Schengen country under NATO SOFA and have proof of residency there, you skip EES for that country.

But when you visit other Schengen countries, you're still limited to 90 days in any 180-day period.

How can I get my details removed from the EES system?

While the EES Taskforce establishes formal arrangements, please contact your Defence Attaché (DA) or National Support Element (NSE) in the first instance.

If they are unable to help, please [contact the Taskforce](#).