



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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United States – Starting 2021, New Travel Requirements for Americans Visiting Europe

Recent press reports have helped to raise awareness about the fact that U.S. citizens traveling to Europe will need to apply for an ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorization System) visa waiver beginning 2021.¹ This is in line with Europe's initiative to improve security to reduce problems with illegal migration and terrorism. (There is a prior report on ETIAS in [GMS Flash Alert 2018-146](#), November 8, 2018.)

WHY THIS MATTERS

At present, there is no European Union (EU) visa waiver requirement for U.S. citizens travelling to countries in the Schengen Zone for fewer than 90 days. Effective 2021, all U.S. citizens traveling to a European Schengen-zone country² will need to apply for an ETIAS visa waiver, which will be valid for three years.

Immigration counsel, global mobility managers in charge of organizing the travel of their outbound U.S. employees, and travelers themselves will therefore soon be subject to new practices and policies and should be taking appropriate steps to prepare and be in compliance. Furthermore, the need for an ETIAS visa waiver will add to the costs of travel to Europe.

Background

Last year, the EU created a new visa waiver program, ETIAS, to protect and strengthen its borders.³ The ETIAS travel authorization is similar to other visa waiver programs such as the U.S. ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization).⁴ The ETIAS program for Europe grants travelers authorization to visit the 26 member countries that comprise the Schengen Zone.

Currently, nationals of [60 named countries](#) are eligible to apply for an ETIAS visa waiver when visiting the Schengen Zone.

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U.S. citizens will need to apply online by completing an ETIAS registration form. The fee for the ETIAS visa waiver will be paid in advance through the secure online portal via credit or debit card and travelers will need to provide passport details, physical address, phone number, and e-mail address. Accordingly, all applicants will need to have a valid passport, a credit or debit card, and an e-mail account.

KPMG LLP Law in Canada will endeavor to keep readers informed of developments as and when they occur.

FOOTNOTES:

1 For example, see L. Bever, "Soon, Americans will have to take an extra step to travel to some European countries" in *The Washington Post* online (March 9, 2019) by clicking [here](#). Also, see: See C. Rizzo, "Americans Will Need to Register to Visit Europe Starting in 2021 — Here's What We Know," *Travel & Leisure* online (March 11, 2019) by clicking [here](#).

For additional information, "ETIAS Visa Waiver for Americans," click [here](#).

2 For more information on travelling in Europe and the Schengen Zone, see the web page "[U.S. Travelers in Europe](#)" on the U.S. Department of State website.

3 For prior coverage, see GMS [Flash Alert 2018-146](#) (November 8, 2018).

4 For more on ESTA, see the U.S. Customs and Border Protection [website](#).

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Contact us

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