

Crew Entry to Europe: EES and Visa Rules Explained

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EES is now fully operational at the Schengen external border. For crew, the important thing to understand is that EES and visa requirements are two separate issues.

EES decides whether your entry and exit are recorded in the system. Your visa status decides whether you are allowed to enter without a visa. One does not automatically decide the other.

If you are travelling on official crew duty with the required crew docs, your entry and exit may not need to be recorded in EES. This means no EES biometric registration, but you must still complete the normal crew immigration process. It also does not automatically mean you can enter without a visa.

A GenDec helps show that you are operating crew on that flight. In most countries though, it is supporting evidence – not a visa waiver and not a replacement for the crew docs required by immigration.

To work out what applies to you, ask three simple questions before you travel:

1. *Does my nationality normally require a visa?*
2. *Does this country accept my licence or Crew Member Certificate for a crew visa exemption?*
3. *What am I allowed to do once I arrive – stay near the airport, transfer to another airport, or travel further?*

This is where the rules become less straightforward. Some countries allow qualifying crew to enter without a visa for normal duty travel. Others only allow airport-area movements, require proof that you are joining your next flight, or keep the visa requirement for certain nationalities.

Before you travel

Bring your passport, crew ID, pilot licence or Crew Member Certificate, GenDec, and flight details.

If you are planning personal travel, an overnight stay away from the airport, or entering Schengen in one country and leaving from another, check your visa position and permitted movements before departure. Don't wait until you reach the border to find out!

On arrival, tell immigration if you plan to leave Schengen from another country, so your full crew itinerary is clear from the outset.

Your quick country guide

The straightforward countries:

If you are travelling as crew on official duty and hold a recognised licence or Crew Member Certificate, **you do not need a visa in the countries below - unless the nationality rule mentioned above still requires one.** If your docs are in order and the trip is clearly for crew duty, entry should be fairly simple.

☐☐ Austria · ☐☐ Belgium · ☐☐ Croatia · ☐☐ Cyprus · ☐☐ Estonia · ☐☐ France · ☐☐ Greece · ☐☐ Hungary · ☐☐ Iceland · ☐☐ Italy · ☐☐ Lithuania · ☐☐ Luxembourg · ☐☐ Malta · ☐☐ Netherlands · ☐☐ Norway · ☐☐ Poland · ☐☐ Portugal · ☐☐ Slovakia · ☐☐ Slovenia · ☐☐ Spain

Countries with extra conditions:

The countries below also recognise the crew visa exemption, but only if you meet the extra conditions shown here.

Extra proof needed: Bring your GenDec and clear evidence that you are operating crew or signed on for duty. In some cases, a GenDec may be accepted where the usual crew document is not available.

☐☐ Bulgaria · ☐☐ Denmark

Airport-area movements only: The exemption covers airport-related movements only – arriving or departing through the airport, staying in the nearby municipality, or transferring to another airport to join a flight. It does not cover wider travel in the country.

☐☐ Czech Republic · ☐☐ Germany · ☐☐ Romania · ☐☐ Sweden · ☐☐ Switzerland

In Germany, border police may need to confirm the exemption and issue a laissez-passer if you do not hold a flight crew identity document.

Your next flight matters: The exemption is only for travel directly connected to your next crew duty. Make sure your onward flight plans are clear and directly linked to your crew duty.

☐☐ Latvia · ☐☐ Finland

What to remember

Treat EES, your crew docs and your visa status as three separate checks. A GenDec helps show that you are operating crew, but it is not a visa waiver. Before departure, make sure your nationality, crew docs and planned movements all fit the rules at your destination. If one of those does not line up, resolve it before you reach the border.

For a deeper look at the national rules, you can read the EU's complete Info on national derogations from the visa requirement.