



Home Office

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EU, EEA and Swiss national identity card factsheet

Top lines

- We are committed to building back a safer, fairer, and more prosperous UK.
- From the 1 October 2021, changes to government legislation will mean that most EU, EEA and Swiss nationals can only travel to the UK using a valid passport.
- ID cards will no longer be accepted as a valid travel document and it will not be possible to enter the UK using one.
- This will not apply EU, EEA and Swiss nationals who have applied to the EU Settlement Scheme by 30 June 2021 or otherwise have protected rights under the Citizens' Rights Agreements. They will still be able to use national identity cards for travel until 31 December 2025 at least.
- They'll also be able to use them after that date if the cards meet the security standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.
- British nationals and Irish nationals using Gibraltar ID cards and Irish passport cards can continue to use these to travel to the UK as they do now.
- The change to travel documents forms part of wider plans to strengthen our borders and bring rules for EU nationals in line with the rest of the world following the end of free movement.

Q&A

Who is impacted by this change?

- EU, EEA and Swiss nationals who were not residing in the UK prior to the end of the transition period or who are not covered by the terms of the Citizens' Rights Agreements will require a passport to travel to the UK from 1 October 2021.
- EU, EEA and Swiss nationals whose rights are protected under the Citizens' Rights Agreements (such as people with status under the EUSS and Frontier Workers) will be able to use their national identity cards to enter the UK until 31 December 2025 at least.
- However, we encourage all EU, EEA and Swiss travellers to use a passport where possible. This allows them to benefit from the use of e-Gates at our ports of entry; the quickest and most efficient method of crossing the border.

Why are you making this change?

- EU, EEA and Swiss identity cards are among the least secure documents seen at the border and are, as a rule, not as secure as corresponding national passports. They continue to dominate detection figures for document abuse at the border.
- We do not accept identity cards as a travel document from other nationalities and, now that we have left the EU, this change remedies that discrepancy.

When is this happening?

- EU, EEA and Swiss nationals whose rights are not protected by the Citizens' Rights Agreements will not be able to enter the UK using a national identity card from 1 October 2021.
- Between now and then, travellers using identity cards to enter the UK may be reminded that they will no longer be able to use them in future.
- We are giving potential travellers plenty of time to plan ahead and apply for a passport before travelling.
- However, we encourage all EU, EEA and Swiss travellers to use a passport where possible. This allows them to benefit from the use of e-Gates; the quickest and most efficient method of crossing the border.

Won't this discourage European tourists from coming to the UK?

- We expect EU, EEA and Swiss nationals to hold a valid passport in order to enter the UK, the same way they would for any other third country (e.g. USA, China and India).
- We have given people plenty of time to plan ahead and obtain a passport, if they need to, before they travel.

Are there any exceptions?

- EU, EEA and Swiss nationals whose rights are protected under the Citizens' Rights Agreements (such as people with status under the EU Settlement Scheme and frontier workers) will be able to use their national identity cards to enter the UK until 2025 at least.
- Irish citizens will not need to qualify for leave to enter the UK even after the end of the transition period, and we will continue to accept Irish passport cards for travel to the UK.
- British Citizens in possession of Gibraltar Identity Cards will also still be able to enter the UK using those cards.
- However, we encourage all EU, EEA and Swiss travellers to use a passport where possible. This allows them to benefit from the use of e-Gates; the quickest and most efficient method of crossing the border.

This will be a disincentive for school groups to visit the UK. Why have you not made an exception for them?

- This would mean treating a particular group of EU, EEA and Swiss citizens whose rights are not enshrined in the Citizens' Rights Agreements more generously than other EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and more generously than students from other countries.
- It is our intention that EU, EEA and Swiss students should in future be treated like students from the rest of the world; they will be able to come either under the visitor route or as a student.
- Various short-term study activities will be permitted under the standard visitor rules, for which entry clearance will not be required in advance, but EU, EEA and Swiss nationals will require a passport like everyone else.
- We have given people plenty of time to plan ahead and obtain passports, where they don't already have them, before they travel.

Can ID cards still be used as proof of identity and nationality in the UK?

- National identity cards will remain a valid proof of identity and nationality for EU, EEA and Swiss citizens applying to the EU Settlement Scheme. EU citizens will continue to be able to use their passport or national identity card to demonstrate their rights to work and to rent, or to access benefits and services, until 30 June 2021.

What will happen if EEA citizens travel to the UK without a passport?

- If EU, EEA and Swiss citizens without protected rights under the Citizens' Rights Agreements travel to the UK without a passport from 1 October, they are liable to be refused entry.

What will carriers need to do / will carriers have to return people?

- Carriers are responsible for ensuring that passengers are properly documented for travel to the UK or they may be liable to a carriers' liability charge.
- However, when this change is introduced, we will not be imposing carriers' liability fines for carriers bringing people to the UK incorrectly traveling on an ID card. Our position on this is will change in the future as the rollout of our points-based immigration system will increasingly support interactive messaging with carriers to let them know what documentation is acceptable on an individual passenger basis.
- If passengers are refused entry at the UK border, it is generally a requirement for the carrier bringing them to the UK to return them.

How do EEA citizens apply for a passport if they do not have one?

- EU, EEA and Swiss citizens should contact their consulate in the UK or the relevant authorities in their country of nationality for information on how to apply for a passport.

Where can I find out more about visiting the UK?

For more information go to the GOV.UK Visiting the UK as an EU, EEA or Swiss Citizen page here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/visiting-the-uk-as-an-eu-eea-or-swiss-citizen>

- Anyone travelling to the UK will also need to comply with any COVID-19 travel restrictions, testing and other health measures.