Transport Committee

Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport

By email

15 July 2026

Dear Heidi,

Impact of the European Union's Entry/Exit System (EES) checks on UK travellers and freight

Following my question to Alex Norris in the Chamber on Wednesday 8th July, as well as concerns being raised by many transport stakeholders, I am writing to request more information on how the Government is working with European partners to minimise the disruption we have seen as a result of the implementation of the European Union's Entry/Exit System (EES).

As you will be aware, since the EES became fully operational in April 2026 there have been widespread reports of long delays and disruption for British travellers, including instances of passengers missing flights due to delays at the border, both on entering and leaving the Schengen Area. There have also been instances of lengthy delays at the juxtaposed controls in the UK, including delays of up to four and a half hours at Dover port in May 2026.

Stakeholders in the transport sector have expressed concerns that, without intervention, EES delays could cause significant disruption over the busy summer travel period, and could also impact hauliers and the UK's ability to trade goods with Europe. The Chief Executive of the Port of Dover recently wrote to the Business and Trade Committee setting out his concerns that another critical incident like the one experienced at the port in May could lead to tourists facing a "worse experience ahead of border controls, with queueing cars spilling out of the port onto the public highway for miles," which would significantly impact the local area. He also highlighted the risk of disruption to freight when HGVs are unable to bypass long queues of tourist and local traffic, adding that many of the goods being transited through Dover are "just-in-time products - medicines, automotive components, fresh food – that must be on the shelf or on an assembly line within a very short time window."

The Port of Dover has suggested that there is a case for the UK to seek a proactive formal agreement from our European partners, and particularly the French Government, to defer the full implementation of EES until after the busy summer travel period, stating that representations made to Ministers to date have not resulted in a workable solution.

In July 2026, the European arm of Airports Council International (ACI) wrote to the President of the European Commission, flagging that EES has placed some European border authorities, airports and airlines under "unsustainable pressure," resulting in waiting times of up to five hours at border control during peak periods, flight delays, and missed

House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

transcom@parliament.uk
+44 (0)20 7219 2226
@TransportCttee

connections. ACI requested that the European Union "provide Member States with all the flexibility needed to completely suspend EES, preventively whenever passenger volumes exceed the operational capacity of border control facilities, at least throughout July and August," and "establish a permanent operational flexibility mechanism allowing Border Control Authorities to suspend EES procedures under clearly defined exceptional circumstances in order to ensure efficient and passenger-focused border management" by September 2026.

While the UK Government has no direct control over the operation of the EES, it is clear from widespread media reports and the interventions of stakeholders that British tourists and freight entering the UK from the EU could face significant disruptions over the summer if no action is taken.

In your recent evidence to the Transport Select Committee, you told us that officials from your Department were engaged in fortnightly meetings with airlines to ensure you understood what passengers were experiencing, and that you had met with the EU Travel and Transport Commissioner in March of this year to discuss EES. You also noted that EU countries have the power to pause the biometric checks when there is a lot of pressure at the border, and that this had been done at Dover in May to enable people to complete border checks more quickly. You added that you planned to work closely with your French counterparts to avoid further disruption over the summer period, and would be "happy to consider what more we could do with our European counterparts to provide reassurance and confidence in the system because it is important for people."

Given the risks that this issue poses, please could you provide: :

- **More details on your engagement with European partners, airlines and ports on the issue of EES, including any outcomes from this engagement, or requests that the Government has made to European partners;**
- **Further details on any recent engagement with the French Government with regards to managing pressures at juxtaposed controls in the UK, in particular at the Port of Dover;**
- **Details of any cross-government engagement that the Department for Transport has engaged in on the issue of EES, for example with the Home Office or Department for Business and Trade; and**
- **Details of any discussions the Government has had with hauliers and freight companies regarding any issues they have faced as a result of EES, including any actions taken in response.**

On 8 July 2026, the Minister for Border Security and Asylum responded to my question in the House of Commons, saying that "the checks in Schengen countries are a matter for them, but […] we are engaging with all countries, not just France, to make sure that a proportionate and sensible use within flexibility is made." He went on to say that while he did not see a full suspension of the EES as being "deliverable," he was seeking "flexibilities […] on the ground for staff to make changes that prioritise flow" during peak times.

In light of this, I would also be grateful if you could clarify:

- **What agreements you are negotiating with European partners on any flexible measures which would allow for the suspension of EES checks**

when demand exceeds current capacity (for example establishing thresholds that would trigger a temporary suspension of EES)

Given the urgency of this issue, I would appreciate a response as soon as possible. I have copied this letter to the chairs of the Business and Trade and Home Affairs Committees, given their ongoing interest in this issue.

Kind regards,

Ruth Cadbury MP
Chair, Transport Committee

cc: Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP
Secretary of State for Business and Trade

Alex Norris MP
Minister for Border Security and Asylum

Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley MP
Chair of the Home Affairs Committee

Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
Chair of the Business and Trade Committee