

Global Immigration alert

January 2026

United Kingdom

UK to fully implement the ETA in February 2026, impacting certain British and Irish nationals and business travelers

Executive summary

Effective 25 February 2026, the UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) will go fully live, and the phased implementation period will end. This means that visitors to the UK will be unable to travel to the UK without a valid ETA. The full rollout and enforcement of the UK ETA scheme introduces additional risks for British and Irish nationals who hold dual citizenship and have allowed their British or Irish passports to expire, and recently naturalized British citizens who have not yet received their first British passports.

Key developments

This change is particularly relevant to:

- *Recently naturalized British citizens:* Individuals who have acquired British citizenship but have not yet received their first British passport. A naturalization certificate alone will not permit boarding or entry.
- *British and Irish nationals with dual citizenship of another country* (e.g., Australia): These individuals are not eligible for an ETA and must have a valid British or Irish passport or Certificate of Entitlement when traveling to the UK. Failure to provide these documents may result in being denied boarding of flights and delays at the UK border.
- *Business travelers:* Particularly those traveling on short notice or business-critical assignments.

Employers sending impacted individuals (as noted above) to the UK may expect these individuals to encounter the following situations:

- Employees being refused boarding overseas
- Delayed or failed returns to the UK
- Postponed start dates or disrupted assignments

- Increased costs and operational impacts
- Reputational and compliance risks where travel requirements are not properly assessed

Impact on employers

To mitigate disruption and risk, employers may:

- Identify recently naturalized British nationals within their workforce
- Identify British and Irish individuals with dual citizenship and ensure they are aware of the need to travel with valid British or Irish passports or certificates of entitlement (where applicable)
- Integrate passport processing times into workforce planning
- Consider updating internal mobility, onboarding, and travel policies to ensure compliance
- Communicate to impacted employees the potential need to renew expired British or Irish passports, or apply for certificate of entitlements prior to travel (where applicable), prior to travel

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.



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