

Press Release



Ministry of Justice

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MOJ Holds Policy Briefing Session for Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA)

– Information Session for 45 Airlines Operating in Incheon Airport (March 9) and KIS Commissioner Cha’s Visit to the System Development Site (March 11) –

□ Starting from this May, the Ministry of Justice (Minister Park, Beom-kye) plans to launch a pilot project for the electronic travel authorization (hereinafter referred to as ETA) for visa-free entry foreign nationals, after a five-month preparation period including establishing legal grounds. On Thursday, March 11th, Korea Immigration Service Commissioner Cha, Gyu-geun visited the Seoul Southern Immigration Office, where system developments are underway, and thoroughly went over the development status, public relation plans, and future schedules, and encouraged the staff.

□ **(ETA Introduction Background)** To promote people-to-people exchange and to attract foreign visitors, the Republic of Korea has been continuously expanding the eligibility for visa-free entry. However, some side effects occurred such as increase in illegal stay of visa-free entrants* as well as increase in entry denials.

* Illegal stay of visa-free entrants: 82,352 cases in 2016 → 206,516 cases in 2019

- Some pointed out that, if visa-free eligible countries were to be abruptly reduced, there would be significant national losses due to diplomatic frictions and decrease in tourists. Thus, as in the cases of major developed countries, the Republic of Korea introduced the ETA policy, while maintaining the existing visa-free entry policy.
- Also, another key factor to the ETA policy introduction was the increase in the need to block the boarding of passengers who live in or have visited high-risk areas, especially in the event of an infectious disease outbreak like the current COVID-19.

□ **(Policy Overview)** ETA is a travel permission granted to foreign nationals who wish to enter an ETA implementing country without a visa, and the travelers are required to provide personal and travel related information through the relevant website in advance. The ETA policy is implemented in countries such as Australia (ETA), Canada (ETA), the United States (ESTA), the United Kingdom (EVW), Taiwan (TAC), and New Zealand (NZeTA), and the European Union plans to introduce this from 2022.

□ **(Progress)** For the implementation of the ETA policy in Korea, the Immigration Act was revised in January 2020 with new provisions related to ETA (Article 7-3), and in August 2020 a budget for 2.9 billion KRW was secured. The system establishment project was launched in October 2020

and is planned to be completed by April 2021. After tests and supplementations, a pilot launch will be carried out from May to August 2021, followed by full implementation from September 2021.

- Taking into consideration the current COVID-19 situation, the eligible persons for ETA will be nationals of 21 countries that can currently enter the Republic of Korea without a visa, and priority entry persons such as business persons from the 91 countries that are temporarily suspended visa-free entry.

□ Commissioner Cha attended the briefing sessions which explained the whole process from the ETA application, assessment, to notification of results. He encouraged all the staff involved in the system development, and asked them to complete the project well.

□ Prior to Cha's visit on March 11, an information session on ETA was held on March 9, 2021, led by the Border Control Division Director, for 45 airlines operating at Incheon International Airport. Abiding by social distancing rules, the sessions were held twice (in the morning and afternoon) to inform policy details before its implementation and to hear comments from the airlines.

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1. Main Details of ETA

■ Summary

- Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) is a travel permission granted to foreign nationals eligible for visa-free entry, when they provide personal and travel related information through the relevant website in advance.

■ Eligibility

- Once the ETA policy is implemented, visa-free entry travelers who intend to enter the Republic of Korea for tourism, etc. will be required to obtain permission in advance by providing personal and travel related information online.

* Total 112 countries: nationals of 66 visa waiver countries and nationals of 46 designated visa-free countries. In case the COVID-19 situation continues, the eligible persons for ETA will be ① nationals of 21 countries that can currently enter the Republic of Korea without a visa, and ② priority entry persons such as business persons from the 91 countries that are temporarily suspended visa-free entry.

- (21 countries) the United States, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Nicaragua, Dominican Federation, Barbados, Venezuela, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts-Nevis, Malta, Ireland, Guyana, Monaco, Vatican City, San Marino, Andorra, Albania, Slovenia, Guam, New Caledonia, Palau

■ Application and Fee

- Travelers are required to apply for the ETA through the Korea ETA

website or mobile phone app* at least 24 hours before boarding their flight. Applicants must pay the 10,000 KRW fee online.

* (PC) www.k-eta.go.kr, (Mobile) m.k-eta.go.kr

■ Result Notification

- Decisions will be made after carrying out assessment based on the information provided by the applicant, and the result will be notified to the applicant's e-mail address.

■ Validity

- The boarding pass to Korea will only be issued when the traveler has received an ETA in advance. Once the traveler obtains an ETA, he/she does not need to receive it again for 2 years.

■ Benefits

- Foreign nationals approved of an ETA will be exempt from submitting an arrival card and thus be able to go through entry immigration quickly.

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2. Visa Waiver Countries and Designated Visa-free Entry Countries

1. Countries under Visa Waiver Agreements (Total 66 countries)

Asia (7)	Malaysia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Kazakhstan, Thailand, Turkey
Americas (25)	Guatemala, Grenada, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Dominican Federation, Mexico, Barbados, Bahamas, Venezuela, Brazil, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts-Nevis, Suriname, Haiti, Antigua and Barbuda, El Salvador, Uruguay, Jamaica, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, Panama, Peru
Europe (30)	Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Russia, Romania, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Malta, Belgium, Bulgaria, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Slovakia, Iceland, Ireland, Estonia, United Kingdom, Austria, Italy, Czech Republic, Portugal, Poland, France, Finland, Hungary
Oceania (1)	New Zealand
Africa (3)	Lesotho, Morocco, Tunisia

2. Designated Visa-free Entry Countries (Total 46 countries and regions)

Asia (10)	Bahrain, Brunei, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Macau, Japan, Kuwait, Hong Kong, Taiwan
Americas (7)	United States, Canada, Guyana, Argentina, Honduras, Paraguay, Ecuador
Europe (11)	Monaco, Montenegro, Vatican, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, San Marino, Andorra, Albania, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia
Oceania (13)	Guam, Nauru, New Caledonia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Palau, Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu, Australia
Africa (5)	South Africa, Mauritius, Seychelles, Eswatini, Botswana