

# Press Release



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## **MOJ to Launch Pilot Operation for Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) from May 3, 2021**

**– K-ETA application required before entering Korea through K-ETA website (PC: [www.k-eta.go.kr](http://www.k-eta.go.kr)) or mobile app (K-ETA) –**

□ Starting from 3 May, the Ministry of Justice (hereinafter referred to as MOJ, Minister Park, Beom-kye) plans to implement the Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (hereinafter referred to as K-ETA) after 2 years of preparation.

- Similar to ESTA of the United States, K-ETA will be required to travelers who can enter Korea without a visa. Those travelers will need to apply and be approved for K-ETA on the K-ETA website (or mobile app) by submitting personal and travel information prior to their departure.

\* ETA policy is implemented in countries that established an advanced border management system such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, and the European Union plans to introduce this from 2022.

□ **(Policy Background)** Until now, the Republic of Korea has been continuously expanding the eligibility for visa-free entry to promote good

relations with other countries and also to attract foreign visitors. However, due to lack of verification procedures as in visa application, some side effects occurred such as increased immigration inspection time due to interviews after arrival and increased illegal stay of visa-free entrants.

- There were some concerns that suspending visa-free entry or reducing visa-free eligible countries in order to settle the side effects could result in diplomatic frictions and create obstacles in tourism. Thus, as a supplementary measure while maintaining the existing visa-free entry policy, the Republic of Korea planned the introduction of the K-ETA policy since May 2019.

□ **(Gathering Stakeholder Opinion)** Throughout the K-ETA preparation process, MOJ carried out various discussions and meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, local governments such as Jeju Province, United States Forces in Korea (SOFA), and also held information sessions with airlines of many countries that directly contact passengers and reflected their views and opinions in designing the system as well as developing the manual.

□ **(Brief Explanation)** K-ETA application should be completed through the K-ETA website or mobile app at least 24 hours prior to boarding the flight at the point of departure. (PC: [www.k-eta.go.kr](http://www.k-eta.go.kr), Mobile app: K-ETA)

- K-ETA is for nationals of 112 countries that are originally eligible for visa-free entry to the Republic of Korea. However, taking into consideration the COVID-19 situation, the eligible persons for K-ETA

will be ① nationals of 21 countries that can currently enter the Republic of Korea without a visa as of April 2021, and ② priority entry persons\* such as business persons from the 91 countries that are temporarily suspended visa-free entry

\* Priority entry persons can either apply for a visa at Korean Embassies as they do now or apply for K-ETA

- For convenience, one applicant representative can apply for up to 30 people at once in case of families or group tourists. And when using the mobile app, the applicant can take a photo of the passport bio page with the camera of the mobile device and the relevant information will automatically appear on the mobile application form.
- After assessment is carried out based on the information submitted by the applicant, the results will be notified without delay by e-mail.
- The K-ETA fee is 10,000KRW per person, and once approved, it will be valid for 2 years. K-ETA approved travelers will be exempted from writing and submitting the arrival card upon entry.

□ **(Publicity)** To promote K-ETA, MOJ distributed press release (Korean and English) to Korean Overseas Missions in March 2021, and produced posters and leaflets (Korean and English), a 20-second spot-video (in 8 languages including English and Spanish), and a 2-minute 30-second informative video (in 8 languages including English and Spanish). These materials will be shared with the relevant organizations such as Korean Overseas Missions and Embassies in Korea. Video clips will also be

uploaded on relevant websites as well as on YouTube.

□ **(Expected Effects)** With the K-ETA, MOJ can dispense with the arrival card requirement for those who are K-ETA approved and as the travelers can be examined before their entry, MOJ will be able to provide efficient immigration service accordingly.

- In addition, MOJ can establish a foundation for an even safer border management by being able to systematically manage the visa-free entry foreign visitors, which account to up to 52% of the total number of travelers.

□ **(Future Plans)** After the pilot operation from 3 May to 31 August, the K-ETA will be implemented in full-scale starting from 1 September, 2021. During the pilot operation period, the K-ETA application will not be a requisite and for those who apply for K-ETA, the fee will be waived and the validity will be 2 years. (Refer to the attached file for details)

□ Ahead of the K-ETA implementation, Minister Park encouraged the staff for their tremendous hard work during the past 2 years in establishing the legal basis, securing the budget, developing the system, and also setting up the K-ETA Center.

- Park also mentioned that Korea's immigration service has been acknowledged for its world-class quality through airport evaluation carried out worldwide, and highlighted that the new K-ETA policy will indeed take Korea's immigration service another step forward.
- In addition, when the One-ID project (an integrated biometrics-based departure processing system being prepared in collaboration with

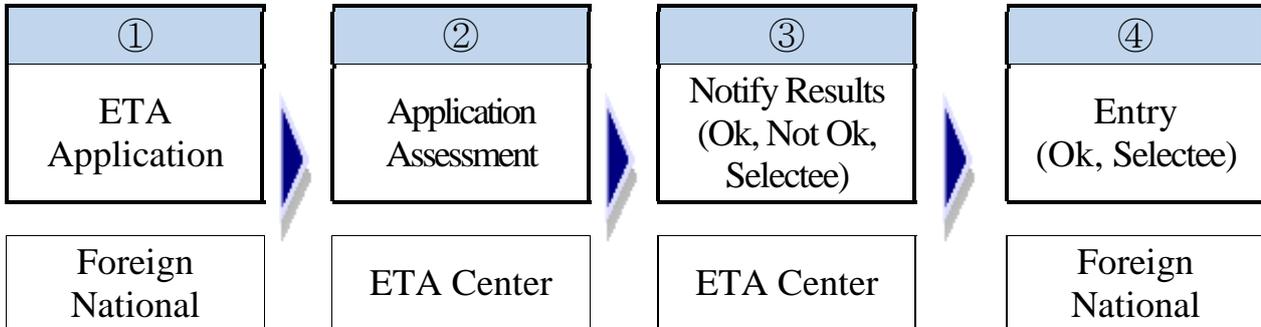
the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport) is completed as planned, and when the MOJ takes the lead in resolving issues regarding the departure waiting room of the Incheon Airport, Korea's border management will truly become worthy of its world-class level.

\* (One-ID system) An integrated identification verification system based on biometric information that seeks to minimize repetitive checks and overcome limits occurred due to visual or manual inspection by expanding the application of biometric information, which is currently being used for only immigration clearance, to areas such as check-in and security check.

[Attachment]

## 1. Main Contents of Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA)

### 1. Application and Approval Procedure



① **(Application)** Foreign national should apply for an ETA through the ETA website\* at least 24 hours before departure

- Application by proxy is available, and for example in case of group tourists, one applicant representative can apply for up to 30 people at once
- PC: [www.k-eta.go.kr](http://www.k-eta.go.kr), Mobile App: K-ETA

#### [Using the mobile app]

- Users can more easily and conveniently use K-ETA through the mobile app. Search 'K-ETA' at Google Play Store or App Store and download the app.
- When using the K-ETA mobile app, the applicant can use the camera on the device to take a picture of the passport bio page. Then, the information on the bio page, such as nationality, name, date of birth, sex, passport number will be automatically entered.
- In addition, the applicant will be able to take an ID photo (facial image) with the camera on the device making it more convenient to apply for the K-ETA.

② **(Assessment)** The K-ETA system will automatically analyze the application information (bio data, watch list, passenger reliability, etc.) and display the results on the K-ETA officer's PC screen.

- If any issues arise when application data is compared against MOJ

database, the person will be NOT OK to board

- If no issues arise when application data is compared against MOJ database, automatic approval will be processed for those above the assessment criteria, but if lower than the assessment criteria, the K-ETA officer will check manually and determine the traveler as 'Selectee\*' or 'Not OK' within 24 hours.

③ **(Notification)** Send K-ETA results to e-mail address submitted by foreign national applicant

④ **(Entry)** Those who received 'Selectee' will be sent to secondary inspection for in-depth interview before final determination of admission. K-ETA approved (including 'Selectees') persons will receive convenience such as being exempt from submitting arrival cards upon entry.

## 2. **K-ETA Required Countries: 112 Countries**

Nationals of **66 visa-waiver countries** and **46 designated visa-free entry countries** (Refer to country list in attachment 1)

- However, due to the current COVID-19 situation, the K-ETA will only be available for ① visa-free entry eligible nationals of 21 countries\* 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, Commonwealth of Dominica, Barbados, Venezuela, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts-Nevis, Malta, Ireland, Guyana, Monaco, Holy See (Vatican City State), San Marino, Andorra, Albania, Slovenia, Guam, New Caledonia, Palau

▷ **(Exempt from K-ETA)** Person who is a national of a K-ETA required country, but is exempt from obtaining a K-ETA

- UN passport holder, ABTC holder, USFK service member, aircraft and ship crew member, transfer passenger, Jeju Island travelers using a direct flight to/from Jeju Island only

▷ **(Exempt from K-ETA application)** Person who is a national of a K-ETA required country in principle, but obtained approval for K-ETA exemption from the Ministry of Justice in advance through the official request of relevant organizations

- Diplomatic or official passport holder, dependents of USFK members and civilian component

### 3. **K-ETA Fee**

The K-ETA fee is 10,000KRW (Article 72-1-2 of the Enforcement Regulations of the Immigration Act), excluding additional fees (VAT).

\* Additional fees will be automatically calculated for each country and payment can be made by credit or debit card.

### 4. **K-ETA Validity**

The K-ETA will be valid for 2 years from the date of approval, regardless of number of entry within the validity period.

### 5. **K-ETA Timeline**

- April 29, 2021: Distribute press release (Korean and English) on K-ETA implementation
  - To be uploaded on Korean Embassy/Consulate websites through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- April to August 2021: Promote K-ETA (website, Embassies in Korea)
  - Poster and leaflet (Korean and English)

- 20-second spot video (in 8 languages including English and Spanish)
- 2-minute 30-second informative video (in 8 languages including English and Spanish)
- May to August 2021: Pilot Operation (fee will be waived)
- 9:00AM Monday, May 3, 2021: Opening of the K-ETA system (considering that May 1 and May 2 are holidays)
  - Begin operation of K-ETA website (and mobile app), and K-ETA Center
- September 2021: Launch K-ETA in full-scale

\* K-ETA to be implemented to all 112 visa-free entry countries when the COVID-19 situation comes to an end

## 2. 21 Countries Currently Allowed to Enter Korea Without a Visa

the United States, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Nicaragua, Commonwealth of Dominica, Barbados, Venezuela, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts-Nevis, Malta, Ireland, Guyana, Monaco, Holy See (Vatican City State), San Marino, Andorra, Albania, Slovenia, Guam, New Caledonia, Palau

## 3. 91 Countries Currently Suspended Visa Free Entry to Korea

<b>Countries with Visa-Waiver Agreement: Total 56 countries</b>	
Asia (7)	Malaysia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Kazakhstan, Thailand, Turkey
Americas (18)	Guatemala, Grenada, Dominican Republic, Bahamas, Brazil, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Haiti, Antigua and Barbuda, El Salvador, Uruguay, Jamaica, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, Panama, Peru
Europe (27)	Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Russia, Romania, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Belgium, Bulgaria, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Slovakia, Iceland, Estonia, Austria, Italy, Czech Republic, Portugal, Poland, France, Finland, Hungary
Oceania (1)	New Zealand
Africa (3)	Lesotho, Morocco, Tunisia

<b>Countries Designated Visa-Free Entry: Total 35 countries</b>	
Asia (10)	Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Macau, Japan, Kuwait, Hong Kong, Taiwan
Americas (5)	Canada, Argentina, Honduras, Paraguay, Ecuador
Europe (5)	Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, Serbia
Oceania (10)	Nauru, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu, Australia
Africa (5)	Republic of South Africa, Mauritius, Seychelles, Kingdom of Eswatini, Botswana

## 4. Statistical Report of Entry of Foreigners in the Past 5 Years

(in number of persons)

Year	Total Number of Entrants	Number of Visa Free Entry (B1, B2)			Rate of Visa Free Entry
		Visa Waiver (B-1)	Tourist or Transfer (B-2)	Subtotal	
<b>2016</b>	17,418,307	1,556,536	4,914,542	6,471,078	<b>37.1%</b>
<b>2017</b>	13,569,509	1,634,095	4,909,869	6,543,964	<b>48.2%</b>
<b>2018</b>	15,630,522	1,908,616	5,814,882	7,723,498	<b>49.4%</b>
<b>2019</b>	17,880,503	2,053,173	7,158,538	9,211,711	<b>51.5%</b>
<b>2020</b>	2,659,845	222,306	939,748	1,162,054	<b>43.6%</b>

## 5. ETA related Legal Contents

### □ Immigration Act

#### **Article 7-3 (Electronic Travel Authorization)**

(1) Notwithstanding Article 7-2, when deemed necessary for the maintenance of public order or national interests, the Minister of Justice may require foreign nationals who fall under Article 7 Paragraph 2 Item 2 or Item 3 to obtain approval (hereinafter referred to as “ETA”) as prescribed by the Ordinance of the Ministry of Justice before entering the Republic of Korea.

(2) When a foreign national who received ETA under paragraph (1) enters the Republic of Korea, he/she shall hold the ETA.

(3) Criteria and procedures for the issuance of ETA shall be prescribed by Ordinance of the Ministry of Justice.