

# Airlines oppose proposed increase in UK electronic travel authorization fees

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is challenging a UK Home Office proposal that would raise the cost of Electronic Travel Authorizations (ETAs) by 60% to GBP 16, just one week after the system's introduction. The move has drawn criticism from industry leaders who view it as counterproductive to the UK's tourism goals.

IATA Director General Willie Walsh highlighted the conflict between this proposed increase and the government's recently announced tourism strategy. "Proposing to increase ETA costs just a week after the system was introduced is bewildering. If implemented it would be a self-inflicted blow to the UK's tourism competitiveness," Walsh said. He pointed out that the government had outlined plans in November to boost tourist arrivals by 30% to reach 50 million annually by 2030.

The proposed ETA price hike would compound existing travel costs to the UK, including the Air Passenger Duty (APD), which Walsh described as "the biggest travel tax in the world." The APD is set to increase again in April. The timing of these cost increases is particularly significant given that the European Union's Electronic Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) will offer travelers a more economical alternative, costing approximately one-third of the UK's proposed ETA fee while providing an additional year of validity.

The stakes are considerable for the UK economy, where aviation and tourism currently support 1.6 million jobs and contribute US\$160.7 billion to the country's GDP. Walsh emphasized the need for a broader perspective on travel facilitation: "It makes no sense to discourage visitors with high costs even before they set foot in the country."