

Digital ATA Carnets: What Businesses need to know

ATA Carnets are moving from a paper-based process to a digital model. For UK users, the key date is **1 June 2026**, when the UK, EU, Norway and Switzerland begin the live transition to digital ATA Carnets. This is the start of a phased change, not the final end-state. Paper and digital carnets will coexist during the transition period, and the remaining carnet countries are expected to complete their move to digital by **2028**.

Digital ATA Carnets are intended to reduce paperwork, improve visibility of customs transactions and make temporary admission easier to manage.



1 What is a Digital ATA Carnet

A digital ATA Carnet is the electronic version of the ATA Carnet. Instead of relying solely on the paper document, the carnet holder or authorised representative can use the **ATA Carnet App** or **ATA Carnet Desktop** to access the carnet, prepare declarations and present transaction-specific **QR codes** to customs.

The digital environment includes:

- **ATA Carnet App**
- **ATA Carnet Desktop**
- **Chamber Issuing System (eCarnet)**

2 Why ATA Carnets are Going Digital

Digital ATA Carnets are part of the wider international digitalisation programme led by the International Chamber of Commerce and the World Customs Organization. The move to digital is intended to:

- Save businesses time
- Reduce administration
- Lower the risk of document loss
- Improve visibility of where goods are
- Support more efficient border processing
- Contribute to more sustainable operations

Digital carnets are also designed to be safer, easier to use and less dependent on physical paperwork.



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The Time Line

Where are we now?

Before 1 June 2026

Before live transition, digital carnets were used in a preparation and testing phase alongside the paper carnet. During that stage, the paper carnet remained the legally valid document.

From 1 June 2026

From **1 June 2026**, the UK, EU, Norway and Switzerland begin using digital ATA Carnets as part of a live transition. From that point, paper and digital carnets coexist during the transition period. Which format applies depends on the itinerary and the customs authorities involved.

By 2028

The broader global transition is expected to continue beyond 2026, with the remaining carnet countries expected to complete their move to digital by **2028**. Businesses should therefore expect phased adoption rather than a single worldwide switchover.

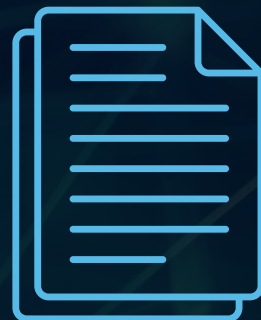


4 What happens from 1 June 2026?

From 1 June 2026, the type of carnet issued depends on the itinerary.

Paper Destinations Only

The broader global transition is expected to continue beyond 2026, with the remaining carnet countries expected to complete their move to digital by **2028**. Businesses should therefore expect phased adoption rather than a single worldwide switchover.



Digital Destinations Only

If the itinerary involves only digital destinations, the issuing chamber will issue a **digital carnet only**. The carnet user will receive the **Carnet ID and PIN**, download the carnet into the ATA Carnet App or ATA Carnet Desktop, prepare the required Travels and present the relevant QR codes to customs.

Mixed Itineraries

If the itinerary involves both paper and digital destinations, the issuing chamber may issue **both paper and digital formats**. In that case:

- the **paper carnet** must be used at paper destinations
- the **digital carnet** must be used at digital destinations

This is one of the most important compliance points during the transition period.



5 How the digital ATA Carnet works



6 ATA Carnet **App** and ATA Carnet **Desktop**

The **ATA Carnet App** allows users to:

- Download and store the carnet on a smartphone
- Prepare travel declarations
- Present QR codes to customs
- Receive near real-time transaction confirmation

The **ATA Carnet Desktop** is the web-based version of the same environment. It is especially useful for:

- company managers
- freight forwarders
- frequent carnet users
- businesses handling multiple carnets at the same time

Both systems can be accessed using the same account credentials.

7 What is a “Travel”?

A **Travel** is the digital declaration prepared before arriving at customs. It is the digital equivalent of completing the relevant voucher movement for that leg of the journey.

A Travel can include:

- departure country or customs territory
- destination country or customs territory
- transit countries where relevant
- declared items from the general list
- means of transport
- additional journey details

Once the Travel is saved, the system generates the relevant QR codes for customs processing.



8 What transaction QR codes are used?

Different QR codes are used for different stages of the movement. These can include:



Activation /
Validation



Exportation



Importation



Re-exportation



Re-importation



Transit

On first use, a carnet may need to be **activated / validated** before the outward movement proceeds, in much the same way that a paper carnet needs validating before first use.



9 Pre-arrival notice, pre-declaration and remote commitment

Some customs locations may support more advanced digital functions.

Pre-arrival Notice

A pre-arrival notice allows the holder or representative to notify customs in advance of when the goods and declaration will be presented.



Pre-arrival Declaration

A pre-arrival declaration allows fuller transaction details, including goods information, to be sent to customs before arrival.

Remote Commitment

At some cargo or freight locations, customs may be able to process the declaration remotely once the holder authorises this in the app or desktop.



These functions depend on whether the relevant customs office supports them.



10 Representatives, freight forwarders and sharing access

There are two main ways to allow a representative or freight forwarder to use the digital carnet.

Share a Specific Voucher or Transaction

The holder can prepare the Travel and share the specific QR code or voucher URL for that movement. This is generally the lower-risk option because access is limited to the relevant declaration.

Share the Whole Carnet

The holder can provide the Carnet ID and PIN so the representative can download the carnet and create Travels themselves. This gives the representative more control, but the holder remains responsible if the carnet is used incorrectly.

If a freight forwarder is acting on behalf of the holder, a Letter of Authorisation may also be needed.



11 Mixed Itineraries

A mixed itinerary includes both paper and digital destinations. During the transition period, this means businesses may need to use both formats on the same carnet journey.

If the route includes both paper and digital destinations:

- paper movements must be completed on the paper carnet
- digital movements must be completed through the digital carnet
- users must understand which format applies at each point in the itinerary
- records should be retained for both formats in case of later customs queries or discharge checks

Mixed itineraries should be planned carefully before issue.

12 Split consignments and other complex movements

Where goods move in more than one shipment, separate Travels must be created for each partial movement. Each Travel should cover only the goods physically moving in that shipment.

Other situations that may require extra planning include:

- mixed paper and digital itineraries
- use of freight forwarders or multiple representatives
- pre-arrival processing
- replacement carnets
- extension of final dates
- termination of temporary admission under the carnet procedure



13 What businesses should do now

Businesses using ATA Carnets should prepare for digital transition by:



Reviewing their regular destinations and routes



Identifying whether they are likely to use paper, digital or mixed itineraries



Training staff, drivers and representatives on the digital process



Deciding whether mobile app, desktop, or both will be used



Planning how declarations will be handled where freight forwarders are involved



Reviewing record-keeping and evidence retention procedures

Businesses with more complex routes or operating models should check the likely format and process before the carnet is issued.



14 How TVCC can help

TVCC can support businesses with:

- **ATA Carnet Applications**
- **Guidance on whether Paper, Digital or Mixed Handling is likely to apply**
- **Practical Support for Complex Itineraries**
- **Help with Freight Forwarder and Representative Scenarios**
- **Temporary Export Planning**
- **Wider Customs and International Trade Support**

Get in touch

Email: Carnet@tvchamber

Phone: 0208 564 6300