



New immigration rules in Nigeria from 1 May 2025

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Background

On 11 April 2025, the Federal Ministry of Interior unveiled a series of reforms designed to overhaul Nigeria's expatriate administration and visa policy frameworks. The reforms were announced at a stakeholder engagement hosted by the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA). The strategic focus of the government is to ensure more transparent and accountable use of expatriate quotas, promote structured knowledge transfer to Nigerian understudies, and encourage greater responsibility on the part of employers and expatriates in managing repatriation processes.

A key implementation measure is the launch of the Expatriate Administration System (EAS), a digital mechanism intended to enhance transparency, accountability, and compliance monitoring in the employment of foreign nationals. Additionally, the Ministry has introduced the Nigeria Visa Policy (NVP) 2025, effective from 1 May 2025. Visa applications are now expected to be automated, secure, and more efficient, particularly for business and temporary work travels.

Collectively, these reforms aim to tighten regulatory oversight, close loopholes in immigration and employment practices, and better align immigration, labour, and tax enforcement efforts in Nigeria.

Key highlights

1 Visa system overhaul – Discontinuation of visa on arrival

From 1 May 2025, Nigeria will switch to a fully electronic visa (e-Visa) system, phasing out the current visa on arrival (VoA) regime. Under the new arrangement, applicants can complete and submit their visa applications online and receive a decision within 48 hours. The system removes the need for physical visa stickers, making the process faster and more convenient. The e-Visas are not extendable, and overstaying may result in penalties such as daily fines or long-term travel bans, depending on the duration of the violation.

Travelers who received VoA pre-approvals before 1 May 2025 may still enter Nigeria within the 14-day validity period stated in their letters. For example, an approval dated 30 April 2025 remains valid until 13 May 2025. Any VoA applications submitted after 30 April 2025 will not be approved.

The upgraded platform also allows for group and family applications. Additionally, applicants seeking three or six-month Temporary Work Permit (TWP) visas can apply online and pay pro-rated fees — \$600 for 3 months and \$1,100 for 6 months. This digital upgrade is designed to shorten processing time, enhance transparency, and simplify visa access for travelers.

2 Clampdown on irregular migration: Effective 1 August 2025

The Federal Government will begin a nationwide compliance enforcement campaign to identify and remove foreign nationals who are residing or working in Nigeria without proper documentation. A 3-month grace period from 1 May to 31 July 2025 has been granted to allow affected individuals and businesses to regularise their immigration status.

All foreign nationals are advised to utilise this opportunity to update their documentation. Failure to do so may result in deportation and other sanctions in accordance with existing immigration laws.

3 Penalties for visa duration abuse

Expatriates will incur a fine of \$15 for each day of overstay, along with potential travel bans ranging from 5 years to life, depending on the severity of the violation.

4 Introduction of the Expatriate Administration System (EAS)

The new digital framework will integrate immigration, employment, and tax databases to streamline expatriate compliance monitoring. It aims to prevent the misuse of expatriate quota positions, enforce compliance with Nigerian immigration rules, monitor local understudy obligations for expatriate positions, and enhance collaboration between the Ministry of Interior, Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), and other relevant federal and state tax authorities.

5 Enhanced review and monitoring of business permits and expatriate quota applications

The Federal Ministry of Interior will enforce more rigorous standards in the evaluation of business permits and expatriate quota applications. This aims to ensure that company requests are thoroughly vetted for authenticity, in line with the Ministry's commitment to prioritise the employment of qualified Nigerians.

The Ministry mandates that employers assign at least two Nigerian understudies, each holding a Bachelor's degree or Higher National Diploma, to every expatriate role. The goal is to prepare these Nigerian understudies to take over the expatriate's position once the expatriate quota slot expires, which typically spans four to seven years depending on the industry.

Companies found to be employing expatriates without valid permits may face fines, reputational damage, or revocation of their business permit.

6 Upward review of business permit and expatriate Quota Fees

The Ministry has disclosed plans to increase application fees to cover the cost of inspections, due diligence, and improved administrative oversight. These new fees will be announced in due course.

7 Automation of residence permit process

The NIS will automate the entire process for obtaining the Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card (CERPAC). Applicants will complete the CERPAC forms online, submit through the NIS portal and receive electronic confirmation along with an e-copy of the form after initial verification. Once they finalise the process, the NIS will deliver the physical CERPAC card to the employer's registered business address.

This new system will replace the current manual process, which requires applicants to purchase forms from designated banks and visit immigration offices to submit documents. This aims to speed up processing time and provide a more user-friendly experience for employers and expatriates.

8 Mandatory repatriation insurance

The new Expatriate Personal Liability Insurance will cover the cost of deportation for non-compliant expatriates. Annual policy premiums will range from \$500 to \$1,000, depending on the duration of stay. This shifts the financial responsibility for repatriation from the Federal Government which uses taxpayers' money, to the defaulting expatriates.

Furthermore, employers who fail to secure mandatory repatriation insurance for expatriates may be held liable for repatriation costs.

9 Launch of online landing and exit cards

Travelers to and from Nigeria will be required to complete digital landing and exit cards to help the NIS monitor overstays and detect patterns of immigration non-compliance.

Implications for employers

- Stronger monitoring and penalties:** Companies that fail to regularise the status of expatriate employees risk sanctions, reputational damage, and disruption to business operations.
- Compliance linkage with tax records:** The digitisation of expatriate administration allows tax authorities to detect unregistered or under-reported expatriate income. This may trigger additional tax assessments and penalties.
- Impact on strategic workforce planning:** Businesses will need to re-evaluate their expatriate staffing strategies, ensure understudy programs are in place, and improve human resource documentation and reporting frameworks.

Insights and recommendations

The Nigerian government's renewed focus on immigration governance signals a significant shift towards a more disciplined and digitised approach to expatriate administration. The reforms aim to clearly define expatriate roles, ensuring that relevant skills are ultimately transferred to Nigerians. While commendable, successful implementation will necessitate thorough engagement with businesses. For instance, the requirement to assign Nigerian understudies for every expatriate role may be challenging for organisations facing attrition or shortage of skilled local talent — a trend worsened by ongoing emigration. A flexible review mechanism that considers such workforce realities, alongside clear metrics for evaluating local capacity development efforts, will be essential to achieving the policy's intent without hampering legitimate business operations.

The automation of residence permit processing, and the introduction of an e-Visa platform are positive steps toward improving service delivery and transparency. However, there are valid concerns about infrastructure readiness, digital access disparities across regions, and the administrative capacity of immigration offices. Sustained investment in technology, training, and support services will be critical to achieving the expected benefits of digital transformation. Also, further clarity is needed on insurance requirements, including policy administration, cost allocation, and enforcement triggers. Stakeholders will benefit from formal guidance on existing visa extension procedures considering non-extendable e-Visas.

The three-month grace period ending 31 July 2025 presents a narrow but critical window for businesses and individuals to regularise their affairs. It is essential that the Ministry publishes comprehensive guidelines on the new Expatriate Administration System (EAS) and the Nigeria Visa Policy (NVP 2025), to give affected stakeholders the clarity and lead time needed to comply effectively. In addition, periodic post-implementation dialogues between the government and the private sector would enhance transparency, foster collaboration, and help address emerging grey areas.

To help businesses prepare and stay compliant, we recommend the following practical actions:

- **Conduct an expatriate compliance audit**

Assess immigration, tax, and human resource records to confirm that all foreign employees are working within approved EQ positions and possess valid CERPAC documentation.

- **Align immigration and tax functions**

Establish strong internal linkages between payroll, expatriate quota applications, and visa documentation to ensure consistency, accuracy, and traceability across compliance processes.

- **Engage with the new EAS platform**

Begin registration and familiarisation with the Ministry's new Expatriate Administration System (EAS) and use the portal for quota monitoring, renewals, and updates.

- **Review underway and localisation strategy**

Develop or reinforce internal frameworks for meeting the required underway obligations, ensuring roles are documented, progress is monitored, and timelines are adhered to.

- **Plan for increased costs**

Budget for additional compliance expenses, including expatriate insurance premiums, increased government application fees, and potential advisory and system integration needs in FY2025 and beyond.

By taking early and structured steps in line with these recommendations, businesses can minimise risks, maintain business continuity, and position themselves as responsible employers within Nigeria's redefined expatriate landscape.

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