

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, NECA & OPSN: STAKEHOLDERS' SENSITIZATION ON THE NEW EXPATRIATE ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER REFORMS

Summary

On Friday, April 11, 2025, the Federal Ministry of Interior (FMI) in collaboration with the Nigeria Employer's Consultative Association (NECA) and Organized Private Sector of Nigeria (OPSN) and other key players, conducted a stakeholders' sensitization program to announce information on the expatriate administration and other reforms to the immigration policies. The program aimed to educate stakeholders on the new policies and procedures governing expatriate administration, including the Nigerian understudies' system, e-visa program, among others.

Background

The FMI has been working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of expatriate administration and other immigration facilities in the country. In line with its commitment to improving its policies, the FMI through the Honorable Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo (the 'Minister'), at a stakeholder's meeting held on April 11, 2025, announced new initiatives and reforms to the expatriate administration as a mechanism to foster better government-private sector collaboration and encourage investment and increased knowledge transfer in Nigeria. Some of the reforms include removal of the Temporary Work Permit (TWP) pre-approval requirement, and the introduction of the e-visa program. These reforms aim to streamline the process, reduce bureaucracy, and improve the overall experience for expatriates and employers. The stakeholders' sensitization program was designed to ensure that all stakeholders, including businesses, expatriates, and relevant government agencies, are aware of these changes and understand how to comply with these reforms and regulations once officially introduced and implemented.

Key Reform Policies

Some of the proposed changes are as follows:

1. Electronic visa (e-visa) System

The automated e-visa system, introduced by the Nigeria Visa Policy (NVP) 2020, which was originally scheduled to be launched on March 1, 2025, will now take effect on May 1, 2025. The e-visa system will replace the current visa-on-arrival process and aims to simplify and secure the online visa application process. This new system will completely digitize the visa application process and will feature the use of QR code.

2. Reduction in Visa Categories

Visa categories will be reduced from Seventy-nine (79) to Forty-Four (44) to simplify the process for businesses and expatriates.

3. Digitization of Landing and Exit Card

Landing and Exit cards will be digitalized to help tackle issues of visa overstays, and delay for travelers who will now populate the cards online. This initiative will also help the government keep accurate and comprehensive immigration records.

4. Personal Liability Insurance

There is the proposed implementation of personal liability insurance on employees. The importance of personal liability insurance for expatriates was emphasized specifically in its role in protecting employers from expatriates' personal liabilities and supporting expatriates in cases of repatriation.

5. Overstay Penalties

It was proposed that overstay on visas by expatriate of a period up to one (1) year will attract in a five-year entry ban, while an overstay beyond one (1) year results in a permanent entry ban.

Other key points noted at the meeting include:

6. The Comptroller General of Immigration's (CGI) sole approval on visas will be eradicated and a visa centre has been launched at the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) Headquarter to oversee visa approvals.
7. Fees for Expatriate Quota and Business Permit applications may be revised upward.
8. Heightened scrutiny will be implemented for expatriate quota and business permit applications.
9. Reduced application process timeline at the FMI with a target of three (3) weeks for completion.
10. The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) will be granted access to the FMI portal to expedite approval processes for companies operating in the oil & gas sector.
11. Temporary Work Permit (TWP) NIS pre-approval requirement will be removed.
12. Expatriate Employment Levy (EEL) which was initially scheduled for implementation in 2024 but subsequently put on hold, remains suspended.
13. CERPAC issuance will be fully automated and issued with a unique QR code.
14. Nigerian understudies' policy will be reinforced, mandating the assignment of qualified Nigerian understudies to each expatriate. Employers would be required to ensure that understudies possess the appropriate educational background to enable effective knowledge transfer. Additionally, there must be a clearly defined takeover timeline, with enforcement of the understudy's assumption of the expatriate's role within the stipulated period.

The Minister announced that companies and all relevant stakeholders in default of any immigration policy have an amnesty period of three (3) months commencing May 1, 2025, until July 1, 2025, to comply and regularize their records.

The proposed reforms will be implemented from May 1, 2025, while the clampdown on defaulters and imposition of penalty will commence on August 1, 2025.

Conclusion

The sensitization program provided a valuable opportunity for stakeholders to engage with FMI officials and receive real time updates on the new initiatives and the proposed mechanism for implementation of these initiatives and provide feedback. The FMI's efforts to improve expatriate administration and introduce reforms will have a positive impact on the country's economy and reputation. It is expected that the FMI will continue to engage with stakeholders and provide updates on the implementation of these reforms.

How we can help

We specialize in providing comprehensive support to businesses navigating the complexities of Nigerian immigration law. Our expert services encompass providing advice and assistance to ensure seamless compliance with the continually evolving relevant regulations.

For additional information, please contact Immigration Team Bloomfield LP - Email immigration@bloomfield-law.com or call +234 1 454 2130

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