

Nigeria Visa Policy 2020: What You Need To Know

February 2020

On 4th February 2020, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched a new Nigeria Visa Policy 2020 (“NVP” or the “Policy”). President Muhammadu Buhari stated that “the Policy is expected to attract innovation, specialised skills and knowledge from abroad to complement locally available ones”. Essentially, the NVP was formulated to help Nigeria become a globally competitive economy and to boost tourism. The Policy provides a platform to achieve African integration without comprising national security.

The Policy has introduced novel categories and classes of visas. One of the marquee provisions of this Policy is that it allows for the issuance of visas at entry points for certain categories of persons (such as businesspersons and tourists). This will surely make it easier for such people to visit the country at short notice.

Key highlights of the NVP are as follows:

1. The Policy lists three visa categories which are:

- Short Visit Visa (SVV);
- Temporary Residence Visa (TRV); and
- Permanent Residence Visa (PRV).

The SVV comprises of visa classes for diplomats (non-accredited), tourists, businesspersons, journalists, clerics, sportspersons, entertainers, scholars, emergency relief workers, humanitarian workers etc. The SVV will be issued for up to 90 days. ECOWAS citizens however do not need visas to enter the country as long as they have their necessary travel documents.

Visas under the TRV categories include visa classes for accredited diplomats, expatriates, clerics (inclusive of their spouses and dependants) and students.

The PRV category includes visa classes for investors in small enterprises, medium-size enterprises, large corporations, ultra large corporations, the oil and gas industry, and the power sector.

2. The Policy has expanded the existing visa classes or types from six (6) to seventy- nine (79).

3. It also introduced visas for Nigerians in Diaspora, for spouses of Nigerian citizens, for persons who have renounced their Nigerian citizenship and their spouses, highly skilled immigrant and retirement visas. Regarding visas for Nigerians in diaspora, the NVP introduced this visa class to enable such Nigerians who either by birth, marriage or nationalization have assumed dual citizenship. Such category of Nigerians will now be able to make use of the passports of their adopted countries to visit Nigeria without the need for short stay visas.



4. The Policy has made the categories of persons listed under the SVV eligible for Visas on Arrival. Previously the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) issued Visas on Arrival to only noteworthy businesspersons and the top management staff of International Organizations. Now, foreign nationals whose countries have visa agreements with Nigeria can also be issued Visas on Arrival. Nationals of African Union member countries are also now eligible for Visas on Arrival.
5. Visas on Arrival will be issued electronically at four (4) specified international airports (and not at land borders).
6. Biometric registration is mandatory prior to the issuance of a Visa on Arrival. This is primarily to enhance security.
7. Payment for visa fees is now automated; cash transactions are no longer allowed.
8. NVP is part of a wider reform: the ‘NIS Border Strategy, 2019-2023.’
9. Introduction of a multiple-entry, multi-year visa for Nigerians by birth who had to renounce their citizenship.

Primarily the NVP outlines the expectations of the Immigration Act 2015 (the “Act”) and the Immigration Regulations 2017 (the “Regulations”) with respect to administration of visas in Nigeria.

We reckon that the National Assembly may need to amend the relevant provisions of the Act to accommodate some of the key components of the Policy. For example, Section 20 (7) of the Act does not include the issuance of Visa on Arrival to nationals of African Union Member States. Accordingly, an amendment may be required in order to give effect to the implementation of the Policy as it affects African Union Member States.

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