



Immigration Regulatory Updates

February 2026

In this month's edition of the Moroom Africa Immigration Update, we highlight significant immigration developments affecting international mobility, visa processing, and travel requirements. This edition covers retirement visa opportunities in South Africa, Nigeria's upgraded passport tracking system, evolving mobility options for Nigerian passport holders, the United Kingdom's transition to a fully digital e-visa system, recent visa policy restrictions affecting certain migration routes, and new entry requirements introduced by Cape Verde.

These developments reflect the growing trend towards immigration digitalisation, stricter border management policies, and evolving travel frameworks across several jurisdictions.

A. Nigeria Upgrades Passport Tracking System

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) announced in January 2026 a significant upgrade to its passport tracking platform aimed at improving transparency and addressing delays in passport collection.

A key feature of the enhanced system is a new status notification labelled "Produced (Passport Produced, Ready for Collection)", which informs applicants when their passport has been produced and is ready for pickup or courier delivery.

The upgraded system also provides clearer distinctions between passports that have been produced but are awaiting collection and those that are ready but pending courier delivery. Applicants can track their passport status through the NIS online tracking portal, reducing unnecessary visits to passport offices and improving the overall efficiency of the passport issuance process in Nigeria.

B. Mobility Options for Nigerian Passport Holders

As of early 2026, Nigerian passport holders enjoy visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to approximately 43 destinations worldwide.

Within West Africa, Nigerian citizens benefit from visa-free travel across all 15 member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), supporting regional mobility, trade, and economic integration.

Outside the region, visa-free access is available to destinations such as Barbados, Dominica, Haiti, Montserrat, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. Nigerian travellers can also obtain e-visas for approximately 35 countries, allowing them to complete visa applications online without visiting embassies or consulates.

Additionally, visa-on-arrival entry is available in several countries including Cambodia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Palau, and Uganda. In some cases, travellers may be required to provide supporting documentation such as proof of onward travel, accommodation arrangements, sufficient financial means, or valid visas for countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, or countries within the Schengen Area.

C. South Africa's Retirement Visa: Pathway for Long-Term Residence

South Africa continues to offer one of the continent's more accessible retirement visa programmes, attracting foreign nationals seeking to spend their retirement years in a diverse and scenic destination with a high quality of life.

Applicants must demonstrate a minimum monthly income of approximately R37,000 (about USD 2,000). This income may come from pensions, retirement annuities, rental income, dividends, or other investments. Notably, South Africa does not impose a minimum age requirement for the retirement visa, with eligibility determined primarily by financial capacity.

The visa is typically issued for an initial period of up to four years and is renewable. Where applicants can demonstrate that their income is guaranteed for life, they may also become eligible to apply for permanent residence in South Africa, providing a pathway to long-term settlement.

Applicants are generally required to submit police clearance certificates, medical reports, proof of accommodation, financial documentation, and comprehensive health insurance valid for the duration of their stay. Employment is generally not permitted under the visa, although spouses and dependent children may be included in the application.

D. Cape Verde Introduces New Pre-Arrival Visa Requirement

Cape Verde has introduced new immigration rules effective 1 January 2026, eliminating its long-standing visa-on-arrival policy for travellers from 96 countries.

Previously, many travellers could pre-register online through the EASE portal, pay the applicable fees, and obtain a tourist visa upon arrival at airports in Cape Verde. Under the new system, travellers from affected countries must secure a visa before travelling, even if they are only transiting through the country.

Several African countries are affected by this change, including travellers from Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Cameroon, Rwanda, Sudan, and Uganda. It is important to note that Nigeria is not included among the affected countries, and the existing visa application process for Nigerian travellers remains unchanged.

Travellers arriving without a valid visa may be refused entry or denied transit at the border.

The policy change reflects a broader global shift toward pre-travel visa authorisation systems, enabling immigration authorities to conduct security screening before travellers arrive at their destination.

E. United Kingdom Expands Digital Immigration System and e-Visa Rollout

The United Kingdom has entered the final phase of transitioning to a fully digital immigration system, replacing traditional physical visa vignette stickers with electronic immigration records known as e-Visas.

From 25 February 2026, most visa applicants will no longer be required to submit their passports for visa stamping. Instead, their immigration status will be issued digitally and linked to an online UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account.

Under the new process, applicants complete their visa application online and attend a visa application centre operated by VFS Global to submit supporting documents and enrol biometric information. After the appointment, applicants may retain their passports while their visa applications are processed.

If the visa is approved, instructions on accessing the digital eVisa are sent to the applicant via email. The digital visa then serves as proof of the holder's immigration status in the United Kingdom.

For Nigerian applicants and travellers from other African countries, the new system provides greater flexibility by allowing applicants to retain their passports after biometric enrolment while their visas are processed. This enables them to continue travelling or apply for other visas during the waiting period. However, applicants must create and maintain a UKVI online account and verify their digital immigration status before travelling, as the system replaces physical visa documents with electronic records.

F. United Kingdom Restricts Certain Study and Work Visa Routes

The United Kingdom government has announced new restrictions affecting visa applications from certain countries following concerns over the misuse of study and work visa routes.

The measures affect applicants from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar, and Sudan, where authorities reported significantly higher rates of asylum claims from individuals who originally entered the United Kingdom on study visas.

According to government figures, asylum claims from individuals who initially arrived through legal visa routes have more than tripled between 2021 and 2025. In response, the government has decided to stop issuing study visas to nationals of Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar, and Sudan, and will also suspend skilled work visas for Afghans.

The UK Home Office stated that the policy is intended to prevent visa misuse and maintain the integrity of the country's immigration system while continuing to support individuals genuinely in need of protection.

Should you require further assistance or clarification on any of the above, please feel free to contact pamilerin.akabunwa@moroomafrica.com.

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