



Expatriate Residence and Work Permit in Nigeria: The Updated e-CERPAC Guide for Foreign Investors and Employers

Description

For foreign investors establishing businesses in Nigeria and Nigerian companies seeking to employ foreign professionals, immigration compliance is an important part of the employment process.

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) now provides an electronic CERPAC application framework for eligible foreign nationals. This changes how employers and expatriates should approach residence and work authorisation.

The e-CERPAC (Electronic Comprehensive Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card) serves as a residence permit and identification card for eligible foreign nationals. The NIS's official platform includes an R2A category for expatriate employees of companies and their dependants, issued to expatriates who intend to take up employment in Nigeria based on expatriate quota.

This guide focuses on the current e-CERPAC process, official requirements, applicable fees, and what employers and foreign nationals need to understand before commencing an application.

1. What Is e-CERPAC?

e-CERPAC is an electronic immigration document issued by the Nigeria Immigration Service to eligible foreign nationals.

According to the NIS, it serves as both a residence permit and an identification card, granting eligible expatriates the legal right to live, work, study, or invest in Nigeria, subject to the applicable authorization and category.

For foreign employees working for companies based on expatriate quota, the official e-CERPAC platform identifies R2A-Expatriate Employees of Companies and Their Dependants as the relevant category.

The applicable immigration category should be selected according to the foreign national's circumstances and the purpose of their stay.

2. Expatriate Quota: The Employer's Responsibility

Foreign nationals seeking employment in Nigeria through a company-sponsored expatriate position must meet the applicable expatriate quota requirements.

The NIS's official R2A information identifies expatriate quota verification from the Citizens and Business Department of the Ministry of Interior as part of the documentation requirements.

This means that the employer should address the applicable quota approval and verification requirements before proceeding with the expatriate's employment residence application.

The expatriate quota process and e-CERPAC application are related, but they are not the same procedure. Employers should ensure that the appropriate corporate and immigration approvals are in place for the employee's proposed role.

3. e-CERPAC R2A: Who Is Eligible?

The R2A category is intended for expatriate employees of companies and their dependants. The official e-CERPAC portal specifically describes it as applicable to expatriates who wish to take up employment in Nigeria based on expatriate quota.

The employer's documentation and the applicant's personal information must meet the applicable requirements.

Important considerations

- The expatriate must be applying under the appropriate employment category.
- The employer must provide the required employment and immigration responsibility documentation.
- Expatriate quota verification is part of the listed requirements.
- The applicant must provide the required identity and professional documentation.

The final eligibility assessment is subject to the official NIS application requirements.

4. e-CERPAC Application Requirements

The NIS's official R2A requirements page lists the documents required for an expatriate employee application.

The following requirements are identified by the NIS:

S/N	Required document	Purpose
1	Valid international passport (not less than 6 months validity)	Establishes the applicant's identity and travel documentation.
2	Employment contract or appointment letter	Establishes the employment relationship.
3	Letter of acceptance of employment	Confirms acceptance of the employment offer.
4	Formal application from the employer accepting Immigration Responsibility	Establishes the employer's undertaking in relation to immigration responsibilities.

5	Expatriate quota verification from Citizens and Business Department – Ministry of Interior	Supports the employment expatriate category.
6	Educational qualifications / evidence of skills acquired	Establishes the applicant’s qualifications or professional skills.
7	Curriculum vitae (CV)	Provides the applicant’s professional background.
8	Board resolution for senior management positions	Required for applicable positions, including CEO, GM, and MD.
9	Professional body registration	Required where applicable.
10	Security clearance	Required where applicable.
11	Police clearance	Required where applicable.

Important: The list above is based on the official R2A requirements page. Additional documents may be required depending on the applicant’s circumstances or the instructions issued through the relevant application process.

5. How to Apply for e-CERPAC

The NIS provides an official online e-CERPAC application platform.

Start your e-CERPAC application

The application should be completed through the official platform using the relevant category and the required documentation.

Application steps

1. Select the applicable category

Identify the appropriate e-CERPAC category. For company-employed expatriates based on expatriate quota, the relevant category is R2A, subject to eligibility.

2. Review the official requirements

Confirm the required documents, including the passport, employment documentation, quota verification, and professional qualifications.

3. Complete the online application

Submit the application through the official e-CERPAC platform.

4. Upload supporting documents

Provide the documents required for the selected category.

5. Pay the applicable fees

Make payment through the official application platform based on the applicable fee schedule.

6. Complete the required application procedures

Follow the instructions issued by the NIS regarding biometric enrolment and any other necessary steps.

The NIS website states that applications are submitted online and that applicants are required to visit the relevant location for biometric enrolment. The specific process depends on whether the application is made from within or outside Nigeria.

6. Official e-CERPAC Fees for Expatriate Employees

The official NIS e-CERPAC R2A requirements page lists the following fees:

S/N	Fee description	Amount
1	CERPAC Fee	\$2,000
2	Applicant Comprehensive Insurance	\$1,000
3	Card Delivery Fee	\$20
	Total	\$3,020

The \$3,020 total is the sum of the three fee components displayed on the official R2A requirements page.

Fee notice: Confirm the applicable amount on the official portal at the time of application, as government charges and applicable requirements may be subject to change.

What the fee covers

The fee breakdown published by the NIS identifies:

- CERPAC fee.
- Applicant comprehensive insurance.
- Card delivery.

Professional service charges, if an employer engages a law firm or immigration consultant, should be quoted separately from the official government charges.

7. e-CERPAC and the Traditional STR Visa Process

The NIS maintains information on the Employment Visa (Expatriate) – R2A category. Its official R2A visa guidance describes the traditional process involving expatriate quota approval, an STR visa application, entry into Nigeria, and regularisation to obtain CERPAC.

However, the e-CERPAC framework provides a distinct electronic application route, and the official NIS e-CERPAC information states that the newly introduced e-CERPAC is processed before entry and eliminates the need for post-arrival regularisation.

Employers and expatriates should therefore confirm the applicable route before beginning an application rather than assuming that every applicant must follow the older post-arrival regularisation procedure.

The appropriate process depends on the relevant category and the current instructions of the Nigeria Immigration Service.

8. Responsibilities of the Nigerian Employer

The employer plays an important role in the expatriate's immigration application.

For the R2A category, the official NIS requirements include a formal application from the employer accepting Immigration Responsibility, as well as employment documentation and expatriate quota verification.

Employers should ensure that:

1. The expatriate has a genuine employment arrangement with the company.
2. The employment contract or appointment letter is properly prepared.
3. The employer's application accepting Immigration Responsibility is completed as required.
4. The expatriate quota verification documentation is available.
5. The expatriate's qualifications and professional information are accurately presented.

6. The applicable e-CERPAC requirements are reviewed before submission.

These steps help the employer organise the required application information and documentation.

9. Why Immigration Compliance Matters

Hiring a foreign professional is not simply a matter of signing an employment contract.

The employer must consider the applicable immigration category, the requirements for authorization, and the documentation needed to support the application.

A properly structured process helps reduce the risk of submitting incomplete or inconsistent information.

At ICA-Ibe, Chido & Associates, we understand that businesses require more than incorporation. They need practical guidance on corporate and regulatory compliance matters connected to their operations.

Our legal and regulatory compliance practice supports businesses and foreign investors seeking to understand and navigate relevant Nigerian regulatory processes.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the current e-CERPAC fee for an expatriate employee?

The official NIS R2A requirements page lists a CERPAC fee of \$2,000, comprehensive insurance of \$1,000, and card delivery of \$20, totaling \$3,020. Confirm the applicable fee before payment.

2. What is the e-CERPAC category for an expatriate employed by a company?

The official e-CERPAC portal identifies R2A for expatriate employees of companies and their dependants, based on expatriate quota.

3. Does the employer have to accept Immigration Responsibility?

Yes. The official R2A requirements list a formal application from the employer accepting Immigration Responsibility.

4. Is an expatriate quota verification required?

The NIS R2A requirements page lists expatriate quota verification from the Citizens and Business Department of the Ministry of Interior.

5. Can an expatriate apply online?

The NIS provides an online e-CERPAC application platform. Applicants must follow the applicable instructions, including requirements for biometric enrolment.

6. Is the old STR and post-arrival regularization process still applicable to everyone?

No universal assumption should be made. The NIS provides traditional R2A visa guidance and separate e-CERPAC information. Applicants should confirm the applicable route for their circumstances before applying.

Conclusion

Nigeria's e-CERPAC system is an important part of the current immigration framework for eligible foreign nationals.

For employers and foreign investors, the focus should be on using the correct immigration category, meeting the official documentation requirements, and paying the applicable government fees through the authorised platform.

For company-employed expatriates, the R2A category provides the relevant e-CERPAC route based on expatriate quota, subject to the official eligibility requirements.

The process should be approached with accurate documentation, careful planning, and proper attention to the current instructions of the Nigeria Immigration Service.

Category

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