

Global Immigration alert

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Angola

Stricter immigration controls for foreign workers

Executive summary

Angolan authorities have strengthened immigration controls affecting foreign professionals entering the country, especially those working in the oil, gas, maritime and offshore sectors. Circulars issued on 1 March 2026 and 16 March 2026 confirm key policy directions, including:

- Tourist visas cannot be used for work or technical activities, including those performed on vessels or in related facilities.
- Ministry of Mineral Resources, Petroleum & Gas (MIREMPET) has changed how Border Visas and Short-Term Visas (STV) are processed, removing pre-approval steps and shifting application channels.
- While Border Visa processing was initially reported as temporarily suspended, applications for the oil and gas sector are now being accepted by the Migratory and Foreigners Services (SME), subject to specific documentary requirements.

These measures apply immediately.

Background

- *Incorrect visa usage and enforcement:* According to Angolan legislation, tourist visas are exclusively for business prospection or family reasons, to attend to scientific and technologic activities, or for recreational, sporting, or cultural activities, and must not be used for work or technical activities. The national visa guidance confirms that travelers arriving with the wrong visa category may face refusal of boarding, refusal of entry or additional immigration checks.
- *Government tightening controls:* The SME, through its official platforms, reinforces the requirement that foreign nationals must apply for and hold the correct immigration status before performing any professional activity in Angola.

Key developments

The following developments summarize the confirmed regulatory changes and visa-category restrictions currently in effect:

- *Prohibition of work activities under tourist visas:* According to a circular issued by the SME Luanda Port Unit, effective 1 March 2026, technicians, professionals or any foreign citizens who intend to work or provide services on board vessels or related facilities, are no longer allowed boarding when holding a tourist visa. For remunerated work purposes, foreign nationals must hold one of the following:
 - Work visa
 - Valid residence permit
 - Temporary Stay Visa
 - Short-Term Visa, where legally allowed
 - Border Visa, within the legal framework
- *Border Visa and STV applications:* Effective 16 March 2026, the MIREMPET suspended the issuance of opinions for Border Visa and STV applications. Border Visa applicants no longer require MIREMPET pre-approval and applications are routed directly to the SME, while STV invitation letters are processed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Following the issuance of this circular, Border Visa applications were initially reported as temporarily not being processed pending procedural alignment. However, based on confirmation obtained from the SME headquarters, Border Visa applications for companies operating in the oil and gas sector are now being accepted, even in the absence of a MIREMPET opinion, provided that a copy of the Company Registration Certificate issued by the Agência Nacional de Petróleo, Gás, e Biocombustíveis (ANPG) and the applicable Programme Contract (Contrato Programa) are submitted. Applications remain subject to case-by-case assessment and current administrative practice.

Impact on employers

These measures may have a significant impact on employers, particularly in the oil and gas, maritime and offshore sectors. Employers may face:

- Operational delays due to the temporary suspension of the Border Visa process and longer lead times for work-aligned visa categories
- Stricter port, airport and vessel-embarkation checks, given increased emphasis on verifying proper visa categorization on arrival
- Heightened documentation requirements, reflecting SME's increasing centralization and digitalization of immigration procedures
- Increased scheduling and coordination challenges, as visa processing timelines may shift under newly restructured STV and future Border Visa processes

Employers may need to review their internal immigration procedures to ensure compliance and mitigate business disruptions.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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