

Mobility: Immigration alert

March 2023



Portugal

Restructuring of Immigration and Border Services leads to staff strike from 5 April 2023

Executive summary

On 27 March 2023, the unions representing the inspectors and administrative staff of the Immigration and Border Services (SEF) announced that they will go on strike in the first week of April 2023. The Union of Employees of the SEF (i.e., SINSEF), which includes the SEF's administrative staff, announced a two-day strike on 5 and 6 April 2023. The Research and Inspection Career Union (SCIF), which includes the SEF's inspectors, is expected to go on strike from 6 to 10 April 2023.

Background

In November 2021, the Portuguese parliament announced that the SEF would be disbanded, and its last operational day would be 31 March 2023. Following the disbandment, some of the SEF's workforce is expected to be integrated into a new public entity called the Portuguese Agency for Immigration and Asylum (APMA), and the rest into the Portuguese police and Registrar Services. The SEF's unions are currently negotiating with the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding the integration of their workforce into these three entities.

Key developments

The unions announced the strike after failing to reach an agreement with the Ministry. The strike is expected to lead to the closure of several SEF branches. Individuals who have immigration application appointments scheduled with the SEF between 5 April 2023 and 10 April 2023 may have their appointments rescheduled, and the SEF is expected to notify them of their updated appointment dates.

The unions are expected to meet with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 3 April 2023. The strike may be recalled at short notice, subject to further negotiations.

Impact on employers

Immigration services (e.g., application processing) are expected to be significantly impacted during the strike. Individuals seeking to submit immigration applications may not be able to do so due to lack of staff. Processing of applications that are currently under review by the SEF may also be impacted.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments and provide further updates as more information becomes known. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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