



EXTINCTION OF SEF AND RESTRUCTURING OF THE PORTUGUESE BORDER CONTROL SYSTEM

As a result of the enactment of Decree-Law 41/2023 of June 2, the Immigration and Borders Service ("SEF") was recently officially abolished and the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum ("AIMA") came into existence.

Two pieces of legislation were enacted as part of this restructuring: Decree-Law no. 40/2023 and Decree-Law no. 41/2023, both of June 2, 2023 which aim to transfer the competencies of the services as well as the mobility and integration of officials falling into various professional categories.

WHAT'S CHANGING?

As part of the restructuring of Portugal's border control system, **the powers of the SEF will be transferred to seven bodies**, with the police functions passing to the Public Security Police, the National Republican Guard and the Judicial Police, while the administrative functions related to foreign citizens will be transferred to the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum, I.P. and to the Institute of Registries and Notaries (IRN). It is created the Borders and Foreigners Coordination Unit, which will operate under the Secretary General of the Internal Security System, guaranteeing an organic

separation between police and administrative functions.

The **Border and Immigration Coordination Unit** is the structure responsible for coordinating the actions of the security forces and services among themselves and between them and the Institute of Registries and Notaries, I. P. (IRN, I.P.), and the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum, I.P. (Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum, I. P.), (IRN, I.P.), and the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum, I.P. (AIMA, I.P.). This unit will strengthen capacities in terms of sharing information available from the different border security and regulation services, thus ensuring greater capacity to coordinate the efforts of the security forces and services to guarantee the objective of regulated and secure borders.

The **Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum ("AIMA")** thus succeeds the now defunct SEF in all its administrative powers in the field of migration and asylum, and the High Commission for Migration, I.P. (which is also extinct) in its powers relating to reception and integration, the fight against racism and discrimination, the integration of ethnic groups, in particular Roma communities, and the promotion of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and intersectional inequality.

The Institute of Registries and Notaries (IRN) now has a wider range of services

in the field of civil identification, with new administrative functions related to:

- (i) Granting and issuing all types of passports, namely the ordinary passport, the special passport, the temporary passport and the passport for foreign citizens, guaranteeing the normal operation of this identification document;
- (ii) The renewal of temporary or permanent residence permits, providing this service, initially exclusively by prior appointment (via siga.marcacaodeatendimento.pt or the [sigaApp](#) mobile application);
- (iii) The renewal of residence permits for victims of human trafficking and for investment purposes will continue to be handled by AIMA, I.P.

FINAL NOTES

The transition period until SEF's definitive extinction took place from June to October 2023, in strict compliance with the principle of continuity of public services, with SEF continuing to make appointments until its extinction date, after which AIMA was responsible for ensuring the commitments made, given that all administrative processes and procedures pending at SEF were transferred to the respective services that succeeded them in their attributions (see article 5 of Decree-Law no. 41/2023, of June 2).

At the same time, as the Deputy Minister for Parliamentary Affairs has already

stated, the government will invest in modernizing the IT system - one of SEF's acknowledged problems, which made it impossible to respond to requests that had already been made and which already had several structural problems - and it is estimated that by 2024 a new portal will be up and running, already open to requests for the granting and renewal of residence permits, thus allowing for the administrative modernization of processes and procedures and the consequent streamlining of these, promoting greater communication and transparency.

Simultaneously, in the first quarter of 2024, the Government is also expected to promote coordination between the municipalities and the immigrant support

offices, which are already part of AIMA, creating communication mechanisms in order to also strengthen the means of response and information to interested parties.

In short, it is true that the problems detected in the functioning of the SEF will not be solved by the creation of a new entity, but it is believed that the adoption of structural measures and the modernization of the system could minimize the constraints that have occurred in its functioning.

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