The Council of the European Union and the European Parliament have reached a provisional agreement on new EU-wide rules aimed at making the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in Member States faster and more effective. The regulation is part of the broader EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Under the new rules, individuals without a legal right to remain in the EU will be required to cooperate with authorities and leave the Member State. Failure to comply may lead to penalties, such as reduced benefits, denial of voluntary return incentives or criminal sanctions including imprisonment.

The agreement introduces the possibility of establishing return hubs in third countries to facilitate deportation processes, provided these countries respect international human rights law and the principle of *non-refoulement*. Unaccompanied minors are excluded from these arrangements.

The new rules also introduce a European Return Order (ERO), a standardised form that will simplify the mutual recognition of return decisions between Member States, although such recognition will remain voluntary for now.

Special provisions are included for individuals considered security risks, such as extended or indefinite entry bans and the possibility of detention.

The deal still needs formal approval by both the Council and the European Parliament. Once adopted and published, the regulation will enter into force immediately, with some provisions applying after 1 year.

Source(s)

- European Council | Council of the European Union (1 June, 2026), [Council and Parliament reach deal on returns of illegally staying third-country nationals], https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/06/01/council-and-parliament-reach-deal-on-returns-of-illegally-staying-third-country-nationals/
- European Parliament (1 June, 2026), [Deal on new EU rules on migrant returns], https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20260518IPR43408/deal-on-new-eu-rules-on-migrant-returns

Date of development

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01.06.2026

Country

European Union

Thematic area(s)

Pact on Migration and Asylum, Return

Development type

Legislation

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