European Parliament approves new rules for the return of irregular third-country nationals

The European Parliament has approved new policy rules on the return of third-country nationals who are staying illegally in the EU. Under the legislation, individuals issued a return decision must cooperate with authorities and leave immediately or within a set timeframe. Authorities will be able to detain individuals up to 24 months, with possible extensions if they risk absconding, fail to cooperate or pose security concerns.

Alternative measures, such as reporting obligations or electronic monitoring, may also be used. The rules also allow investigative actions (e.g. searches) under safeguards.

The new rules include the possibility of transferring returnees (excluding unaccompanied minors) to return hubs in third countries, based on agreements that respect human rights and the principle of *non-refoulement*. Stricter provisions apply to those posing security risks.

The legislation passed with 418 votes in favour, 218 against and 30 abstentions and now awaits formal adoption by the Council before entering into force.

Source(s)

- European Parliament (17 June, 2026), [New EU system for return of illegally staying third country nationals], https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20260611IPR45214/new-eu-system-for-return-of-illegally-staying-third-country-nationals

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