UNHCR expresses concerns about EU Return Regulation

UNHCR acknowledged the agreement reached between the European Parliament and the Council on the EU Return Regulation, however the agency expressed concerns that several of its recommendations to strengthen safeguards for refugees and asylum seekers were not included in the final text.

While welcoming provisions that reaffirm the principle of *non-refoulement,* protection the best interests of children, promotion of return counselling and reintegration support, UNHCR warned that certain aspects of the regulation could create risks for individuals in need of international protection. In particular, the agency is concerned that the regulation applies not only to persons whose asylum claims have been finally rejected but also to applicants whose claims were deemed inadmissible or whose appeals may still be pending.

UNHCR highlighted the absence of automatic suspensive effect for some appeals and cautioned that individuals could be returned before their protection needs have been fully assessed. The agency called on Member States to establish strong procedural safeguards and effective remedies to prevent wrongful returns.

The agency also raised concerns about the proposed use of return hubs, stressing that they should be used only temporarily and only when return to the country of origin is not feasible within a reasonable timeframe.

Furthermore, UNHCR reiterated that detention should be a measure of last resort, with alternatives prioritised whenever possible, and maintained that children should never be detained for immigration-related purposes.

Source(s)

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (6 July, 2026), [UNHCR calls for robust protection safeguards in the implementation of the EU Return Regulation], https://www.unhcr.org/europe/news/press-releases/unhcr-calls-robust-protection-safeguards-implementation-eu-return-regulation

Date of development
06.07.2026

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Country
European Union
Thematic area(s)
Pact on Migration and Asylum, Return
Development type
Legislation

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Document generated on 30-10-2026
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