Austria and Rwanda hold bilateral negotiations on return hubs in Rwanda

Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Greece - the so-called 'Implementers Group' - have initiated formal negotiations with Rwanda to establish a return centre outside of the European Union. This follows the group's formation in January 2026 during an informal meeting of Ministers of the Interior in Cyprus.

The Return Regulation, adopted by the EU earlier this year, provides the legal framework for such centres. The parties aim to conclude a binding agreement by early 2027, with the first transfers of rejected asylum seekers to Rwanda expected to commence later that year.

The Implementers Group met in Vienna for its first working meeting with Rwanda on 16 November 2026, attended by Austrian Interior Minister Gerhard Karner, Greek Migration Minister Thanos Plevris, German Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt, Rwandan Interior Minister Vincent Biruta, and representatives from UNHCR and the IOM.

One day later, Austria and Rwanda held direct bilateral negotiations, where beyond core migration issues, additional topics were defined and discussed involving multiple Austrian ministries.

Austrian Interior Minister Karner stated that he expects a joint declaration to be signed in the first two months of 2027, paving the way for initial returns to Rwanda during 2027.

Source(s)

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Document generated on 29-11-2026
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Related development(s)
Interior Minister Karner meets Danish Migration Minister on Return Hubs outside Europe
Date of development
16.11.2026
Country
Austria
Thematic area(s)
General asylum and migration development, Return
Development type
Practice

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