

EU is targeting illegal immigrants Parliament OKs new rules as pressure for crackdown mounts.

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Body

Europe's hardening attitudes toward immigration found a voice in the **EU Parliament** on Wednesday, as legislators passed **new rules** for expelling illegals amid a widening **crackdown** in the United States.

As the global economy slows, governments in well-to-do countries are coming under more **pressure** to act on **illegal** immigration. While the European **rules** do not lay the groundwork for workplace raids as in America, they do contain such measures such as long detention periods.

The **European Union** is dealing with tension over **immigrants**: Italians blame foreigners for a rise in crime, France is grappling with violence in **immigrant**-heavy communities, and Belgium has come under criticism for its treatment of foreigners in detention centers.

The **EU** says the vast majority of the **immigrants** come to Europe from North Africa, former Soviet countries and the Balkans. For instance, 24,000 sub-Saharan African **immigrants** were caught trying to reach Spain in 2006 and 10,000 in 2007. More than 1,000 African **immigrants** also are believed to have died at sea trying to reach Spain in 2007.

Until now, there has been no common **EU** policy on expelling **illegal immigrants**, and detention periods varied from 32 days in France to indefinite custody in Britain, the Netherlands and five other countries.

Under the **new** guidelines, already approved by **EU** governments, **illegal immigrants** can be held in specialized detention centers - not jails - for up to 18 months before being expelled. But **EU** countries must provide detained migrants basic rights, including access to free legal advice, and unaccompanied children or families with children should be held only as a last resort.

Following apprehension, **immigrants** will be given the opportunity to leave voluntarily within 30 days. If there is a flight risk or they do not comply, they can be put in custody for up to six months while their deportation is processed.

A 12-month extension would be possible in specific cases, such as when **illegal immigrants** do not cooperate with authorities or when their identity must be verified with their home country. A re-entry ban of up to five years may be imposed on expelled **immigrants** who do not cooperate or are deemed a threat.

"Europe has made it clear that it is not tolerating any form of **illegal** status," said German Christian Democrat Manfred Weber, who steered the bill through **Parliament**.

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The **EU** estimates there could be up to 8 million **illegal immigrants** in the 27-nation bloc, many of them living in squalid conditions and engaged in the black market economy. This compares with roughly 11 million **illegal immigrants** in the United States.

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