Five European countries are preparing to establish a migrant return hub in Rwanda for people whose asylum claims have been rejected and who have exhausted legal options to remain in the European Union, according to reports by Reuters and AFP.

Germany, Austria, Greece, Denmark and the Netherlands are expected to announce the arrangement on Monday, November 16, at a meeting in Vienna. The proposal is part of a wider European effort to increase deportations and curb irregular migration following the approval of new EU rules allowing member states to set up return hubs outside the bloc.

The plan would differ from the United Kingdom's former Rwanda scheme, which was ruled unlawful by the UK Supreme Court in November 2023 and abandoned by the British government in 2024. The EU proposal would target people whose asylum claims have been rejected and who have no further legal route to remain, rather than people awaiting decisions on their applications.

Rwanda's involvement follows months of discussions. In August, the government confirmed that preliminary talks had begun with several European countries. Rwanda's Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe later confirmed to AFP that a visit by European delegations had taken place and negotiations were ongoing.

Reuters reported that two European Parliament lawmakers who visited Kigali in September were shown facilities originally prepared for the abandoned British scheme, including a hotel that could potentially be used to accommodate people transferred from Europe.

The five governments have said the proposed hubs would comply with European and international law. However, rights organisations have questioned how migrants would challenge violations and which government would be held accountable if their rights were breached.

Céline Mias, the European Union director at the Danish Refugee Council, questioned what legal remedies migrants would have if their rights were violated. The Council of Europe warned in July that return hubs posed "considerable human rights risks".

Supporters argue that the possibility of being transferred to a third country could deter people from attempting dangerous journeys to Europe. Critics say there is limited evidence that tougher enforcement stops migration, arguing instead that it changes routes and gives smugglers opportunities to raise prices.

The details of the proposed arrangement, including the number of people to be transferred, the facilities to be used and the safeguards governing their treatment, require clarification. While Rwanda has confirmed preliminary discussions, the final terms and operational arrangements should be distinguished from the broader political announcement.