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## **The Role of European Union in Refugee Crisis on Belarusian Border – European Union in 2021 - 2022**

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*Received: 10-02-2024*

*Reviewed: 20-02-2024*

*Accepted: 15-03-2024*

### **Abstract**

This article aims to analyze the role of the European Union in handling the refugee crisis at the Belarusian-European Union border in 2021-2022. The refugee crisis at the Belarusian-European Union border poses significant challenges for the European Union in various aspects, such as politics, security, and humanity. This research uses a qualitative approach and is then analyzed to explain the evaluation of the European Union's policies, responses, and strategies in responding to this crisis. Through an in-depth study of the policies and actions taken by the European Union, this article outlines the European Union's response to the refugee crisis on the Belarus – European Union border. This includes diplomatic efforts, humanitarian assistance, and security strategies implemented by the European Union to address problems arising from the crisis. In addition, this article also analyzes the challenges faced by the European Union in dealing with this refugee crisis, including coordination between member countries and internal political consequences. This research found that the role of the European Union in the refugee crisis on the Belarus-European Union border is in the form of providing financial assistance to refugees trapped in the border area. The European Union has also facilitated the Schengen forum, which will be held in 2022. The European Union has also closed its border areas due to the interests of national member countries with direct borders, such as Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania. The European Union also imposed sanctions on Belarus because it was deemed responsible for the crisis that occurred.

**Keywords:** Belarus, Crisis, Qualitative, Borders, Schengen, European Union

### **Introduction**

After World War II, population movement from one country to another increased rapidly. This increase in population movement was based on several factors, including inappropriate

## ***The Role of European Union in Refugee Crisis on Belarusian Border – European Union in 2021 – 2022***

income levels and unequal distribution of resources in their country, causing poverty. Therefore, residents felt their country of origin needed help to guarantee a decent life. Europe is often a destination country for immigrants (Vaagland & Chmiel, 2023). In 2015, based on data from the United Nations, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (U.N.C.H.R.) stated that there were 366 thousands of immigrants who crossed the Mediterranean Sea to Europe as a result of conflicts in several countries such as Syria and other Sub-Saharan countries (CNN Indonesia, 2015a).

The high level of immigrants in 2015 caused Europe to experience an immigrant crisis, especially in Libya, because Libya is a route often used by immigrants to go to Europe (CNN Indonesia, 2015b). In 2021, Europe is again experiencing a refugee crisis occurring in the Belarus-European Union border region (Górska et al., 2023), which is a result of the conflict in the Middle East. The conflict has caused a rapid increase in immigrants in border areas. Immigrants who are trapped on the border between three countries, namely Belarus, Poland, and Lithuania, are prohibited by border guards from entering their country; immigrants also receive unfair treatment from the guards (Watch, 2022). The refugee crisis in the border areas of Belarus and two other countries that are members of the international organization known as the European Union is motivated by the Belarusian authorities carrying out promotional tours using social media to convince immigrants to come to Belarus (Loucas, 2023). Misinformation causes the emergence of beliefs immigrants that entering European Union countries is relatively easy. Due to this problem, Polish Borders reported that at least 977 attempts were made to cross the border (Valcarcel, 2022). The dismissive and unjust actions carried out by the Belarusian side against immigrants can be considered inhumane and, in some cases, can be described as torture.

Responding to the case, Poland stated that it had no involvement in rejecting immigrants. Based on Poland's latest law amendments, those with the authority to return refugees who cross the border illegally to border areas are the officials in those border areas. As of 16 November 2021, Poland's border officials had prevented around 29,921 refugees from trying to cross illegally (Watch, 2021). The issue of facilitation by the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has received criticism from the Polish government, the European Union, NATO and the United States. In response to the crisis, three countries deployed patrols in border areas and built fences to prevent refugees from crossing. Lithuania also declared a state of emergency for one month starting 10 November 2021, and then Latvia declared a state of emergency for three months starting 11 August 2021. Polish authorities strengthened control over border areas and prevented migrants from entering their country (Acaps, 2021).

The Belarusian and Polish authorities must prevent increasing deaths by ensuring humanitarian access to those trapped in the border area. However, countries in border areas prefer to close their borders and not let refugees in because they still do not want to take risks (Watch, 2021). The European Court asked Poland to provide supplies immigrants needed, such as clothing, food and drink, and medical supplies. The European Court previously did not respond to the actions taken by Belarus because the country is not a member of the European Union. However, the European Union finally decided to impose sanctions in the form of blocklisting travel companies linked to migrant trafficking and smuggling to Belarus because

they were deemed responsible for the crisis that occurred (Acaps, 2021). The action taken by the European Union regarding refugees that the European Union has implemented an asylum policy to arrange adequate accommodation for refugees who experience discrimination (Grzeškowiak, 2023). Compared with the number of asylum applications applied by refugees, the asylum policy is quite large, so it still needs to accommodate all the refugees who have entered Europe.

A similar problem was previously researched by the University of Warwick by Dogachan Dagi, entitled "Refugee Crisis in Europe (2015-2016): The Clash of Intergovernmental and Supranational Perspective," which was published in 2017. This research discusses the refugee crisis that occurred in Europe in 2015 to 2016. The crisis that occurred in 2015 revealed the humanitarian crisis that occurred in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, resulting in population displacement (Dagi, 2017). This journal focuses more on the actions taken by the European Union in dealing with the 2015 crisis. This journal explains the arguments regarding the refugee crisis in 2015-2016 and historical achievements related to refugee rights, although not directly achieved through Article II of the Treaty on European Union (1992), which formulated the European Union in finding values as 'self-respect. Humanity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of someone who is part of a minority group.

Furthermore, a journal published by Oxford University in 2022 titled "2021 Harrell-Bond Lecture, Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford: Empire's Refugees" is related to the crisis that occurred in 2021 (Achieme & Tendayi, 2022). However, the journal only focuses on the attitude of countries such as the American Union in responding to the crisis. The explanation in the journal provides an insight into the detrimental treatment received by refugees trapped on the Belarusian-Polish border. The author aims to pay more attention to the operations carried out by the kingdom about border areas and the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers by analyzing historical factors and the country's policies in dealing with international crises (Korosteleva & Petrova, 2023).

With the comparative research above, therefore, this research needs to be carried out to determine the development and role of the European Union as an international organization. The research was conducted focusing on 2021-2022. Based on the two previous comparative journals, neither discusses the role of international organizations such as the European Union. In contrast, an international organization, the European Union, has involvement and roles such as providing sanctions for Belarus, which is considered responsible for the crisis that occurred, to providing aid. Fund.

## **Literature Review**

### ***International Organizations***

International organizations are institutions consisting of countries with different roles and functions. International organizations have three primary roles that can be identified: instrument, arena, and actor. International organizations have three leading roles: international

## ***The Role of European Union in Refugee Crisis on Belarusian Border – European Union in 2021 – 2022***

organizations as instruments, international organizations as arenas, and international organizations as actors. The European Union, as an international organization, certainly has its role. As an organization in the regional realm, the European Union has a role in taking action and providing solutions related to the crisis. It has an impact not only on the country but also on refugees trapped in the Belarus-European Union border area. This is the role of the European Union as an Instrument. As an international organization consisting of several countries, the member countries of this organization have their national interests, as does the European Union.

The President of the European Union, Von der Leyen, is more focused on imposing sanctions on Belarus, which is considered to be the cause of the crisis in 2021, which also raises pros and cons because the European Union is considered to be more focused on imposing sanctions rather than providing humanitarian assistance to refugees. When viewed through the lens of the European Union, the different interests of each member country can also hamper policies in an international organization. The European Union, as an organization, certainly has its regulations by accepting refugees entering from various countries into its countries by complying with the applicable rules and regulations. With this literature review, the European Union as an organization certainly tries to provide the best solutions for its countries. However, the European Union also has its regulations as an international organization (East, 2023).

### **Research Method**

This research uses a qualitative approach and is then analyzed explanatorily by explaining why something happens. This research explains many things behind a phenomenon to find out the reasons behind an event or phenomenon that can occur (Saryono, 2010). The data collection technique in this research uses a literature study method sourced from books, articles, and journals that are credible and relevant to the research title, namely "The Role of the European Union in the Refugee Crisis on the European Union's Belarusian Border in 2021-2022". The research is limited to 2021 – 2022. The data collected is then analyzed directly by the researcher.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### ***The Role of the European Union in the Refugee Crisis on the Belarusian-EU. Border***

The European Union as an international organization has been involved in the refugee crisis on the Belarusian border with the European Union in 2021. At that time, an error in the dissemination of information by the Belarusian side led to the emergence of a crisis which resulted in refugees being trapped in the border area of Belarus and the European Union (Yohanes et al., 2023). Because the crisis at the border involved its member regions, the European Union took a role in the crisis. The European Union imposed sanctions on Belarus because the country had provided facilities for immigrants and asylum seekers to reach the border and then forced them to cross illegally into the European Union (Commission, 2021)

The European Union has provided humanitarian assistance due to the Amnesty International article's violence against migrants and those seeking asylum by Belarus and European Union countries involved in some violations (Amnesty, 2022) As well as Poland and Lithuania, which were directly involved in the crisis, took action in the form of returning refugees who had entered by force by changing the applicable laws and regulations (Acaps, 2021). The actions and efforts that the European Union has carried out are a response to fulfilling its obligations regarding the state's national interests to minimize further conflict. The European Union has also established relations with humanitarian organizations such as the International Federation of the Red Cross (I.F.R.C.) to alleviate the suffering of refugees stranded in the border areas of Belarus and its territories. The European Union provides humanitarian assistance because it is by the principles that have been regulated internationally.

The assistance provided by the European Union is based on the need for anyone experiencing a disaster, whether natural or non-natural disasters caused by humans. So, special attention is given to pretty vulnerable victims. The assistance provided is impartial and does not look at race, religion, ethnic group, age, gender, nationality, or political affiliation (Elyta et al., 2023).

In the current refugee crisis, the European Union has no direct connection. The role given is only in the form of humanitarian assistance for refugees. The European Union is coordinating with the United Nations to repatriate displaced refugees to their respective countries because the European Union cannot accommodate several refugees due to political differences and the actions taken, and this has become the cause of difficulties in coordinating efforts regarding the crisis. The European Union has recognized the right to asylum in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. This right is by the rules of the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 and the protocol of 31 January 1967 concerning refugees. The Convention has defined refugees recognized internationally and outlined the legal protection, rights, and assistance refugees can receive. The main principle of the Convention is non-refoulement, which means that refugees must not be returned to countries where they experience severe threats to their lives (UNHCR, 2005)

### ***Indicators of the European Union's role in the Refugee Crisis on the Belarusian – European Union Border***

In the theory by Archer, an international organization is categorized as an institution whose members include many countries with specific roles and functions and cannot be the same (Kulakevich, 2023). The institutions under the auspices of the European Union, namely the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission the central institutions, and several other institutions have their respective roles, especially in the crisis related to refugees that occurred in the Belarus - European Union border area (Kapliyev, 2023). As in its function, an international organization in Archer's thinking is related to aggregation, in which case an international organization functions as a tool for articulating and carrying out aggregation for its national interests. In this case, one country's interests differ from those of other countries, which is also one reason why a policy feels challenging to achieve. The role of the European Union in the refugee crisis is also divided into several indicators, which then describe the role of the European Union in the crisis (Archer, 2001).

## ***The Role of European Union in Refugee Crisis on Belarusian Border – European Union in 2021 – 2022***

The European Union, through Democracy and Human Rights as an instrument, is one of the legal instruments in the European Union that promotes democracy and human rights worldwide (Matveieva et al., 2023). In the regulations contained in the regulations of the European Parliament and Council article 1, namely that if a large number of third-country citizens or people who do not have citizenship in large numbers irregularly enter a country that is part of the European Union, then the member country concerned must provide asylum as stipulated in the regulations as a goal of instrumentalization. In the Lisbon Treaty, Article 18 in the charter contains an amendment that states: "The right to asylum shall be guaranteed with due respect for the rules of the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 and the Protocol of 31 January 1967 relating to the status of refugees and by with the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union" (The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Right to Asylum, p. 5).

The European Union, as an international organization, is obligated to assist refugees and immigrants trapped in border areas. Meanwhile, as an instrument, the European Union, an international organization with many members, certainly has diverse interests.

Archer explained that an organization cannot be dominated by just one party because it has many members. As an instrument, the European Union allocated funds carried out by the European Council as a form of function in 2021, 700,000 euros to the International Federation of Red Cross (I.F.R.C.) to provide humanitarian assistance to those vulnerable in open areas. Some of the assistance provided is also in the form of food, cleaning equipment, blankets, and first aid. In the crisis on the Belarusian border, the European Union played an active role. However, because there was a rejection of refugees in the border area, it caused significant humanitarian and political challenges (Elyta et al., 2023). Hence, as an instrument, the European Union also provided financial assistance to refugees trapped in the border area. , as an international organization, imposed sanctions on Belarus by banning flights and freezing assets suspected of being involved in human rights violations (Commission, 2021).

In 2022, there will be 17,300 refugees who need international assistance and protection and who will then be resettled from previously non-EU countries to countries that are part of the European Union. At that time, about 63% of Syrian refugees were resettled. In addition, judging from the European Union's resettlement scheme, 117,000 refugees have received protection from the European Union since 2015. In 2021, around 46,000 refugees, mostly from vulnerable Afghanistan, will arrive in the European Union due to permits. Humanity. In dealing with this crisis, the budget provided is a form of support organizations use for the resettlement and humanitarian reception of refugees (Commission, 2023).

An international organization and its role as an arena means that the organization is a forum for conducting forums. In his theory, Archer explains that as an arena, international organizations are places where forums are held. The organization also provides a venue for member countries to express their perspectives (Cielemęcka, 2023). The European Union as an arena in 2022 facilitated the Schengen forum in which there was a discussion about the situation experienced by refugees. This forum is also encouraged for political dialogue, which is entirely structured compared to all the actors involved. Several discussions have been held by this

forum, including discussions regarding external border management, internal border conflicts, and evaluation of Schengen's priority setting in external border management, police cooperation, repatriation, the Schengen information system, visa policy, and data protection.

The Schengen Border Code includes controls on internal and external borders that aim to ensure the security of the Schengen area and maintain the integrity of these borders. This code also allows member countries to temporarily implement border-related controls on internal borders if there is a severe threat to security. Therefore, the European Union's legislative section related to the crisis occurring in border areas could legitimize several national measures allowing countries affected by the crisis to bypass the European Union's migration and asylum framework to manage the consequences of instrumentalization. Migration (Commission, 2023).

As an arena, the European Union has been actively involved in overcoming refugee crises in the regional or global realm. This organization has joined the global refugee forum, held every four years, and is the largest in the world. The European Union contributes to global efforts to promote global stability and durable solutions regarding refugees by providing more high-quality asylum space within the European Union. In its commitment, the European Union strengthens its support for refugees and communities by hosting resettlement and humanitarian reception forums. The European Union has provided around 80% of the humanitarian budget, which is then allocated to some projects that address the needs of refugees.

Like an arena, the European Union is a place for countries to hold discussions through forums, producing many decisions as a form of output. In 2022, the European Union will hold another forum discussing migration in the European Union. As a forum, the European Union is facilitating a forum to be held on 20 and 21 October 2022 with the theme "Youth inclusion: key to successful migrant integration." In this forum, there is a focus on discussion regarding access for young, legal immigrants or refugees, youth mobility in the educational context, mobility of the young generation's workforce, increasing participation and involvement of young migrants, and also the attitudes given by the community towards immigrants who enter their country. The implementation of this forum is an effort by the European Commission to foster mutual trust and cooperation among Schengen member countries (Commission, 2023).

The role of the European Union as an arena is still less than optimal due to the implementation of forums related to the crisis that occurred. The European Union still needs to produce an agreement that can be used to overcome the crisis that occurred optimally. This can be seen in the Schengen forum held in 2021. Namely, a number. The support countries provide in the form of financial, operational, and diplomatic support, including intervention in border areas by Frontex. Not only that, the European Union is also trying to build a solidarity platform that will be under the coordination supervision of the European Commission in order to overcome the crisis (Europa, 2023).

As an international organization, the crisis that occurred on the border of Belarus and the European Union is a challenge in itself for the European Union because there are refugees who are trapped and stranded in its border areas. An organization is seen as an independent actor. Thus, an international organization can act in world situations without significant external

## ***The Role of European Union in Refugee Crisis on Belarusian Border – European Union in 2021 – 2022***

coercion. The European Union, as an international organization, still needs more significant efforts in making decisions regarding the crisis that is still occurring in border areas. In the context of the European Union, member states have different responses to the crises occurring in the region. As an actor, the European Union and its members have diverse interests that cannot be equated (Archer, 2001). Several countries, such as Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania, joined the European Union and the Schengen area in response to the refugee crisis on the European Union's Belarusian border. Also, based on the Schengen code, these countries have the right to ignore the Union's asylum migration framework. Europe.

However, the actions taken by these countries are not entirely justified because the refugees who are trapped in the border areas where the crisis occurs are not only trapped but are subjected to life-threatening treatment and blame their rights as refugees. As an independent actor, the European Union as an international organization has implemented quite strict measures against Belarus as the country that is the cause of the crisis that occurred on the European Union - Belarus border so that refugees from the Middle East are trapped in the border area. In the crisis that occurs in border areas, the European Union is still unable to implement an asylum policy that can be given to refugees as a whole due to the large number of refugees trapped in border areas. Meanwhile, countries around the border have yet to take significant action regarding the security of refugees still stranded (Europa, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

The refugee crisis that occurs on the Belarusian border of the European Union is still happening today; this is due to a lack of action in dealing with refugees who are trapped in the area; the surrounding countries close their borders and do not allow refugees to enter their countries. Due to this protracted crisis, the role of the European Union as an international organization has been criticized because more is needed. The role played by the European Union is as an instrument for the European Union only to provide financial assistance. As an arena for the European Union to facilitate the Schengen forum in 2022, this forum discusses refugees' current situation. Apart from that, as an international organizational actor with many members, the European Union chose to close its borders because the national interests of these countries were considered to conflict with the European Union. However, on the other hand, Germany accepts refugees even though the number of refugees entering is limited. Because the dynamics of the European Union, which is relatively flexible, make it difficult for the organization to achieve unanimity in decision-making regarding applicable regulations.

### **Suggestion**

The role of the European Union as an international organization in dealing with this crisis still needs to be improved. The imbalance in the interests of each member country ultimately hinders the decision-making process, which should help refugees obtain proper humanitarian rights. As an international organization, the European Union has been involved in a role in the crisis, such as providing sanctions to Belarus as the country responsible for the crisis and



providing financial assistance, as well as countries such as Germany, which accommodated several refugees who were previously trapped in border areas. However, as is known, the crisis has not been wholly resolved because there are still refugees who are still trapped and do not have a suitable place to live. After all, the European Union has still not been able to find an absolute agreement regarding granting rights to these refugees.

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***The Role of European Union in Refugee Crisis on Belarusian Border – European Union in 2021 – 2022***

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