UoBDMUN

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Background guide
European Union
UoBDMUN - 2025

Welcome letter

Dear delegates,

We are exhilarated to welcome you to the first in person UOBD Model United Nations conference! We are both thrilled to be your moderators while chairing the EU committee. we cannot express how enthusiastic we are to embark on this journey with you delegates. Your participation in this year's conference already demonstrates your confidence and a greater step towards gaining the learning experience encompassing both passion and diligence. We understand that this conference may present itself with many debates and challenges, but we truly hope to ensure we can create an environment that encourages intellectual growth.

As your chairs, we would like to strongly highlight that the background guide is not meant to be your sole source of research but a mere starting point to set you on the right path for your research. This is simply a starter to ensure that you have an understanding of the topic. It is crucial to note that understanding your country's stance and researching it is essential for your participation in the committee and understanding of the topic.

Remember that by joining the conference and putting yourself out there you have done half the challenge, the next half is simply demonstrating what you've worked to prepare. We cannot wait to see what each delegate contributes to the committee and we don't doubt that each delegate will deliver an outstanding performance. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any inquiries as we are always here to assist you and guide you.

Your Chairs,
Mahinour Elsisy & Daniel Shihat

Topic – Addressing Security Approaches on Contemporary European Borders

Introduction

The European Union, created after the end of World War II in an effort to achieve peace and economic integration, comprises 27 countries in Europe (European Union, n.d.). It began with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, designed to reduce conflict potential by integrating certain key industries. The six founding states signed the Treaties of Rome in 1957, giving birth to the European Economic Community—the EEC—that aimed at building a common market (Treaty of Paris, 1951). The Maastricht Treaty signed in 1993 formally established the EU and created the euro as its currency—adopted by 20 countries (European Central Bank, n.d.). With time, the EU expanded to become one of the world leaders on trade, climate policy, and human rights policy (European Commission, 2020).

The EU developed its border security strategies alongside its commitment to free movement. The Schengen Agreement of 1995 eliminated internal border controls, making stronger external border management necessary in order to prevent illegal immigration and cross-border crime (Reuters, 2024). In this regard, the EU implemented Integrated Border Management (IBM) in view of surveillance, information sharing, and cooperation with non-EU countries (Tandfonline, 2021). The creation of Frontex in 2004 was a significant development, coordinating operations and providing assistance at external borders (EUI, n.d.).

The EU has also adopted "border externalization," outsourcing border management to non-EU countries in an attempt to curb migration, as witnessed in agreements with North African nations (RLI, 2024). Advanced technologies, such as drones and biometric systems, have enhanced the effectiveness of these monitoring efforts (Reuters, 2024). However, some member states have reintroduced internal border controls, raising concerns about the future of the Schengen Area and the proper balance between security and free movement (The Times, 2024). These evolving strategies represent the EU's ongoing efforts to deal with modern challenges while preserving unity and openness.

History

Early Developments: (Post-WWII-1990s)

In the years following the end of World War II, Europe's approach toward borders began to change. This process of integration was initiated in 1951 with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), with the purpose of avoiding future conflict through the pooling of critical industries—coal and steel—under a single authority. This economic cooperation led to the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1957 through the Treaties of Rome, which set up a common market and established a system of free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor (Treaty of Paris, 1951).

By 1995, the Schengen Area was created, allowing the free movement of people across member states and, in effect, abolishing internal borders. This, however, called for a much more efficient control of external borders, a turn which brought about security concerns regarding illegal immigration and cross-border crime (European Commission, 2020).

EU and Schengen Enlargement (2000s):

With the EU expanding into former Eastern Bloc countries in the 2000s, new challenges along its eastern borders opened up. Migration from conflict zones such as the Middle East and Africa had been increasing, which led to the further expansion of the Schengen Area. This showed major vulnerabilities in the external border security of the EU. Further complicating this issue was the Dublin Regulation, where the country of first entry was responsible for asylum claims; this brought tensions between member states on issues of migration management (European Commission, 2020).

Mediterranean Crisis and the Rise of Frontex (2010s):

The 2015 migrant crisis brought new attention to the EU's border security. More than one million refugees and migrants arrived, mostly crossing the Mediterranean Sea, where thousands died every year. The response of the EU was focused on strengthening its external borders, and in this respect, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, has been playing a central role. Frontex expanded its operations to include sea patrols and surveillance, thus becoming one of the main actors in managing migration and securing borders (EUI, n.d.).

However, pushbacks by coastal guards—forced returns of migrants to unsafe countries such as Libya and Turkey—were widely criticized. Such pushbacks usually involved violent tactics, including the use of physical force and the denial of food and water. Human rights organizations, such as the European Court of Human Rights, criticized the actions, charging that the EU had placed security concerns at its borders over humanitarian protection (Reuters, 2024).

Recent Developments (2020s and Beyond):

The EU's security strategies for borders evolved in the 2020s to include hi-tech surveillance tools: drones and biometric systems in order to enhance monitoring and control (Reuters, 2024). These have helped in detecting illegal migration and trafficking but at the same time raised concerns around privacy and how data could be misused. The EU also adopted the practice of "border externalization," outsourcing border management responsibilities to non-EU countries like Turkey and North African nations to reduce the flow of migrants before they reached European shores (RLI, 2024).

However, these have been restored by some member states of the EU, especially the Mediterranean frontline states, including Greece, Italy, and Spain, thus creating tensions in the Schengen Area and opening questions about the future of an open border system in the EU (The Times, 2024).

Key Events

1995: Creation of the Schengen Area; abolition of internal border controls.

2000-2010: Enlargement of EU and Schengen Area with a set of new challenges.

2015: The peak year of the European migrant crisis, with over a million refugees.

2016: The EU-Turkey deal, in an attempt to curb migration flows.

2020s: More significant deployment of surveillance technologies, and debates over border ethics.

2020s-Present: Growing reports of pushbacks and human rights abuses.

Analysis

The EU has been facing an immensely complex challenge of balancing border security with the protection of human rights, especially at a time when migration flows and security threats are on the rise. Migration, terrorism, and cross-border crime all contribute to the need for a multi-faceted security approach.

Migration and Refugee Flows:

The Mediterranean region has been one of the most important entry points into Europe for refugees fleeing conflicts in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. Many of these migrants risk dangerous sea crossings, with thousands dying each year. The EU's challenge lies in managing these flows while ensuring protection for migrants. Border security operations, including those coordinated by Frontex, are critical, but the practice of "pushbacks" has sparked controversy. Pushbacks involve the forced return of migrants to unsafe countries without access to asylum processes, raising ethical and legal concerns (Reuters, 2024).

Frontex and Border Control:

Frontex was established in 2004 and has been the centerpiece in managing the EU's external borders. It coordinates border surveillance, provides technical assistance, and helps out in situations of crisis. However, its operations are highly criticized for human rights violations. Migrant cases of mistreatment, including pushbacks, have urged criticism of Frontex's role and the EU's reliance on the agency. This also increases the risk of privacy overreach with increased use of surveillance technologies and the expansion of Frontex's mandate (Tandfonline, 2021).

Cross-Border Crime and Terrorism:

The EU's borders are also exposed to various criminal activities, including human trafficking, narcotics smuggling, and terrorism. Organized crime groups use weak points in the security of borders to facilitate trafficking, while terrorist organizations use porous borders for recruitment and operations. This sets up a double-edged issue: how to keep borders secure while allowing legal migration at the same time (RLI, 2024).

Technological Solutions:

The EU has integrated advanced technologies, including drones and biometric systems, into border surveillance in order to improve security. This technology provides better security and monitoring of vast areas with more efficiency. However, it raises privacy and surveillance concerns regarding the possible misuse of personal data. It also fears that migrant and refugee communities may be disproportionally affected, with their human rights being potentially violated (Reuters, 2024).

Internal Tensions and Human Rights:

Another source of tension is the different approach by the member states toward border security. Frontline countries that receive migrants—Greece, Italy, and Spain—often clash with EU-wide policies on border management and the resettlement of refugees. It has fanned nationalist and populist movements demanding more drastic measures, such as the restoration of internal border controls in the Schengen Area. At the same time, the EU's commitment to human rights, enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, underlines the requirement for a balance between security and protection of migrants (European Union, n.d.).

Conclusion

The EU has to balance its strategies in protecting its external borders with an observance for human rights. The core challenges in this context are the managing of migration flows, preventing cross-border crime, and seeing that migrants are treated humanely. Ethical concerns about some of the security measures at borders, especially in regards to pushbacks and surveillance technologies, feed into the debate on the future of EU border policies. Effective and sustainable policies will require cooperation, transparency, and respect for human dignity.

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Questions a Resolution Must Answer

1. What strategies will be adopted to manage migration flows, including asylum seekers and refugees?
2. What mechanisms will ensure that reinstated internal controls do not undermine the Schengen Agreement?
3. What role should third countries play in controlling migration (e.g., "border externalization"), and how will partnerships be managed?
4. How will the EU collaborate with entities like the UN or NGOs to address security and humanitarian concerns?
5. Should there be more physical barriers, or should the focus remain on digital and strategic tools?

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Previous treaties and solutions attempted in correspondence with border control.
2. Immigration policies and how they've changed overtime.
3. Ethical, moral, and legal implications and the importance of taking action, to avoid geopolitical instabilities and future trends.
4. New ways nations could/did strengthen efforts to transition away from border control difficulties.

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