



MADMUN XV
November 2, 2024

Human Rights Council

Background Guide
MADMUN 2024



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Letter from the Dais

To the Delegates of the Human Rights Council,

Welcome to MADMUN XV - Madison Area's 15th Annual Model United Nations Conference! As delegates, you will represent various countries and work together on pressing human rights issues. This background guide will provide an overview of the two main topics you will discuss: LGBTQ+ rights worldwide and addressing Eastern European refugees. The Dais includes Chairs Adra Lange and Carley Boudreau. We are honored to have you participate in one of MADMUN's beginner (and best) committees!

About Us:

My name is Adra Lange (she/her), and I am a senior at Baraboo High School. This is my third year participating in Model United Nations, although I hope to continue through college. Aside from acting as the Secretary-General for my Model UN team, I am the Vice President of Educators Rising, a member of NHS, and a volunteer specialist. I love fashion, yoga, going out with friends, and traveling!

I am Carley Boudreau (she/her). I'm a senior at Whitewater High School. I've participated in MADMUN before; however, this will be my first time chairing. I also hold the positions of NHS president and SHS treasurer at my school. In addition to being the varsity soccer captain and captain of the forensics team, I'm a class officer in StuCo and a mentor. I enjoy sports, my favorite being school, club, and indoor soccer. I like to run, read, thrift, and more!

The committee decided on two substantial topics fitting to our theme of All's Fair in Love and War: LGBTQIA+ rights around the world and addressing Eastern European refugees. For the first topic on LGBTQIA+ rights around the world, please keep in mind your country's stance on discrimination, violence, sexism, and the legalization of same-sex marriage. For the second topic on addressing Eastern European refugees, we wish that everyone stay honest about their country's history of accepting, or not accepting as it may be, refugees from Eastern Europe; also consider whether or not your country has accepted any refugees from anywhere in the world. Lastly, reflect on the treatment of said refugees and access to nationwide opportunities.

In this committee, we hope that through intensive research about your country's perspectives and also extensive collaboration with others in your blocs in committee, we can come up with effective solutions to help dispel the issues of LGBTQIA+ rights around the world and address Eastern European refugees. We also hope that everyone stays civil throughout the conference.

If there is one piece of advice we give to you, let it be this: take comfort in being uncomfortable! Speak up and advocate for your nation during debate. Also, please ensure that you thoroughly answer the guiding questions in each of your papers. As the conference approaches, we will await civil debate and inspiring resolutions, which will shape a wonderful conference filled with diplomacy. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. We look forward to seeing you debating soon!

All the best,

Adra Lange and Carley Boudreau



Topic One - LGBTQIA+ Rights Around the World

Introduction

The acronym LGBTQIA+ represents a diverse community that includes those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex, queer or questioning, and asexual, among others. We understand that people around the world use different terms to express their sexual orientation or gender identity, with these terms often varying widely depending on historical, cultural, and societal contexts.

The battle for obtaining LGBTQIA+ rights is a global issue. Additionally, there are varying degrees of acceptance and legal protection around the world for LGBTQIA+ individuals. Today, many LGBTQIA+ individuals face discrimination, violence, and a lack of basic human rights.

The spectrum of unequal treatment may be influenced by:

- **Gender identity** (how one self-identifies, regardless of sex assigned at birth)
- **Sexual orientation** (who one is attracted to)
- **Gender expression** (how one expresses their gender [e.g. through clothing, hair or mannerisms])
- **Sex characteristics** (e.g. chromosomes, reproductive organs, genitals, or hormone levels.)

Members of the Human Rights Council will examine the current state of LGBTQIA+ rights globally, identifying challenges, and proposing solutions to promote equality and protection for all individuals (regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation).

Historical Background

Major Events in LGBTQIA+ History

- **The Stonewall Riots (June 28, 1969)**

“In 1969, a riot at the Stonewall Inn (later known as the Stonewall Riots) became a turning point. Though few records of the actual raid and riots that followed exist, the oral history of that time has been captured by the participants -- both those who rioted and the police. The Stonewall Riots ignited after a police raid took place at the Stonewall Inn. The tension from ongoing harassment galvanized the LGBTQ community to riot for six days. The protest through the streets of New York City is memorialized as the annual Gay Pride parades that are now celebrated”



- **Harvey Milk (1930-1978)**

“When he won the election to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977, Harvey Milk made history as the first openly gay elected official in California, and one of the first in the United States. His camera store and campaign headquarters at 575 Castro Street (and his apartment above it) were centers of community activism for a wide range of human rights, environmental, labor, and neighborhood issues. During his tenure as supervisor, he helped pass a gay rights ordinance for the city of San Francisco that prohibited anti-gay discrimination in housing and employment.”

- **National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (1979)**

“Marches on Washington, D.C. can serve many functions: to protest peacefully, to make visible the commitment and volume of support behind a movement, to mobilize and nationalize otherwise more fractured, local efforts to organize. The LGBTQ community and its allies have marched on the nation's capital on numerous occasions, beginning with a march and rally that took place on October 14, 1979.”

- **The HIV/AIDS Epidemic (1980s)**

“The United States was the focal point of the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. The disease was first noticed en masse by doctors who treated gay men in Southern California, San Francisco, and New York City in 1981. When cases of AIDS first emerged in the U.S., they tended to originate among men who had sex with other men, hemophiliacs, and heroin users. The prevalence of the disease among gay men in the U.S. in the 80s and 90s initially resulted in a stigma against homosexuals and a general fear and misunderstanding regarding how AIDS was spread. However, as celebrities like Rock Hudson and Freddie Mercury revealed that they had the disease, and Magic Johnson came forward with HIV, and dedicated his retirement to educating others about the virus, attitudes began to change.”

- **“Don’t Ark, Don’t Tell and DOMA (1990s)**

“In 1993, the ‘Don't Ask, Don't Tell’ policy was instituted within the U.S. military, permitting gays to serve in the military but banning homosexual activity. President Clinton's original intention to revoke the prohibition against gays in the military was met with stiff opposition; this compromise, which led to the discharge of thousands of men and women in the armed forces, was the result. On April 25, an estimated 800,000 to one million people participated in the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. The march was a response to ‘Don't Ask Don't Tell’, Amendment 2 in Colorado, and rising hate crimes and ongoing discrimination against the LGBT community. Amendment 2 in Colorado, sought to deny gays and lesbians protection against discrimination, claiming that such rights were ‘special rights.’”

DOMA (1996)



“The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was enacted in 1996 and defined marriage, at the federal level, as the union of one man to one woman. DOMA was primarily brought about by a fear that if states granted same-sex couples the right to marry, the federal government and other states would have to honor those marriages. DOMA allowed states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages granted under the laws of other states. While DOMA did not bar individual states from recognizing same-sex marriage, it imposed constraints on the benefits that all legally married same-sex couples could receive. These benefits included insurance benefits for government employees, social security survivors' benefits, immigration assistance, ability to file for joint bankruptcy, and the filing of joint tax returns, financial aid eligibility otherwise available to heterosexual married couples, and other laws that applied to heterosexual married couples.”

- **Proposition 8 (2008-2013)**

“Prop 8, was a California ballot proposition and a state constitutional amendment passed in the 2008 California state election. The proposition was created by opponents of same-sex marriage brought before the California Supreme Court. As an amendment, it was ruled constitutional by the California Supreme Court in 2009. Among the advocates for Prop 8 were religious organizations, most notably the Roman Catholic church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Once Prop 8 had been upheld by the state courts, two same-sex couples filed a lawsuit against Prop 8 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in *Hollingsworth v. Perry*. On June 26, 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its decision in *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, ruling that proponents of initiatives like Proposition 8 did not possess legal standing to defend the resulting law in federal court. Thus, Prop 8 was held unconstitutional and Governor Brown was free to permit same-sex marriages to recommence.”

- **Obergefell vs. Hodges - Marriage Equality (2015)**

“2015 - The U.S. Supreme Court makes same-sex marriages legal in all 50 states in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

The following is a quote from that decision:

‘No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate, marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death. It would misunderstand these men and women to say they disrespect the idea of marriage. Their plea is that they do respect it, respect it so deeply that they seek to find its fulfillment for themselves. Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization's oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right.’”



- **US Supreme Court Ruling Protections for LGBTQ employees (June, 2020)**

“In a historic decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects gay, lesbian, and transgender employees from discrimination based on sex”

Additional History Before 2000

- A significant wave of activism emerged during the 20th century. Advocates fighting for the civil rights and freedoms of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals. For a long time, members of the LGBTQIA+ community faced widespread public hostility and legal persecution, with very little protection against discrimination shown in employment, housing, military service, and access to both public and private services.
- In 1924, Henry Gerber founded The Society for Human Rights in Chicago. This would be the first **documented** gay rights organization.
- Years following World War II, organizations like the Mattachine Society (formed by activist Harry Hay in 1950) and the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB)(in 1955) were founded, with early leaders such as Frank Kamany, who fought against discriminatory federal policies, and Lilli Vincenz, who documented and promoted the movement through various media.
- The American Psychiatric Association’s diagnostic manual lists homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance in April 1952.
- July 1961- “Illinois becomes the first state to decriminalize homosexuality by repealing their sodomy laws.”
- The police raid at the Stonewall Inn in New York City took place on June 28th, 1969. This starts a trend of protests and demonstrations, and later becomes known as the impetus for the gay civil rights movement in the United States. exactly a year later community members in New York City march through the local streets to recognize the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall riots. This event is named Christopher Street Liberation Day and is now considered the first gay pride parade.
- January 1st, 1973- “Maryland becomes the first state to statutorily ban same-sex marriage.”
- By a vote of 5,854 to 3,810, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders on December 15th, 1973.
- By winning a seat on the Ann Arbor, Michigan City Council, Kathy Kozachenko, in 1974, became the first openly LGBTQIA+ American elected to any public office. Additionally, Elaine Noble became the first openly gay candidate elected to a state office the same year.
- January 14th, 1975- “The first federal gay rights bill is introduced to address discrimination based on sexual orientation. The bill later goes to the Judiciary Committee but is never brought for consideration.”
- October 14th, 1979 - “The first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights takes place. It draws an estimated 75,000 to 125,000 individuals marching for LGBTQ rights.”



- On March 2nd, 1982, Wisconsin outlawed discrimination based on sexual orientation, making them the first state to do so.
- November 30, 1993 - "President Bill Clinton signs a military policy directive that prohibits openly gay and lesbian Americans from serving in the military, but also prohibits the harassment of "closeted" homosexuals. The policy is known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."
- The Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act went into effect in November of 1995. This law allowed for harsh punishment to be given if there is evidence showing that a victim was selected because of the "actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person."
- September 21st, 1996- The Defense of Marriage Act was signed by President Clinton, banning federal recognition of same-sex-marriage, defining marriage to be a union of man and women.
- December 3, 1996 - "Hawaii's Judge Kevin Chang rules that the state does not have a legal right to deprive same-sex couples of the right to marry, making Hawaii the first state to recognize that gay and lesbian couples are entitled to the same privileges as heterosexual married couples."
- October 6-9, 1998- Matthew Shepard, a member of the LGBTQAI+ community, was tied up and beaten near Laramie, Wyoming. Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney, His killers, each receive two life sentences for their crime. This gruesome truth was later made into a movie (The Matthew Shepard Story [2002]) and won a Primetime Emmy Award.



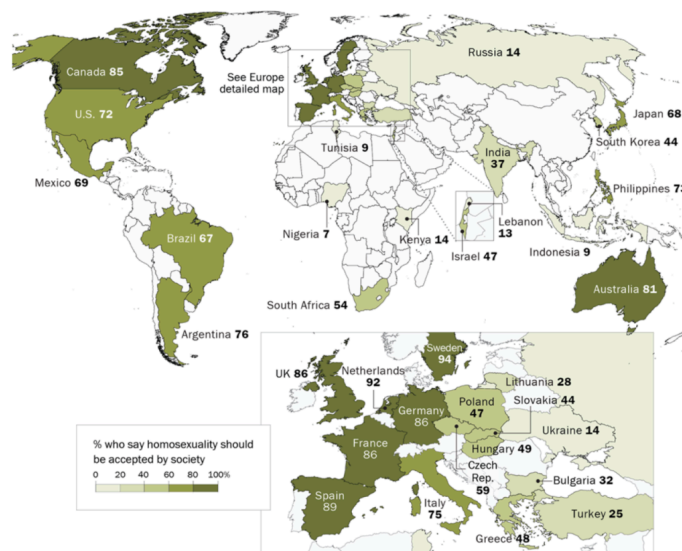
Current Situation + Influential Factors

Statistics under current situation + influential factors are from 2020

Even with significant shifts occurring in laws and social norms regarding same-sex marriage and LGBTQAI+ rights globally, public opinions on the acceptance of homosexuality continues to vary widely across different countries, regions, and levels of economic development.

The global divide on acceptance of homosexuality

% who say homosexuality should be accepted by society



When researching and curating your country's position relating to LGBTQAI+ rights keep in mind other factors which commonly affect greater or less accepting stances.

- In many countries, younger generations are shown to be more accepting of homosexuality

As of 2020, in 22 out of 34 countries, when surveyed, significantly show younger adults are more likely to say homosexuality should be accepted by society when compared to their older counterparts. When surveyed, South Korea showed 79% of 18-29 yr olds believe homosexuality should be accepted by society; Whereas only 23% believed homosexuality should be accepted by society when surveying those 50+. Similarly, Japan saw similar results with a 36% difference when comparing the percent who believe homosexuality should be accepted by society.

- “Those with more education express greater acceptance of homosexuality.”



In surveyed countries, the majority show that individuals with higher education levels are considerably more inclined to believe that homosexuality should be accepted in society compared to those with lower education levels.

- Look for common religious views in your country that may affect that position

“People who see religion as less important in their daily lives are more accepting of homosexuality.” Beliefs about religion, both in terms of its significance in people’s lives and their religious affiliation, greatly influence how societies perceive the acceptability of homosexuality worldwide. In 25 of the 34 countries surveyed, individuals who view religion as “somewhat,” “not too,” or “not at all” important in their lives are more likely to believe that homosexuality should be accepted compared to those who consider religion to be “very” important. For example, among Israelis, those who deem religion less important are almost three times more likely than those who consider it very important to say that society should accept homosexuality.

These significant differences are evident across a wide range of both highly religious and less religious countries, including the Czech Republic (a 38-percentage-point difference), South Korea (38), Canada (33), the U.S. (29), Slovakia (29), Greece (28), and Turkey (26).

Religious affiliation also plays a crucial role in shaping views on the acceptance of homosexuality. For example, individuals without religious affiliations, often referred to as religious “nones” (including those who identify as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular”), tend to be more accepting of homosexuality. While opinions among the religiously unaffiliated can vary widely, in nearly every country surveyed with a sufficient number of unaffiliated respondents, “nones” are generally more accepting of homosexuality than those with religious affiliations. In most cases, the affiliated comparison group consists of Christians. Even within Christianity, Catholics are generally more likely to accept homosexuality than Protestants and evangelicals in countries where sufficient data is available for analysis.

A notable example of this trend is seen in South Korea, where religiously unaffiliated Koreans are about twice as likely to say that homosexuality should be accepted by society (60%) compared to those who are Christian (24%) or Buddhist (31%). Similarly, in Hungary, 62% of “nones” believe society should accept homosexuality, compared with only 48% of Catholics. In the few countries surveyed with large enough Muslim populations for analysis, acceptance of homosexuality is notably low among Muslims. However, in Nigeria, acceptance is low among both Christians and Muslims (6% and 8%, respectively). In Israel, Jews are much more likely to say that homosexuality is acceptable compared to Israeli Muslims (53% and 17%, respectively).



Bloc Positions

1. Authoritarian and Traditional Society

Countries: Some parts of Central Asia, rural areas in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

Position: Combination of authoritarian governance with traditional norms. This approach leads to minimal recognition (or sometimes repression) of LGBTQAI+ identities. Limited public support for LGBTQAI+ rights.

2. Progressive Democracies

Countries: Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, parts of Latin America (e.g. Argentina, Uruguay), South Africa.

Position: Generally supportive of LGBTQAI+ rights. Has legal recognition of same-sex-marriage and anti-discrimination protection. Supportive public for LGBTQAI+ issues is relatively high, with some ongoing debates in some areas.

3. Emerging and Mixed Stance Nations

Countries: Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Israel, Japan, some Latin American countries, parts of Africa.

Position: Show a mix of progress and resistance. Some legalized same-sex-marriage or have anti-discrimination laws enacted. Varying public acceptance. Typically with younger generations being more supportive.

4. Conservative and Religious Nations

Countries: Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, parts of SouthEast Asia (e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia), Russia, China.

Position: Either LGBTQAI+ rights restricted or just non-existent. Has legal barriers as well as societal barriers against LGBTQIA+ community/individuals. Low public acceptance. Possibility of having same-sex-marriage and same-sex relationships criminalized/illegal.



Questions to Consider

1. How does your country's government address issues such as discrimination, violence, and hate crimes against LGBTQAI+ individuals?
2. What challenges do LGBTQAI+ refugees and asylum seekers face in your country, and how does your government respond to these challenges?
3. Are there any legal or social barriers that prevent LGBTQAI+ individuals in your country from accessing healthcare, education, employment, or other essential services?
4. What is the current status of LGBTQAI+ rights in your country, and how does it compare to international human rights standards?
5. What cultural or societal factors influence the acceptance or rejection of LGBTQAI+ rights in your country?
6. What role (if any) do non-governmental organizations and civil society groups play in advocating for LGBTQAI+ rights in your country?

If struggling, consider what bloc position your country may fall under

Sources for preliminary research

1. List of United Nations resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council:
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/united-nations-resolutions-sexual-orientation-gender-identity-and-sex-characteristics>

for link above: once opened the link, under "Human Rights Council" click the blue text, then your preferred language to access that resolution

2. United Nations Reports and Resolutions:
<https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/lgbtqi-plus>



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Topic Two - Addressing Eastern European Refugees

Introduction

Refugees are defined as “people forced to flee their own country and seek safety in another country.”¹ While refugees have been around for hundreds of years, World War II is one of the most well known events that led to a major refugee crisis. World War II dislocated 55 million people in Europe alone, and after the war, 11 million displaced persons remained.² What happened to those people? While some returned home, others did not.³ Those who did not return home became known as *refugees*.

In past years, Eastern European refugees have faced criticism from the media as to why they leave their home countries. Without all the facts, the media has led people to believe that refugees take jobs from nations while simultaneously destroying their economies and communities. This is false, as new research shows that refugees have positive socio economic impacts, with refugee women contributing millions of dollars to the annual global GDP.⁴ Around the world, “three in four adults...agree with the principle that people should be able to take refuge in other countries to escape war or persecution, and attitudes toward refugees have become more positive.”⁵ This is a stark contrast to the WWII era, when officials treated each refugee not wishing to return to their home country with forceful repatriation.⁶

The treatment of refugees in the past warrants discussion about the governmental plans each nation has to aid and protect refugees. If refugees can help economies flourish, then nations must also be willing to provide aid, specifically financial, health, shelter, and anything else needed to live comfortably. Given this complex issue, states must enact further measures to ensure that the safety of refugees and civilians alike, is a priority.

¹ “Refugees.” *UNHCR*, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/refugees>.

² Calhoun, Mark T., and Lesley J. McNair. ““The Last Million.” Eastern European Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany.” *The National WWII Museum*, 4 April 2022, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/last-million-eastern-european-displaced-persons-postwar-germany>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ “5 Myths & Misconceptions About Refugees | Women For Women.” *Women for Women International*, 12 June 2023, <https://womenforwomen.org.uk/blog/5-myths-misconceptions-about-refugees#main-content>.

⁵ “World Refugee Day 2022: More than eight in 10 Australians say people should be able to take refuge in other countries.” *Ipsos*, 17 June 2022, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-au/world-refugee-day-2022-more-eight-10-australians-say-people-should-be-able-to-take-refuge-other>.

⁶ Calhoun, Mark T., and Lesley J. McNair. ““The Last Million.” Eastern European Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany.” *The National WWII Museum*, 4 April 2022, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/last-million-eastern-european-displaced-persons-postwar-germany>.



Historical Background

World War II

In October of 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, “When this ghastly war ends, there may be not one million but ten million or twenty million men, women, and children... who will enter into the wide picture—the problem of the human refugee.”⁷ Unfortunately, President Roosevelt was not too far off; during World War II, 55 million people were dislocated in Europe. After the war, over 11 million of those displaced persons (DPs) were still uprooted, eight million of which were in Germany.⁸ Those DPs “included about six million civilian volunteer and forced laborers [LINK Nazi Forced Labor Policy in Eastern Europe article], two million prisoners of war, and 700,000 surviving concentration camp prisoners. Additionally, thousands of anticommunists and former Nazi collaborators from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia fled the Red Army as it reconquered Eastern Europe.”⁹ From May to September of 1945, most displaced persons returned home of their own accord. Others were forcibly removed by Soviet authorities. However, at the end of September, 1.2 million displaced people had stayed in Germany and refused to return home. These displaced persons came to be known as “the last million” and migrated mainly to the United States, Canada, and Australia. Their refusal to return back to their home countries impacted the development of international refugee protection heavily and led to the first definition of a refugee.

Brief History of European Refugees

Europe has extensive history regarding the offered sanctuary toward refugees.¹⁰ In 1951, after World War II, the Refugee Convention was initiated in response to the displaced persons crisis. For nearly 70 years since, “Europe has received people seeking asylum as they flee conflict, persecution and human rights violations.”¹¹ As a result of the convention, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) came about. Even still, the UNHCR works in Europe to protect refugees and ensure their well-being. Additionally, the UNHCR supports individual governments while aiming to find solutions for refugees; this includes family reunions, sponsor programs, and visas.¹²

⁷ Calhoun, Mark T., and Lesley J. McNair. ““The Last Million:” Eastern European Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany.” *The National WWII Museum*, 4 April 2022, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/last-million-eastern-european-displaced-persons-postwar-germany>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ “UNHCR Europe.” *UNHCR*, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/where-we-work/europe>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

**Difference between a refugee, asylum-seeker, and migrant:**

- A refugee is a person who has been “forced to flee their country in fear of persecution.” They are legally protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention, as well as other legal forums, committees, organizations, etc.¹³
- An asylum-seeker is a person “whose request for refugee status, or asylum, is being processed.”¹⁴
- A migrant is a person who has moved to another country usually to improve their lives by finding work, receiving an education, or reuniting with family.¹⁵

List of Eastern European countries:

- Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechia, Lithuania, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Serbia, North Macedonia, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kosovo, Türkiye, Austria, Kazakhstan.

Where do Refugees Come From in the Modern Age?

“According to UNHCR data, by the end of 2023, the number of people displaced across borders hosted in European countries was 13 million.¹⁶ This statistic is a dramatic increase from 2022 due to the war on Ukraine.¹⁷ Now, most refugees go to one of two countries, Türkiye or Germany; Türkiye has over 3.3 million refugees and Germany hosts 2.6 million refugees.¹⁸ Additionally, “There are also some 493,000 stateless people in Europe, who have been denied a nationality and lack access to basic rights such as education, health care, employment and freedom of movement.”¹⁹ While two nations bear the brunt of the refugee crisis, why aren’t more countries helping? The failure to divide responsibilities of this humanitarian crisis is putting a strain on the two nations, but it is also affecting the refugees.²⁰

As helpful as the EU has been, they are struggling because member countries no longer want to contribute. “In total, EU countries have provided protection to 7.5 million refugees over the last ten years,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “UNHCR Europe.” *UNHCR*, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/where-we-work/europe>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Christophersen, Eirik, et al. “A few countries take responsibility for most of the world's refugees.” *Norwegian Refugee Council*, <https://www.nrc.no/shorthand/fr/a-few-countries-take-responsibility-for-most-of-the-worlds-refugees/index.html>.



which corresponds to 1.63 percent of the population.²¹ This number is extremely underwhelming and upsetting. Nations that have the means to accept and help refugees simply do not want to open their borders. In recent years, Greece and Italy have begun to refuse boats with asylum seekers to dock in their ports.²² Regardless of the monetary support from the EU to strengthen their asylum systems, these two nations refuse to do so.

While some nations claimed they could not accept refugees due to their lack of economic growth, sharp increases in recent decades have negated this statement. As written by the Norwegian Refugee Council, “A country that can afford to host the Summer Olympics can also afford to receive a few thousand refugees each year. This plight simply is not about money, as the EU and similar political and governmental organizations have offered money to nations that open their borders. This plight is about humanity.

Current Situation

Netherlands

The Netherlands has been working with other countries in the European Union (EU) to help solve the ongoing refugee crisis. Four major parts of their ongoing plan for helping refugees include: addressing the root causes, reception in the region of origin, combatting people smuggling, and asylum or return.²³ The Netherlands’ government has stood behind these policies; although the collective EU approach toward refugees is that their influx to Europe should be managed, the EU also believes that “people fleeing war and oppression must be assured protection.”²⁴ While the Netherlands does not have any ongoing crises that makes the nation unable to help refugees, they have wholeheartedly committed to aiding refugees from all around the world, following these four steps.

1. Addressing the root causes²⁵
 - a. Refugees flee their countries due to persecution, conflict, violence, or other political circumstances. The European Union wishes to pinpoint the root cause of refugee flows and works toward attaining peace in many nations, such as Syria and Libya.
 - b. As the EU pinpoints these causes, the Union hopes to reduce the number of refugees that enter their borders and instead, welcome *immigrants*.
2. Reception in the region of origin²⁶

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ “Tackling the refugee problem | Asylum policy.” *Government.nl*, <https://www.government.nl/topics/asylum-policy/tackling-the-refugee-problem>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.



- a. The European Union supports the reception of refugees in their region of origin so they do not have to commit to dangerous journeys. The end goal is for refugees to be able to return to their home countries once it is safe. With this, the EU has helped countries that take in refugees in the following ways: building reception camps and providing education for children and medical care.
3. Combatting people smuggling ²⁷
 - a. The Netherlands is hypervigilant for people smugglers. These smugglers often trick refugees into believing they can get work and asylum in Europe, take them on dangerous journeys, and ultimately, many refugees perish on route.
 - b. To tackle this issue effectively, the Netherlands works alongside other EU member states, Europol, Interpol, and Frontex. These organizations are law enforcement or international crime adjacent, and wholeheartedly committed to protecting refugees. These bodies also support EU nations and work with countries of origin to organize modes of transportation or other protections. On Africa's coast, the EU has aided some nations with protection in their coastal borders and waters.
4. Asylum or return ²⁸
 - a. All refugees entering the Netherlands and the EU must apply for asylum. "The Netherlands grants asylum to people who are in danger, risk torture or inhuman treatment in their country of origin. For example if there is a war in their country. First, however, special procedures are followed to determine whether an asylum seeker genuinely needs protection."
 - b. The special procedures are as follows: applying for asylum at an application center, interview (with interpreter present), IND assesses applications, asylum residence permit or return, application for judicial review, permanent residence permit.
 - i. These procedures may be accelerated if another EU member state is responsible for processing the application, the asylum seeker has already been granted protection in another EU member state, or if the asylum seeker is from a country on the list of safe countries of origin.
 1. This list comprises the following nations:
 - a. Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Georgia, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kosovo, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Senegal, Serbia, Tunisia, United States.
 - ii. The Netherlands holds the right to adjust the list of safe countries of origin and nations may be added or removed, depending on how safe the nation is deemed to be.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.



Türkiye

The European Union and member states have taken significant steps to address the migration affairs on the Eastern Mediterranean route and also to support refugees in Türkiye. “The Eastern Mediterranean route refers to irregular arrivals in Greece, Cyprus, and Bulgaria.”²⁹ Since 2015, shockingly large numbers of refugees seeking shelter and asylum from the Syrian civil war have presented themselves in the EU.³⁰ To combat the unsafe travels from refugees along this route, the EU-Türkiye statement from March of 2016 was implemented.³¹ This long and complex 9 step statement details the issues that have arisen due to the high number of refugees entering through the route. It reiterates that for every Syrian returned to Türkiye from a Greek island, another Syrian will be resettled in Türkiye under the United Nations criteria. The next steps discuss measures to prevent illegal migration and soon after, visa requirements will be lifted, and the disbursement of 3 billion euros will be given out to refugees in the fields of health, education and infrastructure.³²

Additionally, Türkiye has created facilities for refugees and they have seen drastic improvements to living conditions.³³

- “65 projects have been implemented to cover the response to basic needs, protection, education and health
- 701,000 refugee children supported to attend school
- Free and equitable access to healthcare for 4 million refugees
- More than 2.6 million refugees have received support for their basic daily needs”

Türkiye, similarly to the Netherlands, has the means to put in the serious and costly work to help refugees. Most notably, alongside the European Council, they have raised 3 billion euros for refugees and host communities to cover costs from 2021-2023. The funding is not only valuable, but life changing to refugees. “The funding [continues] to support in the priority areas of basic needs and education, migration management and border control and also in humanitarian support.”³⁴

²⁹ “EU action to address the migration situation in Türkiye.” *Consilium.europa.eu*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/eastern-mediterranean-route/>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.



Ukraine

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Over two years later, Ukraine still faces “widespread destruction, loss of life and suffering...[as] millions of people...were forced to flee their homes.”³⁵ More than 14.6 million people, equating to 40% of the total population, were in need of drastic humanitarian aid.³⁶ As a result, a Regional Refugee Response Plan was implemented and has been updated annually to support the countries who have graciously opened their borders.³⁷ Over 300 partner countries support “the host governments of Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia”³⁸ and more. The UNHCR has helped protect numerous refugees from Ukraine.

Although the UNHCR has done much to help refugees, they cannot protect them from the media. Shortly after the invasion, the media began to spin lies about refugees. They wrote stories stating that refugees fleeing had planned to come into nations, steal jobs, and ruin economies. Without all the facts, the media scared viewers and painted refugees in a bad light. None of those lies were true, and to set the narrative straight, Ukrainian refugees took things into their own hands. Ukrainian influencers started telling their stories utilizing social media platforms. Now, information that is spread about the refugee crisis comes straight from refugees themselves.³⁹ Since the invasion in February 2022, Ukrainian influencers have utilized TikTok and similar media platforms to raise awareness about the ongoing crisis. Their followers shared the messages from the videos and soon, the promotion of humanitarian support was rampant.⁴⁰

Alongside the UNHCR, the European Union (EU) has also been involved in showing “solidarity in action by helping people in need.”⁴¹ The EU gave direct aid, emergency protection assistance, and granted protection to refugees fleeing the invasion.⁴² Additionally, the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) was activated for the first time.⁴³ Under this directive, refugees were given access to housing, education, health care, and work while in Union nations.⁴⁴ Second, the Solidarity Platform was set up to

³⁵ “UNHCR Europe.” *UNHCR*, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/where-we-work/europe>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Karalis, Magdalene. “Russia-Ukraine War Through the Eyes of Social Media | GJIA.” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 2 February 2024, <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2024/02/02/russia-ukraine-through-the-eyes-of-social-media/>.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ “Migration management: Welcoming refugees from Ukraine - European Commission.” *Migration and Home Affairs*, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migration-management/migration-management-welcoming-refugees-ukraine_en.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*



ensure the TPD was actively working with nations.⁴⁵ The Platform brought together EU countries, EU agencies, Ukrainian authorities, International partners, and more.⁴⁶ A Platform of this magnitude has brought nothing but positive effects and large aid to the Ukrainian people.

Bloc Positions

Favoring the Forcibly Displaced

Nations favoring the forcibly displaced exist with the ideology that “refugees make a positive contribution to their country.”⁴⁷ Countries that house refugees understand the humanitarian implications of the crisis that can occur if they turn refugees away. For instance, Türkiye is the largest host country for refugees, with most coming from Syria where an ongoing conflict has displaced families since 2011.⁴⁸ Without neighboring countries opening their borders to aid refugees, long treks might be more common and danger may ensue for refugees who do not speak other languages. In 1951, over 70% of countries recognized by the United Nations agreed to provide refugees with protections, following World War II.⁴⁹ Although 149 countries agreed to this international pact, the wealthiest nations in the world only host 24% of the world’s refugees, while over $\frac{3}{4}$ reside in developing nations.⁵⁰ The most accepting countries for refugees include Colombia, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, and Türkiye.⁵¹

Disfavoring the Forcibly Displaced

While 70% of United Nations recognized countries made a pledge to protect refugees, some have broken that promise. Among those nations, Hungary, North Macedonia, Serbia, Greece, and Italy are the least accepting of refugees.⁵² Experts give opinions as to why some countries open their borders and others close them to refugees. The consensus? Criminal activity, economic troubles, danger, and lack of

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “World Refugee Day 2022: More than eight in 10 Australians say people should be able to take refuge in other countries.” *Ipsos*, 17 June 2022, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-au/world-refugee-day-2022-more-eight-10-australians-say-people-should-be-able-to-take-refuge-other>.

⁴⁸ “Refugee facts, statistics and FAQs.” International Rescue Committee, 26 September 2023, <https://www.rescue.org/article/facts-about-refugees-key-facts-faqs-and-statistics>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “UNHCR Refugee Data Finder.” *UNHCR*, 13 June 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

⁵² “Countries Less Accepting of Migrants, Study Finds.” *USNews.com*, 23 September 2020, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2020-09-23/countries-less-accepting-of-migrants-study-finds>.



diversity.⁵³ Nations that close their borders to refugees list these four reasons as legitimate worries for their nations regarding refugees. Additionally, some nations, such as China, believe that as they did not create certain political turmoils, they do not have to bear the responsibility of protecting refugees that flee from crisis.⁵⁴ When the 1951 refugee convention was convened, nations around the world did not expect a refugee crisis at the magnitude of what the world has today, yet some nations do not want to claim responsibility.⁵⁵

Questions to Consider

1. What is your respective country's current governmental plan regarding Eastern European refugees, and refugees in general?
2. Does your country have existing guidelines in place for refugees? Are they effective? Why or why not?
3. Define short-term and long-term goals for the task of resolving the Eastern-European refugee crisis.
4. How do different countries around the world approach the Eastern European refugee crisis; are their policies effective in inspiring a well-rounded resolution?
5. Do attempts at alleviating extreme refugee crises from populated countries require foreign assistance?
6. Consider how countries in the global east have different economic structures and incentives that may create an environment to help foster refugees. How would a resolution reflect these differences?

If struggling, consider what bloc position your country may fall under

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⁵³ Surana, Kavitha. "Why Do Some Countries Get Away With Taking Fewer Refugees?" *Foreign Policy*, 12 September 2017,
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⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.



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