



University  
of Basel

# **International Organizations and the Challenges of the Pandemic:** The Examples of the WHO, the EU and NATO

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# Agenda

- 1 What is an International Organization?
- 2 The Current State of International Organizations
- 3 International Organizations in the Pandemic:
  - 3.1 The World Health Organization (WHO)
  - 3.2 The European Union (EU)
  - 3.3 The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
- 4 Some Conclusions

# What is an International Organization?

## At least two different meanings:

- In a wider sense: all kinds of entities that act on the international plane, including international sport organizations, TNCs, NGOs
- In international law: more limited, technical term

# What is an International Organization?

## Characteristics of an International Organization

- Founded by an international agreement
- Members are States or other international Organizations
- At least one organ with a will of its own
- Generally has international legal personality

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# The Current State of International Organizations

- Important forums for intergovernmental cooperation
- Cover a wide range of areas that call for international collaboration:
- Big questions of peace and security (UN) to economic and technical cooperation (WTO, UPU, ITU, ICAO)
- Creation flourished following World War II

# The Current State of International Organizations

- In recent years: less advantageous conditions
- Strong criticism:  
inefficiency  
lack of democratic accountability  
political agendas
- Considerable consequences:  
withdrawal UK from EU  
withdrawal US from UNESCO
- New trend: States shift their interaction to less formal platforms

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# The World Health Organisation (WHO)

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- Founded in 1948
- Specialized agency of the United Nations
- 194 member states
- More than 7000 employees
- More than 150 local and regional offices
- \$ 2.5 to 3 billion annual budget

# The World Health Organization in the Pandemic



**Infection prevention and control (IPC) training**  
© WHO Bangladesh

# The World Health Organisation in the Pandemic

- Gathered and shared information
- Declared Public Health Emergency of International Concern
- Distributes protective equipment, test kits
- Invests in research for treatments and a vaccine
- Sends experts and emergency medical teams
- Published extensively on myths regarding the pandemic

# The World Health Organisation in the Pandemic

## Insufficient Competences:

- No legal means to obtain relevant information from member states
- No legal means to force inspections
- Relies on diplomatic efforts and hope for compliance
- Result:  
delayed operations  
strong criticism from other member states

# The World Health Organisation in the Pandemic

## Fragmentary Funding:

- Annual budget \$ 2.5 to 3 billion
- Only 20% financed by mandatory member contributions
- 80 % voluntary contributions with specified purpose
- Additional \$ 1.7 billion required for 2020, only 50% so far obtained
- Largest contributor US (15%) stopped payments
- No efficient sanctions available
- Withdrawal threats

# The European Union (EU)

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- Started with the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952
- 27 member states
- 32 000 employees
- Annual budget € 165 Billion
- Supranational Organization:  
e.g. “infringement proceedings” before the European Court of justice

# The European Union in the Pandemic



**Milan, Italy: FFP2 protective masks from the rescEU reserve are unloaded from a military airplane coming from Bucharest, Romania**

© European Union, 2020,  
Photographer: Piero Cruciatti

# The European Union in the Pandemic

- EU Civil Protection Mechanism activated:
- Emergency Response Coordination Centre coordinates assistance
- Reserve of pre-committed assistance at disposal
- EU bears main costs
- Assistance delivered to EU members and others
- Establishment of the rescEU stockpile of medical equipment
- Use of the Joint Procurement of Medical Countermeasures



# The European Union in the Pandemic

- Only limited competences in health and emergency border regulations:
- EU involved, main decisions by member states
- Recommended restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU
- Advocated for the reduction of restrictions at internal borders
- Issued guidance for the common lifting of containment measures

# The European Union in the Pandemic

- Particularly strong competences regarding the internal market:
- All cases of state aid require approval by the European Commission
- Intervened in cases where national governments intended to violate EU consumer protection laws
- Plans for economic relief through 500 Billion EU Recovery Fund
- EU also active to counter disinformation

# North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

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- Established in 1949
- Currently 30 member states
- Structure of civilian and military elements
- Article 5 NATO Treaty: “mutual defence clause”
- Article 3 NATO Treaty: civil resilience and preparedness

# NATO in the Pandemic



**The NATO-supported Strategic Airlift International Solution (SALIS) brings 75 tonnes of equipment to Poland**  
© NATO / Ministry of National Defence of Poland

# NATO in the Pandemic

- Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre:
- Distributes the requests of disaster stricken countries to NATO allies and others
- Offers of assistance are agreed bilaterally
- Costs are not covered by NATO, no pre-committed assistance
- NATO Support and Procurement Agency:
- Logistics support
- Use of NATO's Rapid Air Mobility process
- NATO involved in dealing with disinformation

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**Thank you**  
for your attention.

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