

# Poland Wants New “Marshall Plan” to “Save” Belarus

By [Lucas Leiroz de Almeida](#)

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*Poland is currently experiencing one of the most difficult periods in its recent history. The effects of the new coronavirus pandemic have been devastating in the country, considering that it has effectively reduced Polish industrial production – which decreased by 24.6% compared to last year – and structurally weakened the tourism sector in which the orders in hotels and restaurants fell by 80%, registering the worst numbers in the country’s history. Unemployment also affects the Polish people terribly. Only in April this year, 165 thousand people lost their sources of income due to the crisis generated by the virus, which is a number five times greater than the Polish citizens who lost their jobs during the 2008 crisis. Still, small and medium-sized private businesses have completely broken down, leading to countless breaches of workers’ contracts who are now unemployed and, therefore, dependent on government aid. The authorities will have to pay benefits of 209 million zlotys to unemployed citizens, the money that comes from the Ministry of Labor’s social security fund, which further increases the government spending. In total, the state has already spent 47 billion dollars to fight the coronavirus pandemic, even though it has had few practical results so far.*

Faced with this absolutely catastrophic scenario, the most strategic attitude for the Polish state would be to invest heavily in a national economic recovery plan, rescuing companies affected by the crisis and guaranteeing maximum employment for the people. However, the Polish government’s priorities appear to be different. Poland recently announced an economic aid plan for Belarus valued at more than 500 million dollars. The project goes far beyond the Polish borders since an economic recovery plan for Belarus was already presented to the European Union under the condition of new elections in Minsk. Such economic aid from the EU is valued at more than a billion dollars and is still being evaluated in the bloc.

However, Poland’s situation in the EU is getting worse. Because of the crisis of democracy in the country The EU wants to pressure Poland to move forward in its democratic process through economic punishments that will further affect the Polish economy, and it is possible that Warsaw will soon stop receiving its annual aid from the EU. In fact, despite contributing to various Western interests, Poland is still a nation considered “retrograde” on issues such as the implementation of democracy and the defense of human rights, which creates serious problems in their relations.

Interestingly, neither the crisis of relations between the EU and Poland nor the Polish economic collapse seems enough to stop the plan to “save” Belarus. In this sense, to ensure that the plan for Belarus is carried forward, the Polish government is investing in a truly dishonest propaganda. Polish Finance Minister Tadeusz Kosciuszko even announced that

“everything is very good with public finances and the banking sector is working normally”, which is contradicted by the country’s official data. Still, the little “stability” that remains in Polish public finances is thanks to European aid – every year Warsaw receives 11 billion euros from the EU.

It is also important to consider that not only is Poland experiencing a serious economic crisis, but also the EU itself is inserted in a scenario of great economic difficulties, which is being aggravated by the advance of the second wave of the new coronavirus. The pandemic makes several European nations impose measures of social isolation that severely hamper economic development. So, what would be the advantage of offering so much money to Belarus?

The idea of a “Marshall plan” to “save” Belarus must be analyzed far beyond the economic aspect. The EU is more concerned with the economy of its members than with the situation of Belarusians. We can only understand the real nature of the plan when we analyze it from a strictly political point of view: in fact, Poland is so concerned with Lukashenko’s victory that in order to change the Belarusian scenario it demands to spend such huge amount of money.

The pandemic situation in Belarus is far less worrying than in Poland or any European country. The small Slavic nation has managed to control the major effects of the crisis. In this sense, the proposal for economic aid from Poland is not intended to rescue a country in ruins due to a crisis, but simply to guarantee the interests of the nation that sends such “aid” which mostly destined for the Belarusian political opposition. Poland has been one of the most active countries in the Belarusian political crisis, openly supporting the opposition, collaborating with protest organizers and protecting political activists who committed crimes during the unrest.

Both Poland and the EU see Lukashenko’s victory as a threat due to the rapprochement between the Belarusian president and Russia, which has strengthened considerably recently. In parallel, Poland, although acting as a satellite of Western interests, is far from the democratic ideal desired by Europeans, who are already considering some kind of sanctions against Warsaw. In this sense, attracting the focus of European concern to Belarus and trying to promote a falsely “democratic” and “humanitarian” campaign of economic support for the opposition is an interesting strategy for Poland. However, until Europeans actually decide to send the large sum requested by Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, it is Poland itself that is leading this “new Marshall plan” while its own population suffers from unemployment and exponential increase in poverty.

Undoubtedly, Poland’s priority must be to protect its own people, while the EU’s priority must be to ensure that all its members are indeed in line with the democratic values and standards upheld by the organization (isn’t it the case with Poland?) before worrying about nations outside the bloc.

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*Lucas Leiroz is a research fellow in international law at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.*

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