



**EUNPACK**

A CONFLICT SENSITIVE UNPACKING OF  
THE EU COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH  
TO CONFLICT AND CRISES MECHANISM

**Workshop,  
European Café Debate and presentation of initial findings in  
Iraq**

Deliverable 7.10

(Version 1; 22.11.2017)

Prepared by:  
MERI



Project acronym:	EUNPACK
Project full title:	Good intentions, mixed results – A conflict sensitive unpacking of the EU comprehensive approach to conflict and crisis mechanisms
Grant agreement no.:	693337
Type of action:	Research and Innovation Action
Project start date:	01 April 2016
Project duration:	36 months
Call topic:	H2020-INT-05-2015
Project web-site:	www.eunpack.eu
Document:	Workshop, European Café Debate and presentation of initial findings in Iraq
Deliverable number:	D7.10
Deliverable title:	Workshop, European Café Debate and presentation of initial findings in Iraq
Due date of deliverable:	30.11.2017
Actual submission date:	28.11.2017
Editors:	Line Hammeren (NUPI)
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Participating beneficiaries:	NUPI, UMan, FUB, SSSA, ARG, MERI, AREU
Work Package no.:	7
Work Package title:	Crisis response in the extended neighbourhood
Work Package leader:	FUB
Work Package participants:	NUPI, UMan, FUB, SSSA, ARG, MERI, AREU
Estimated person-months for deliverable:	0,15
Dissemination level:	Public
Nature:	Report
Version:	1
Draft/Final:	Final
No of pages (including cover):	10
Keywords:	Iraq, EU crisis response, Peacekeeping, Impact

# Perceptions of EU Crisis Response in Iraq

MERI is pleased to host a round table for stakeholders and experts to debate the ” **Perceptions and impact of EU’s Crisis Response in Iraq**“.

This event is made to coincide with the launch of a MERI Paper which provides a bottom-up analysis of the impact of the European Union’s (EU) crisis response policies in Iraq. It examines how the EU’s engagement in crisis response is received and perceived by different local actors throughout the recent ISIS-related conflict cycle.

**Presenters:** Khogir Wirya, Kamaran Palani (MERI Research Fellows)

**Discussants:** Clarisse Pesztory (EU Head in Erbil) and Morton Boas (Norwegian Institute for International Affairs)

**Date:** 22, September, 2017 (Wednesday)

**Time:** 14:00-15:30

**This event is by invitation only**

# Agenda

Wednesday, 22, November, 2017

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<b>14:00</b>	Introduction and Welcome	Dlawer Ala'Aldeen, MERI
<b>14:10</b>	Overview of ENPACK	Morten Boas, NUPI
<b>14:25</b>	Presentation of Study Findings	Khogir Wirya and Kamaran Palani, MERI
<b>14:45</b>	Q&A and Discussions	Participants
<b>15:30</b>	Conclusion	Clarisse Pasztory, EU Mission, KRI

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## List of Participants

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1	Lisa Raffy	IOM
2	Hasan Ali Omer	Jyan Foundation
3	Sangar Youssif	Peace and Freedom Organisation
4	Khanzad Ahmed	IERPC
5	Barbara Foresti	IRC
6	Andrea Berardi	DRC
7	Rubin Stewart	OCHA
8	Hoshang Mohammed	Joint Crisis Coordination Centre, Kurdistan Regional Government
9	Javier Rio Navaro	ECHO
10	Aram Abdullah	Netherlands Consulate General Erbil
11	Ary Taher	Public Aid Organisation
12	Anne Mitaru	OXFAM
13	Hussein Botani	Qandil
14	Khogir Wirya	MERI
15	Sardar Sdiq	Geneva Call
16	Clarisse Pazrory	EU Head of Mission
17	Atif Hameed	Geneva Call
18	Chiya	Norwegian People's Aid
19	Alto Labetbun	Norwegian People's Aid
20	Rebar Bakr	Qandil
21	Kamaran Palani	MERI
22	Fuad Smail	MERI
23	Amanj	Salahaddin University
24	Adnan Majeed	Salahaddin University
25	Khidir Domle	Minority Rights Activist

## **MERI Debate on European Union Crisis Response in Iraq**

The European Union (EU) has been actively engaged in responding to the numerous crises that have been facing Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) since 2003. With the aim of examining local perceptions towards EU’s crisis response endeavors, the Middle East Research Institute (MERI) has recently published a report under the title of “Perceptions of EU Crisis Response in Iraq”. The research was conducted as part of a larger study funded by the EU’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, and titled ‘Good intentions, mixed results – A conflict sensitive unpacking of the EU comprehensive approach to conflict and crisis mechanisms’.

Before a capacity crowd, local and international officials, academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) discussed the report’s findings and offered actionable recommendations that the EU can take to improve visibility, efficiency, and effectiveness of its engagement in crisis response in Iraq.



### **Key Findings**

Based on 295 interviews with refugees, internally displaced individuals (IDPs), local government, and civil society organizations (CSOs) in Erbil, Sulaimaniah, Dohuk, and Kirkuk governorates, the research finds that the majority of respondents (96 percent) were aware of international actors’ involvement in crisis response in Iraq, of these only 37.7 percent knew about EU’s engagement in the field. Conversely, awareness and satisfaction is less clear-cut with regard to the

sectoral programs, which the EU and/or its member states typically address as part of their mission mandates in Iraq.

Whereas respondents were decidedly aware of EU's humanitarian aid programs, they were far less aware and satisfied with security sector reform, rule of law, and development aid initiatives.



## **Despite an Information Gap, the EU is Positively Viewed**

Ever since its early days, the EU has played leading international roles, providing various forms of developmental, technical, political, and diplomatic roles in as diverse countries as the Balkans, Ukraine, Libya, and Iraq. More to the point, because local beneficiary communities perceive the EU less suspiciously than other actors, they tend to view it fairly positively. Yet, these communities appear to lack the knowledge about what the EU exactly does, why it does, and what it tries to achieve. This state of affairs creates an information and communication gap, requiring studies on how the EU interacts and reaches out to beneficiaries.



In Iraq in particular, and while EU’s roles are viewed largely favorably, the gap is particularly pronounced in the fields of security sector reform and rule of law, where merely 18 and 29.5 percent of respondents acknowledged awareness or satisfaction with the EU’s security and rule of law initiatives respectively. But this is due primarily to the lack of EU’s initiatives in these fields. As put by Ms. Clarisse Pasztory, “the EU has yet to launch initiatives with respect to security sector reform.” This statement refers largely to EU’s activities post-June 2014, since the EU has in the past engaged in a rule of law [mission mandate](#), where thousands of mid and high-level Iraqi officials were trained in criminal justice, rule of law, and modern investigative policing between 2003-2013.





## Lacking Visibility

Discussants noted a number of reasons for the lack of visibility within certain EU's programs in Iraq. The first is related to an inadequate communication strategy that can clearly and timely communicate EU's initiatives and mission to local community. The second is related to the fact that most EU's programs are implemented by partner organizations, not by the EU. The failure to properly display EU's logos by partner organizations may result in a lack of awareness about EU-affiliated and funded programs. The third reason is attributed to EU's top-down approach where elites and individuals with high-level positions in local government (in the recipient country) are often the ones with the most knowledge about EU activities and involvement.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the EU at times purposefully makes its activities less visible, especially security-related. This is done to protect the security of staff on the ground and that of EU citizens abroad. For example, the EU prefers not to publicize its global counterterrorism activities for fear that such an action may endanger the security of staff, prompt retaliation by terrorist groups in Europe, or result in fomenting negative attitudes toward EU governments. Moreover, in Iraq between 2003-2006, the EU made the choice not to make its assistance a matter of public knowledge lest it was interpreted as an act of support for the Iraq War, which the EU strongly opposed.



Discussants also noted that awareness and satisfaction of crisis response activities decreases with individuals' social status, and thus a different sample size with broader social, or even geographical, parameters might result in higher level of

awareness and satisfaction, for IDPs and refugees may not be the most informed about EU's activities. While valid, this doesn't take away from the validity of the sample in the report because the KRI is home to a large number of IDPs and refugees from across Iraq and Syria, who are among the key beneficiaries of the EU support. In addition, respondents from government institutions and civil society organizations were also included in the sample, precisely to account for any selection bias.

## **Recommendations:**

Within the EU's approach to crisis response, it is critical to consider the inputs of all stakeholders and beneficiaries. While the EU is recognized as one of the largest actors involved in providing humanitarian aid in Iraq, some of its initiatives are less visible, prompting a degree of dissatisfaction. This view is particularly marked in the fields of security sector reform, rule of law, and development aid. To make sure the EU's crisis response initiatives receive the highest degree of effectiveness, the EU is invited to consider:

- Incorporating top-down and bottom-up approaches in its assistance programs. The EU should be more inclusive by involving government institutions, tribal and religious institutions, community-based institutions, and everyday people in order to develop holistic understanding of local needs and priorities.
- Consulting with beneficiary communities at an early stage of programs' design, to make sure local feedback is accommodated before the program is finalized.
- Revisiting the methods for hiring employees and selecting partner organizations. The EU should be more judicious on whom to hire or partner with, selecting those who adequately embody EU's ideals and mission and who are able to effectively implement its programs.
- Expanding its reach to include media and education sectors to share views with informed locals.
- Assuming leading stabilization roles, including taking the steps necessary to prevent demographic changes in certain areas.