

Newsletter #6

March 2019



Welcome to the last newsletter of the Horizon 2020 EUNPACK project - a conflict-sensitive unpacking of the EU comprehensive approach to conflict and crises.

EUNPACK: Unpacking the EU's approach to conflict and crises

*Morten Bøås and Pernille Rieker
Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)*

As the EUNPACK project nears its end, the editorial of this newsletter - the project's final one - will focus on the main findings from the project. Which policy recommendations can be derived from three years of extensive research and fieldwork on the EU's response to external crises? And what are the highlights from the case studies?

EUNPACK's five policy recommendations for EU crisis response

First, the EU needs to get a better grip on the real needs of the people on the ground. This can only be achieved by establishing a sound local knowledge base built on micro-political approaches to grounded data and intelligence gathering. The EU needs to establish contacts with local civil society organisation and other traditional and non-traditional sources of knowledge and information. This might also be facilitated by some innovative thinking about diplomatic representation from the EU side. Instead of high turnover of generalists, it might be better to have longer term postings of personnel with in depth competence and interests for the country where they are stationed.

Second, the EU needs to institutionalise systematic procedures for vertical lessons learnt about local root causes of conflict and how they can be addressed most effectively in a legitimate and transparent manner.

Third, the EU must be clearer about its intentions and objectives and acknowledge and work with local beneficiaries to overcome the 'information-local ownership' gap. The EU must improve its capacity to communicate clearly with a broad spectrum of the population when it is engaged in a crisis response.

Fourth, the EU must recognise that its priorities - notably the fight against terrorism and halting migration - are not necessarily aligned with the interests of various segments of the local population. EU representatives must actively try to work with, instead of against, local populations' views and ideas in this regard.

Fifth, the EU always needs to combine short-term crisis response with more long-term engagement to avoid unintended consequences. Fragile countries are not only those most in need of external crisis response, but also those where it will be most difficult to get such external programming to work due to a combination of very weak domestic administrative capacity and often governments without much real popular legitimacy.

Case study highlights

In **Afghanistan**, EUNPACK found very limited awareness among various communities on EUPOL, and that the groups that benefited the least from the intervention were refugees, children, students, orphans and people with disabilities.

In **Mali**, EUNPACK found that despite years of EU engagement, approximately half of the respondents (from a sample of Malians in Bamako who had been involved with the EU either professionally or as direct beneficiaries) had so little knowledge about what the EU is doing that they could not come up with an answer concerning their level of satisfaction with EU support. They simply did not know whether they were satisfied with EU assistance to security sector reform, governance and capacity-building, development aid and humanitarian assistance. This points to a huge democratic deficit as people are not aware of crucial processes in their own country.

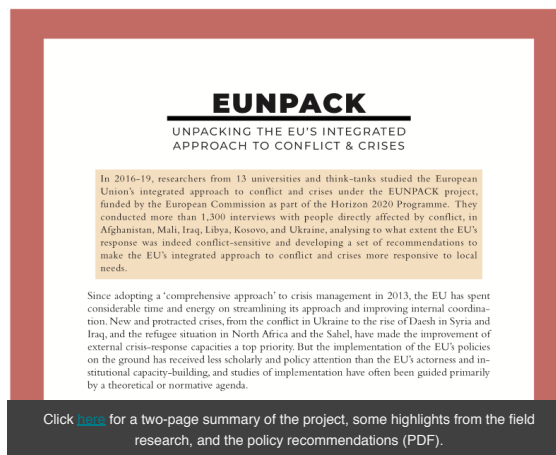
In **Libya**, a lack of conflict sensitivity on the part of the EU has been most evident in the EU's outsourcing of migration management to Libyan authorities and the setting up of detention centres, which fuelled a criminal economy of exploitation and trafficking. The EU may have unintentionally empowered non-state armed actors and militias, given the links that exist between security officers and trafficking networks on the ground.

In **Iraq**, the EU approaches the whole of the country as a single unit, while on the ground no such entity exists. Implementing the same projects in all governorates, as the EU tends to do, lacks the sensitivity to local context and conflict needed to gain a more sustainable impact.

In **Kosovo** and **Serbia**, the EU's approach to stabilisation through the dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia may have come at the expense of contributing to building transparency and democracy as some of the individuals the EU relies on in this regard are the very same that a significant number of the general public believe should have been investigated by EULEX.

In **Ukraine**, the EU's main emphasis is on dealing with the consequences and not the causes of the humanitarian emergency.

Click [here](#) for a full version of EUNPACK's Executive Summary of the Final Report and Selected Policy Recommendations (PDF).



EUNPACK
UNPACKING THE EU'S INTEGRATED
APPROACH TO CONFLICT & CRISES

In 2016-19, researchers from 13 universities and think-tanks studied the European Union's integrated approach to conflict and crises under the EUNPACK project, funded by the European Commission as part of the Horizon 2020 Programme. They conducted more than 1,300 interviews with people directly affected by conflict, in Afghanistan, Mali, Iraq, Libya, Kosovo, and Ukraine, analysing to what extent the EU's response was indeed conflict-sensitive and developing a set of recommendations to make the EU's integrated approach to conflict and crises more responsive to local needs.

Since adopting a 'comprehensive approach' to crisis management in 2013, the EU has spent considerable time and energy on streamlining its approach and improving internal coordination. New and protracted crises, from the conflict in Ukraine to the rise of Daesh in Syria and Iraq, and the refugee situation in North Africa and the Sahel, have made the improvement of external crisis-response capacities a top priority. But the implementation of the EU's policies on the ground has received less scholarly and policy attention than the EU's atonement and institutional capacity-building, and studies of implementation have often been guided primarily by a theoretical or normative agenda.

Click [here](#) for a two-page summary of the project, some highlights from the field research, and the policy recommendations (PDF).

Final Conference, Brussels, 18-19 March 2019



Held on 18-19 March 2019, near the end of the EUNPACK project, the Final Conference provided an opportunity to look back at three years of research and fieldwork and to consider the policy implications of the findings. The conference provided an opportunity for EUNPACK researchers to share insights and discuss findings with relevant policymakers, other scholars as

well as representatives from civil society. Project co-ordinator Morten Bøås (NUI) opened the event, presenting key findings from the three years of research. His main emphasis was on the need for greater conflict sensitivity in EU operations. The keynote speech was given by Hilde Hardeman, Head of the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments. She agreed with Bøås on the necessity for greater conflict sensitivity, and suggested this was of even greater importance given the heightened focus on prevention of conflict in recent years – both by the Pathways to Peace report by the United Nations and the World Bank, and especially by UN Secretary-General António Guterres. Hardeman mentioned three ways in which conflict sensitivity relates to lessons learnt in her work: the need for independent and quality conflict analysis, analyses of potential negative consequences on conflict dynamics, and involving local stakeholders in order to do no harm.

Held on the premises of EUNPACK consortium member CEPS, the two-day conference consisted of panels that together synthesized key findings: 'Concepts and policy planning' which focused on the EU and its crisis response mechanisms and capacities; the EU in Eastern Europe; and the EU in the Southern Neighbourhood. Throughout, EUNPACK researchers engaged with relevant policymakers from the European External Action Service in particular, but also other EU institutions as well as the policy planning unit at the Office of the Secretary General of NATO. The discussions varied between putting specific case countries under scrutiny and discussing larger scholarly perspectives along with concrete implications for policymakers. Scholars and policymakers had often similar perceptions of EU effectiveness in different countries and ways in which to improve it, but did at other times disagree, engaging in a constructive exchange of perspectives.

The event ended with a wrap-up session on lessons learnt for EU policymakers and the way ahead. Morten Bøås and Pernille Rieker (both NUI), in discussion with Steven Blockmans (CEPS), discussed ways in which EU policymakers in Brussels can utilise EUNPACK findings to enhance the effectiveness of EU crisis response. As such, the Final Conference, and the EUNPACK research project as a whole, delivered on its aim to combine an institutional understanding of the EU with in-depth knowledge of the crisis response context. As Jozef Batora (Comenius University) put it, EUNPACK put up a mirror to the EU, showing its officials how people on the ground perceive it and its intentions, interests and actions.

Policy Roundtables at Norway House, 20 March 2019



On March 20, 2019, EUNPACK organised two policy roundtables on various dimensions of the EU's external action at Norway House in Brussels.

The first roundtable, 'Assessing the EU's Toolbox in Handling Internal and External Challenges', was in collaboration with three other H2020-funded projects: [EU-STRAT](#), which has studied the relationship between the EU and countries in the European Eastern neighbourhood; [FEUTURE](#), which has mapped the dynamics of EU-Turkey relations; and [INFORM](#), which has studied interactions between formal and informal institutions in the Western Balkan societies. Pernille Rieker (NUI/EUNPACK) chaired the panel, which consisted of Morten Bøås (NUI/EUNPACK), Antoaneta L. Dimitrova (Professor, Leiden University/EU-STRAT), Eric Gordy (Professor, University College London/INFORM), Eduard Soler (Research Fellow, Barcelona Centre for International Studies/FEUTURE), and Kyriacos Charalambous (Member of EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn's Cabinet, Department for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations). Although the projects have evolved around different research topics, a mutual finding is that there is a mismatch between what

happens on the ground and the debate within the so-called 'Brussels bubble'. A policy recommendation that could be derived from the panel was therefore that the EU should break out of this bubble by paying greater attention to and interact more with citizens on the ground both in capital cities but also beyond.

The event is available on NUPI's official [YouTube channel](#).

The second roundtable, 'The EU, Migrants and Refugees: Building Walls, Fuelling Global Crisis?', consisted of EUNPACK researchers Morten Bøås (Research Professor, NUPI), Roger Mac Ginty (Professor, University of Durham), Sandra Pogodda (Professor, University of Manchester), and Luca Raineri (Research Fellow, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies), as well as the Director of Norwegian Refugee Council Europe, Edouard Rodier. The panel was chaired by Kari M. Osland (Senior Research Fellow, NUPI), also part of EUNPACK. While the panellists recognised the importance of the EU's humanitarian efforts in areas where migrants and refugees come from as well as transit countries, they also agreed that there is need for a new approach. While Bøås stressed the need to separate refugees and migrants in order to secure the former's right to protection, Pogodda argued that the so-called refugee crisis was a result of lack of solidarity among European communities. Mac Ginty highlighted that the EU is talking more about fences and borders than ever before, which Rodier underlined has fundamentally denied the most vulnerable inside Syria, for example, the right to seek refuge. This must be seen in connection with the fact that the EU's actions have become less need-driven than interest-driven, as Raineri pointed to in his presentation. Despite this, the panel agreed that there can be an EU-based solution to these imminent challenges. To achieve this, a turn away from the currently more realist/pragmatic approach may be needed and with a greater emphasis on values over interests.

The event is available on NUPI's official [YouTube channel](#).

EUNPACK Academic Event at Belgrade Security Forum, 17 October 2018

The Academic Event is a unique feature of the Belgrade Security Forum (BSF) that enables interaction and networking between the academic and policy communities and provides theoretical input for the policy debates. This year's Academic Event, organized in partnership with the H2020 project "EUNPACK", was entitled "How Conflict Sensitive Is EU Crisis Response?". Combining bottom-up perspectives with an institutional approach, this event was aimed at increasing our understanding of how EU crisis responses function and are received on the ground.

The Academic Event started with a keynote lecture delivered by Professor Roger Mac Ginty from the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University, entitled "How Do We Listen to the Local in Times of Crisis?". In his address, Professor Mac Ginty talked about the difficulty of defining the term "local", especially when it is used by international organizations that seek to ground the legitimacy of their actions in this term. He pointed out that "the 'local' is even more local than many of us realise", concluding that internationals should engage not only with local institutions but also with the "common people". Two thematically organized panels and closing remarks followed. Each panel consisted of four academic paper presentations followed by comments from one discussant, while the closing remarks were delivered by senior researchers from the EUNPACK project, Pernille Rieker and Morten Bøås.

The first academic panel focused on local perceptions of the EU as a crisis management actor, as well as on the potential lessons that the EU can take from NATO, the UN and the OSCE. The second panel inquired into the effectiveness of the EU's crisis response and border management, investigating the full cycle of EU response – intentions and motivations, policy implementation, evaluation of impact effectiveness and local actors' perceptions, reactions and ownership – as well as analysing the balance between security and development in the EU's crisis response approach. Both panels discussed case studies, including Kosovo, South Ossetia, Libya, Ukraine, Iraq, Mali and Afghanistan. Finally, the closing remarks examined two gaps in the EU's crisis response: the intention-implementation gap and the implementation-local reception/perception gap.

Recommendations/action points:

- The EU should learn from its own mistakes and adopt good practice from other international peacekeeping actors in order to improve its efficiency in crisis response.
- The EU's crisis response should take into account conflict sensitivity and conflict specificity – the local political and social situation should always be considered.

- As a peacekeeping actor, the EU should include locals at various levels and should put greater emphasis on local ownership.

For videos from the various panels, go to the BSF [YouTube channel](#). For pictures from the event, click [here](#). For additional information, click [here](#).



Sonja Stojanovic Gajic opens the Belgrade Security Forum Academic Event.
Picture: BSF/Aleksandar Andjic

Is the EU ready to handle the major challenges it is facing?

On 21 November 2018, Ivan Krastev visited NUPI to discuss whether the EU is ready to handle major challenges such as migration, the spread of right-wing populism, and instability in the East. As such, while the EUNPACK project has examined the EU's capacity or lack of capacity to engage in external crisis response, the focus of this event was the EU's capacity or lack of capacity to handle internal crises. Although Krastev emphasized that Europe has failed repeatedly the past 70 years, he focused on four crises that have basically been shaping the European Union the past decade: (1) the 2008 financial crisis; (2) the Ukrainian crisis; (3) Brexit; and (4) the migration crisis. The event was part of NUPI's seminar series Norway meets Europe and closely linked to the EUNPACK project. It was chaired by Research Professor Pernille Rieker (NUPI), while Research Professor Morten Bøås (NUPI) provided comments to Krastev's presentation.



Graduate seminar "European Union foreign policy in action"

WP 7 leader and researchers, Ingo Peters and Enver Ferhatovic, used the analytical framework of EUNPACK for developing a

EUNPACK panel at MERI Forum 2018: 'EU in the Middle East: Responsive State-Building to Prevent Violent Extremism'

On 23-24 October 2018, researchers from the EUNPACK project attended the Middle East Research Institute (MERI) Forum 2018: 'Visions for Stabilizing the Middle East' in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. EUNPACK co-hosted a panel titled 'EU in the Middle East: Responsive State-building to Prevent Violent Extremism'. The panel consisted of chair Morten Bøås (NUPI), Kamaran Palani Mohammed (MERI), Tine Gade (NUPI), Steven Blockmans (CEPS), and Roman Blecua (EU Ambassador to Iraq).

Overall, the panel agreed that to prevent violent extremism, the root causes need to be addressed. In order to achieve this, the EU's crisis response in the Middle East needs to be more bottom-up and conflict sensitive by including real experiences from the field rather than being inspired by 'Brussels'. This will be essential for the EU to be viewed as a legitimate and credible actor by local stakeholders, whom at the end of the day should be steering crisis management and peacebuilding processes. Local knowledge and participation is crucial in solving local issues. This requires both a strong state (not regime) and a strong civil society. By strengthening these (f)actors, the EU could play a more meaningful role in tackling the global challenge of violent extremism.

For a full conference report and videos, click [here](#).

graduate seminar ("European Union foreign policy in action: crises and conflict management policy"). This course was taught four successive semesters at the Otto-Suhr-Institute for Political Science, Department of Political and Social Science, Freie Universität Berlin.

Despite its demanding design, it attracted altogether more than 90 students, not just from Germany our EU countries but literally from all over the world, including the United States, VR China, Russia. This teaching activity hence significantly contributed to the visibility of the EUNPACK project. Students not just showed lively interest in EUNPACK matters that is EU crises response policy but contributed indeed remarkable seminar papers covering various case studies of EU CSDP engagement in EU candidate states, the immediate and extended neighbourhood. Moreover, at least 10 students chose the seminar topic also as the realm for writing their MA thesis, of which one was specifically remarkable: A degree student from Iraq wrote an excellent study on the EU's engagement in Iraq (EUJUST LEX Iraq). We were delighted to learn that he found employment with a diplomatic representation of an EU member state in Erbil (Iraq/Kurdistan) and will hence be able to contribute his share to the state- and peacebuilding in his country.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no.: 693337. The content reflects only the authors' views, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.



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