Contents: The seven papers of this edited volume analyse the EU’s influence on policy change in the enlargement and neighbourhood countries in (South-)East Europe and the southern Mediterranean. They develop policy recommendations on how the EU can improve its support of reforms concerning societal, economic and political issues.

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The series „Europäische Schriften“
is edited by

Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin
Policy Change in the EU’s Immediate Neighbourhood: A Sectoral Approach
The edited volume is published in the framework of the IEP’s Programme “Dialogue Europe” of the Otto Wolff-Foundation as part of the project “The relations of the European Union with the eastern neighbours — between neighbourhood and enlargement policy”.

The book project benefited from financial support of the Kolleg-Forscherguppe (KFG) “The Transformative Power of Europe”, hosted at Freie Universität Berlin. The KFG is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and brings together research on the diffusion of ideas in the EU’s internal and external relations.

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Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

ISBN 978-3-8329-7441-1

1. Auflage 2012

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Besides mastering the financial crisis, one of the greatest challenges the European Union (EU) is currently facing is how to turn its immediate neighbourhood into an area of stability, peace, and prosperity. The EU’s most successful foreign policy instrument in this regard has been its enlargement policy, which offers a membership perspective. Accession to the EU provided a key incentive for the Central and Eastern European countries in the 1990s to master their political, economic and societal transition. With its enlargement in 2004 and 2007, the EU’s borders extended east- and southwards. Many of its new neighbours suffer from serious problems of ‘bad governance’: their democratic institutions are weak and not yet consolidated, they are plagued by corruption crippling both economic development and administrative capacity for reforms, and ethnic conflicts undermine their political stability. While the need for the EU’s transformative power is greater than ever, the ‘golden carrot’ of membership seems to have lost its appeal. Even though the EU has offered all Western Balkan countries an accession perspective, Croatia is the only one that has made sufficient progress to join the EU in the near future, probably on 1 July 2013. Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia seek to catch up to Croatia, but Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo trail significantly behind in the reform process.

For the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood countries, EU membership is not in the cards (yet). Belarus is the only dictatorship remaining in Europe, and Georgia, once the poster child of the Southern Caucasus appears to be stuck in transition, while Ukraine may be facing an authoritarian backlash. More positive signals come from the Southern neighbourhood with the events of the Arab Spring, but to this date it remains unclear whether democratizing forces will prevail in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and if the popular uprising in Syria will topple the repressive Assad regime.

How much power does the EU have to transform its neighbouring countries as to foster stability, peace and prosperity? In this volume, the Kolleg-Forscherguppe “The Transformative Power of Europe” at Freie Universität Berlin (KFG) and the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) have joined forces to combine the individual strengths of academic and think tank work. Senior PhD students and junior post-doctoral researchers hosted by the KFG were asked to tease out the policy implications of their research projects. The IEP provided them with training on how to
translate their research into a policy paper that provides policy recommendations based on their major empirical findings and theoretical arguments. In order to do so, three workshops were organized over the course of 2011. At the last workshop, practitioners were invited to comment on the papers. These experts included officials from EU institutions (European Commission, European External Actions Service) and members of the European Parliament and the German Bundestag as well as researchers from other Berlin-based think tanks responsible for developing training programs for think tank researchers in the Western Balkans.

The contributors to the volume were asked to structure their recommendations around the following questions:

– What are the problems the EU is facing? Why are its policies not effective in inducing the changes in accession and neighbourhood countries that are necessary to foster stability, peace and prosperity?
– What changes should the EU introduce to make its policies more effective? More specifically, how and with whom can the EU induce domestic change in accession and neighbourhood countries to foster stability, peace and prosperity?
– What policies should civil servants in the European Commission (Commission), members of parliament or civil servants in the member states pursue in order to improve the EU’s impact on domestic change in accession and neighbourhood countries?

The edited volume engages basic research and applied science in a meaningful dialogue on issues that are at the top of the EU’s political agenda. It is a timely publication that comes at a crucial point in time with the EU seeking to restructure its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in reaction to the Arab Spring and negotiating its multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020. The book presents specific recommendations on how these reforms can make EU policies more efficient and effective in bringing about the necessary transformations to achieve the goal of a stable, prosperous and democratic neighbourhood despite the financial constraints that the Euro crises might impose.

Each paper develops recommendations on some of the current challenges the EU is facing in its enlargement and neighbourhood policy and identifies necessary policy changes that need to be addressed. How should the EU adjust its ENP to support democratic change in the Mediterranean countries? With EU accession becoming an ever more distant prospect, what changes are necessary in the EU’s enlargement policy to lock-in reforms in Turkey and some of the Western Balkan accession candidates? Are there other incentives than membership by which the EU can induce neighbouring countries to adopt EU policies and make their institutions more effective and democratic?

The book contains a total of seven papers dealing with three groups of countries: the enlargement countries, the Eastern neighbours and the Mediterranean region.
The policy papers also cover a variety of policies: minority protection, political decentralization, inclusion of civil society, regulatory convergence, visa liberalization, environmental policy and democracy promotion. While most of the papers focus on one country, some offer a broader overview of a specific region. All of the papers aim at offering policy-level recommendations in a way that makes their findings transferable also to other countries and regions.

The target group of the book and the individual policy papers includes staff from the Commission and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Members of the European Parliament, Members of national parliaments, governments and civil services, but also think tanks and students interested in the European Union and its external policies.

Regarding the enlargement countries, the first paper of Imke Pente deals with northern Kosovo as the crucial factor for both Serbia’s and Kosovo’s prospects for EU membership. The author advocates a special status label of northern Kosovo. She sees an abandonment of Serbia’s parallel structures and the recognition of Kosovo by Serbia on the one hand, and a stronger integration of the Serbian minority into Kosovo’s political structures and thereby society on the other hand, as necessary steps for achieving this.

In the second paper, Gozde Yilmaz explores possibilities for improving minority protection in Turkey through pressure by the EU. She shows that this improvement depends on a combination of EU enforced and domestic factors, the most important of which is a common standard for minority rights achieved by the EU setting clear benchmarks for minority protection and by shifting the focus from legal adoption to implementation as well as by including minority civil society organizations at the domestic level.

Three papers deal with the Eastern neighbours: Mariella Falkenhain and Iryna Solonenko advocate a stronger role of civil society in the EU’s approach to Eastern Europe in order to have greater impact on policy change. They argue that the EU should see civil society as a potential reform partner in need of capacity-building measures but already able to contribute by comprising a critical mass of actors who can exert pressure for reforms. They further argue for a broad definition of civil society including trade unions and business associations.

The next paper by Julia Langbein takes a closer look at two tools for convergence with the EU’s single market’s technical standards and shareholder’s rights for the neighbourhood countries: market access and assistance in setting up the necessary institutions for adopting and implementing EU rules and regulations. She argues that the EU should focus more on including private actors in this convergence process as the EU single market is regulated by private-public governance arrangements. In order to participate in the internal market, the neighbouring countries need to institutionalize such arrangements.
Esther Ademmer analyzes the process of visa facilitation in the European neighbourhood and offers suggestions on how to improve it. She recommends a “roadmap light” to make the necessary reform steps leading up to visa facilitation more transparent in order to achieve more sustainable change in the migration policies of the neighbourhood countries.

Concerning the Mediterranean region, Vera van Hüllen deals with the necessary adaptations of the EU’s democracy promotion after the Arab Spring. She argues that the EU should apply sanctions and rewards consistently by clearly defining benchmarks and incentives to be both credible and effective in promoting democracy and stability. She identifies political dialogue and democracy assistance as well as the association councils and the human rights subcommittees of the regional framework for cooperation as particularly useful tools for this. In addition, she argues for a more coordinated assistance to civil society actors and clear strategic guidelines following the principle of differentiation.

Last but not least, Eva Maggi evaluates the EU’s promotion of environmental policy in Morocco. She argues that the EU should focus more on policy implementation in order to establish the capacities needed, and that it should acknowledge the cross-sectoral character of environmental policy.

We are grateful to the Otto Wolff-Foundation for significantly supporting the Research Project “The relations of the European Union with the eastern neighbours – between neighbourhood and enlargement policy” in the course of which this publication was prepared. We also thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for supporting this publication in the framework of the Kolleg-Forscherguppe “Transformative Power of Europe” at the Freie University Berlin. Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to Jörn Griesse, Ska Keller, Markus Meckel, Pirkka Tapiola and Natasha Wunsch for their valuable and insightful comments on the first drafts of the individual papers, and their participation in the workshop which greatly supported the project. We would like to thank Christoph Kornes and Mirjam Schmid for their support in organizing the workshops. Finally, our special thanks go to Dorothee Pätzold for the excellent editorial work on this volume, as well as Rachel Manis for the English language proofreading.

Katrin Böttger/Tanja A. Börzel
Berlin, February 2012