

## **TIME TO RESET THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY**

**STEFAN LEHNE**

Through its European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), the European Union (EU) aims to support the structural transformation of its Eastern and Southern neighbors, promoting democracy, the rule of law, and successful market economies. Ten years after the ENP's launch, it is clear that the policy is not working. Adjusting the ENP to the changing reality on the ground, sharpening its tools, and rebuilding its credibility should be a top priority for the EU's foreign policy leadership.

### **Conceptual Flaws and Incoherent Implementation**

- Today, the ENP includes sixteen countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe that share little except a certain geographic proximity to the EU.
- The ENP's methodology is derived from the EU's enlargement experience. But accession to the EU is not promised.
- This approach does not work for countries that do not want close association with the EU, and the absence of the carrot of future membership frustrates those who do.
- Designed for long-term engagement in a stable environment, the ENP's instruments are ill-suited for the rapid change that characterizes much of the EU's neighborhood today.
- The EU insists on conditionality in its relationships with its neighbors but frequently applies those conditions inconsistently and selectively.
- The ENP is Eurocentric in conception and often ignores the roles outside actors play in the EU's neighborhood.
- The policy overemphasizes bilateral relationships, overlooking the fact that many of the neighborhood's problems require a regional approach.

### **Recommendations for the EU Leadership**

**Undertake a fundamental review of the ENP.** A new EU leadership will take office in 2014. The new team should initiate a broad discussion of the parameters of an ENP II and launch the renewed policy in 2015.

**Expand the ENP framework to include all neighboring regions.** This engagement should be tailored to particular countries and subregions. Enlargement methodology should be reserved for those partners that can and want to develop a close relationship with the EU.

**Improve the ENP toolbox.** Enhance the capacity for action with rapid impact and boost support for regional and subregional cooperation.

**Develop a more sophisticated approach to promoting democratic values.** Aim for a policy that is more responsive, employs a variety of tools, and systematically involves civil society.

**Strengthen the ENP's political leadership.** To more closely tie the ENP to the EU's broader foreign policy, it should be placed directly under the authority of the high representative for foreign affairs and security policy. EU member states should more actively participate in running the new policy.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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