Review: *The European Union's Fight Against Corruption. The evolving policy towards Member States and candidate countries*, 2010, by Patrycja Szarek-Mason, Cambridge Studies in European Law and Policy, Cambridge University Press

This book is a timely, insightful and well researched contribution to policy and academic debates on EU anti-corruption endeavours, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive, multi-facetted and even-handed approach. The expression 'evolving policy' is very appropriate since, although elements for the construction of a policy undoubtedly exist at European Union level, no coherent policy is in evidence. Szarek-Mason focuses on two approaches that have been implemented at EU level: anti-corruption through EU criminal law and through the mechanism of enlargement.

Some progress has been achieved through EU criminal law, both through the prism of the protection of the financial interests and, to a limited extent, by focussing on the trans-national aspects of corruption. The author points out that the EU has not addressed corruption as a general threat to democracy and to the rule of law across the Member States – in fact it has no competence to do so. Efforts remain 'half-way through' in comparison with evolving international standards.

Conditionality in candidate and in neighbourhood countries constitutes the second aspect of this 'evolving policy'. The EU has attempted to address corruption within the CEE countries through the enlargement process. When it was introduced in 1997, the requirement upon these countries to fight against corruption did not correspond to any EU policy towards its Member States. The EU imposes increasingly stringent standards upon candidate countries (is there an even playing field?) but it is not able, following accession, to monitor measures' effectiveness or the post-accession maintenance of effort. Thus there are problems with both the pre and post-accession approach to anti-corruption that need to be addressed.

Szarek-Mason helps us to reflect on what might constitute a more comprehensive and less discriminatory EU anti-corruption policy in the future. She argues that the best way forward would be for the same (high) standards and monitoring to apply to the EU Member States, candidate and neighbourhood countries and, more generally, the EU should work more closely with international organisations, drawing on monitoring mechanisms such as those developed by GRECO, OECD or FAFTF.

The reviewer adds that accession of the EU to the Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms will undoubtedly lead to *rapprochement* between the Council of Europe and the European Union. Yet there are also aspects of the *acquis communautaire* that could be included in an anti-corruption policy – such as warning and debarment systems in the procurement field, whistle-blowing regulation, auditing and accounting standards, the registration of lobbyists and various compliance mechanisms. The partiality for criminal law and for action outwith the EU should not distract the Member States from effective action at home.

Simone White