Preface and acknowledgements

In the fifty years or so since publication of the first Programme for Economic Expansion, and particularly during the ‘celtic tiger’ years, the pace of Ireland’s economic, social and political development has intrigued analysts. A leading role in this transformation is commonly ascribed to Europeanisation, with the European Union being credited as the instigator, facilitator and dictator of change. But is this the only explanation? This book challenges the usually unquestioning acceptance of the EU’s dominant role in effecting change. It contends that domestic structural and cultural features as well as global developments must also be considered as major determinants of change.

The book has its genesis in research carried out during the EU 5th Framework ADAPT project, Adapting to EU Multi-level Governance: Regional and Environmental Policy in Cohesion and CEE countries. Analysis of the adaptation and adjustments evident in the governance of the regional and in understanding the environmental spheres prompted further questions and debates about the impact of Europeanisation. As observers of political and administrative development in Ireland, the authors were engrossed by the interplay of internal and external catalysts of change and sought to explore the nuances of Ireland’s vicarious relationship with the EU. We believe the study provides a topical and perceptive exploration which will be of interest to both scholars and policy actors seeking to understand Ireland’s transformation and the EU’s contribution to that transformation.

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