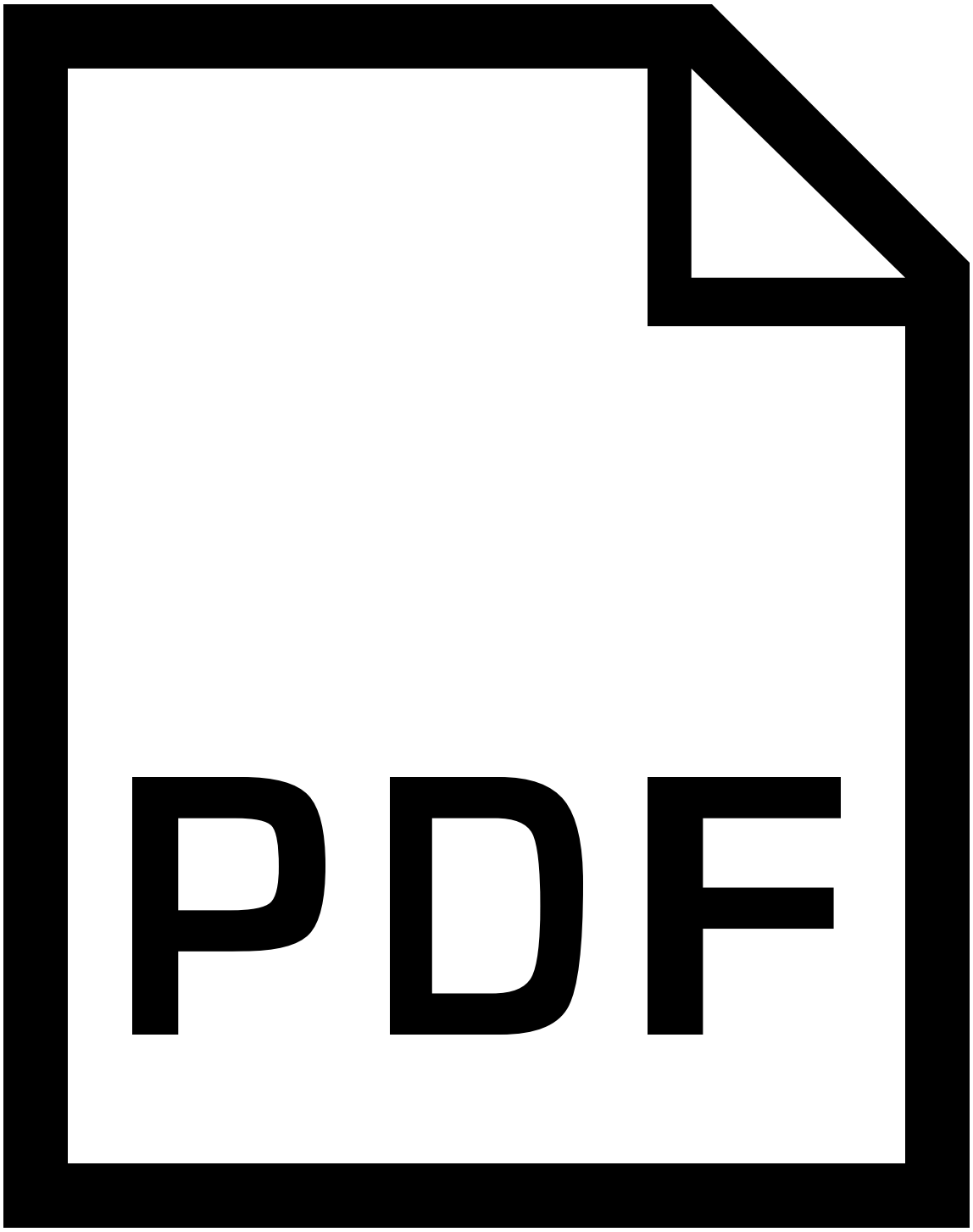
# News Item, 13/05/2011, Rabat: Europe’s Role in Today’s Middle East

Bertelsmann Stiftung organizes Kronberg Talks in Morocco

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**Ansprechpartner**

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Christian Hanelt

After decades of authoritarian-enforced stagnation, people in the Arab world are now fighting for the rule of law, the right to be heard politically and a new, democratic future. What role is Europe playing in these efforts?

In light of recent events, Europe's relationship with the Arab world has a new foundation. This offers a number of opportunities, but also presents challenges. Will it be possible to stabilize the region over the long term? Which joint projects are feasible? Which benefits do Europe and countries beyond the Mediterranean realm stand to reap? Can Europeans contribute to developments in the Arab world in light of their experiences in Central and Eastern Europe following the fall of the Iron Curtain?

These are some of the questions to be addressed at the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Kronberg Talks conference, being held in the Moroccan capital of Rabat on May 15 and 16. Discussion at the event will focus on what a transformational partnership between the EU and the Arab world might look like, as well as projects relating to long-term economic, social and energy policies.

The urgency of the discussions can be seen in the presence at the gathering of German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle and EU Commissioner for Energy Günther Oettinger. As host country, Morocco is being represented by its foreign minister, Taieb Fassi-Fihri.

Organized by the Bertelsmann Stiftung together with Morocco's Foreign Ministry, the Kronberg Talks gathering in Rabat will include journalists, women, young people and Jewish Moroccans, along with representatives of Morocco's traditional

political and social elite. Some 250 people are expected at the Open Forum scheduled for the first day of the event.

The discussions will be based on the special volume recently released as part of the “Europe in Dialogue” series, which includes strategic policy recommendations developed by nine activists and intellectuals from North Africa and the Middle East for the EU. The authors’ message is clear: The European Union must take an unequivocal, active stance in support of democratic movements throughout the Arab-speaking world, and any measures it implements must be both tangible and effective.

Against the background of the far-reaching changes taking place in the Arab world, Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung is also releasing an e-book containing data from the Bertelsmann Transformation Atlas for countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

First held in Kronberg, Germany, near Frankfurt, the Kronberg Talks have been organized since 1995 to provide a venue where opposing groups from the Middle East can gather for off-the-record discussions relating, above all, to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Over the years, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has been able to gain the confidence of the participating groups and has been asked to organize events in the Middle East as a result. In 2009 for the first time, a conference was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In recent years, the discussions have been expanded to include topics relating to European-Arab cooperation.

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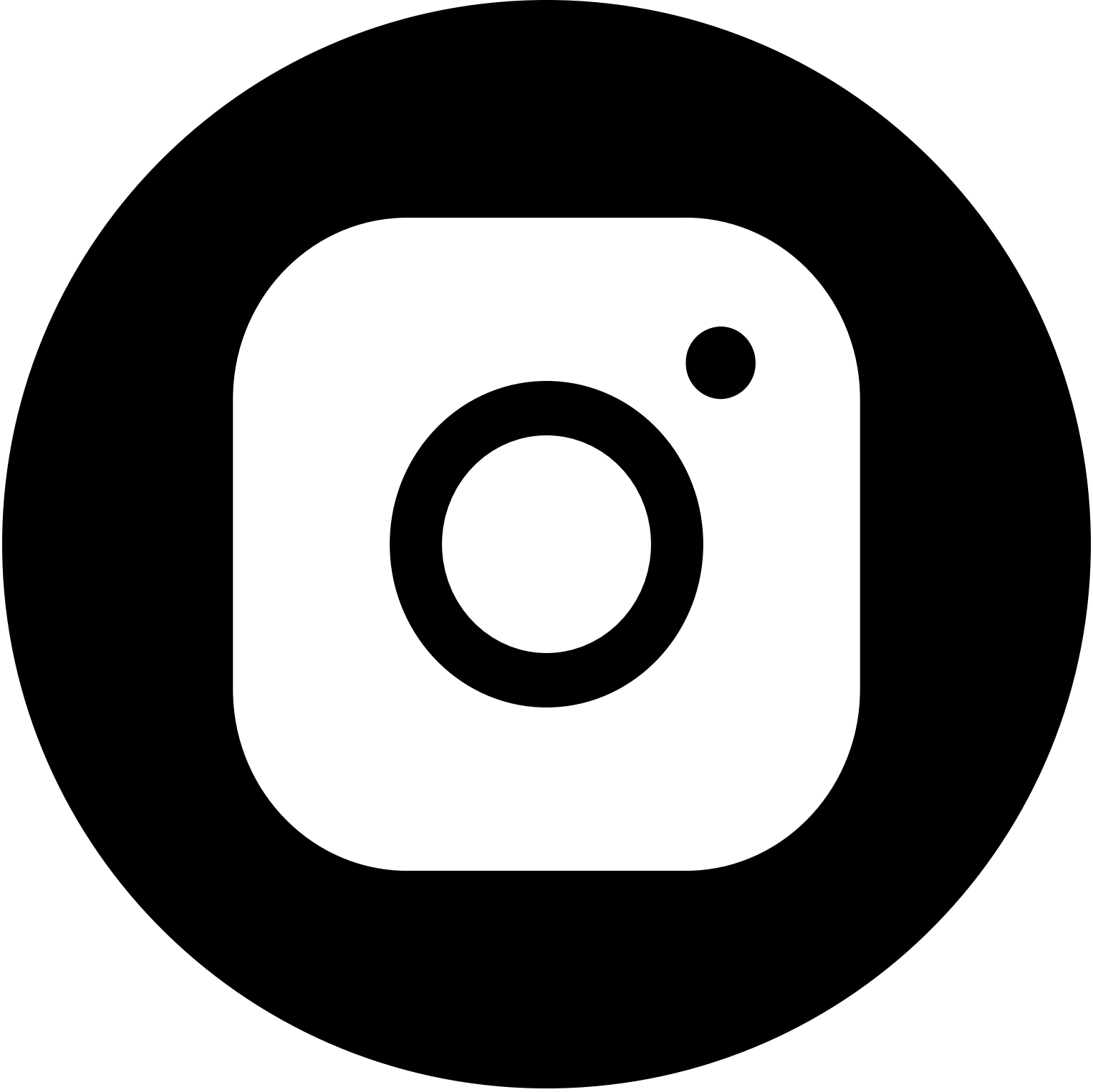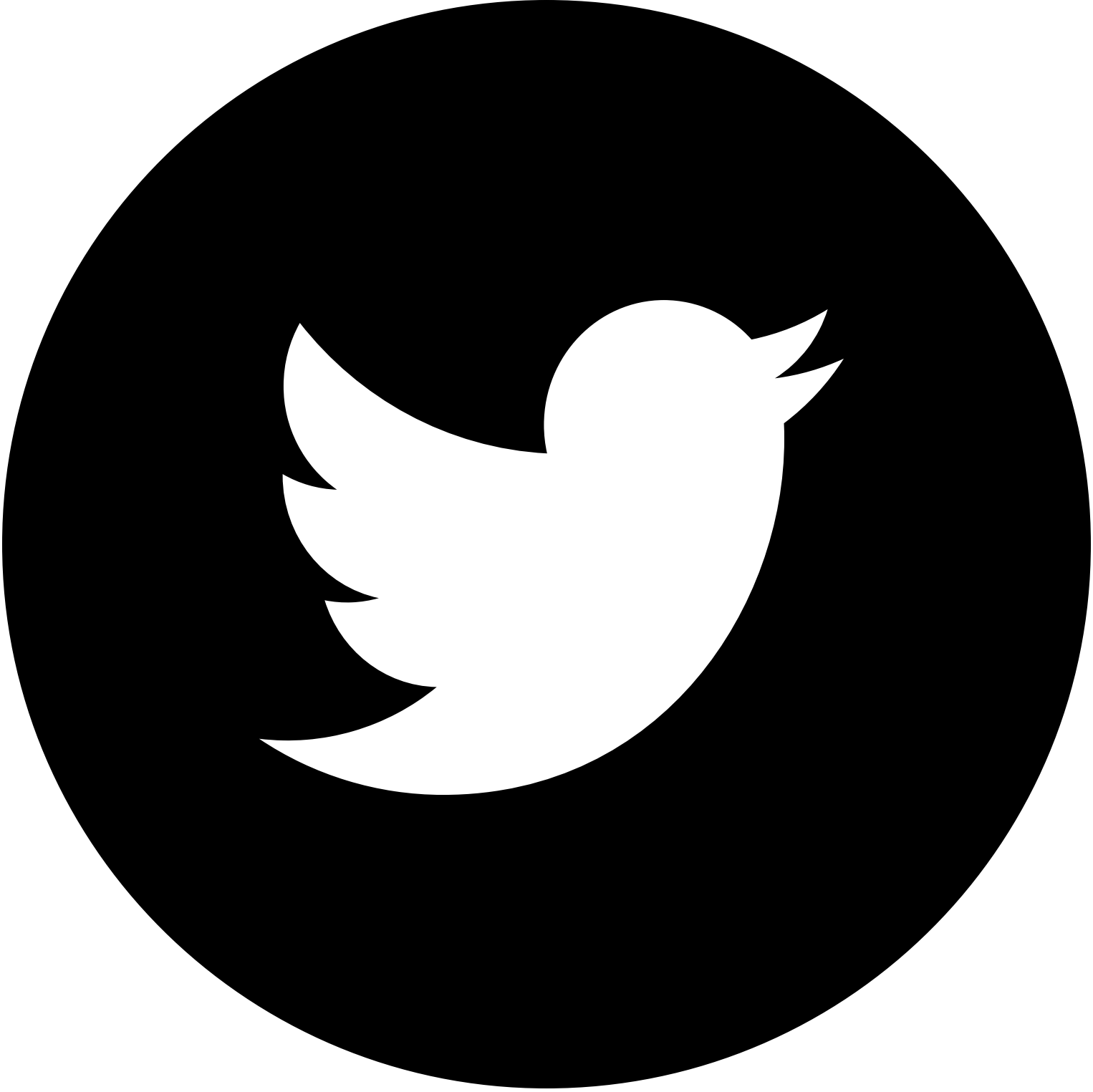
- Europe in Dialogue #01/2011 (2.7 MB)
- Kronberg Talks Overview (77 KB)
- Kronberger Gespräche - Hintergrund (88 KB)