



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**

Conference on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Copenhagen Criteria

28 June 2023 in Copenhagen

30 years ago, on 21-22 June 1993, the EU's then-twelve heads of state and government met in Copenhagen to adopt a set of conditions that countries wishing to become member of the EU must adhere to. Known as the Copenhagen Criteria, their adoption established – for the first time – a set of clear criteria on the basis of which applicant countries' merits could be assessed.

The Copenhagen Criteria define a set of broad rules spanning from democracy, rule of law and human rights to market economy and the ability of countries to effectively implement the EU acquis. In the 1990's and early 2000's, they played a key role in driving democratic reforms in Central- and Eastern Europe, resulting in the historic decision to welcome ten new member states to the EU under the 2002 Danish presidency. Their accession to the EU formally took effect in 2004. Today, the Copenhagen Criteria continue to constitute a central element in the enlargement process with the six countries on the Western Balkans and, since 2022, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

The 30th anniversary of the Copenhagen Criteria therefore presents an excellent opportunity to look back on the challenges and successes of the past three decades and of previous enlargement rounds. At the same time, it constitutes a timely occasion to look ahead and consider how past experiences and lessons learned can be used to support current candidate countries on their path to EU-membership as they undertake the reforms necessary for living up to the criteria.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Mr. Lars Løkke Rasmussen, will therefore be hosting a conference to commemorate and celebrate 30 years of the Copenhagen Criteria. The conference will bring together past and present high-level officials from Denmark, the EU and current candidate countries, as well as representatives from the academic community. It will combine historical and forward-looking perspectives. First by revisiting the role of the Copenhagen Criteria in preparing and driving the historical enlargement of 2004 as testified by some of the most central figures who took active part in the process. Second by focusing on their importance for the current accession process as seen from the perspective of current candidate countries.