

Hello, I am the ambassador of Denmark. Today I am at the cabinet of minister. I have signed on behalf of Denmark the project document for a new program called "UA2EU".

What's that?

It is an EU Integration Support Facility for Ukraine co-funded by the EU, Denmark, and Lithuania. The facility will support Ukraine's EU-accession process, for instance by providing expertise for the office of the deputy prime minister and her team and to line ministries and other agencies that will be involved.

The idea of Danish technical support for Ukraine's EU accession was discussed between the Danish foreign minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen when he met with deputy prime minister Olha Stefanishyna in October 2023. And now it is happening.

It is a sign that Denmark remains strongly committed in our support for Ukraine on its European path. It is part and parcel of our strong overall support for Ukraine's fight for freedom in the face of Russian aggression.

EU-enlargement will also be a top priority for the Danish EU-presidency in the second half of this year. This was made very clear by the Danish minister for European Affairs, Ms. Marie Bjerre, when she visited Kyiv in December last year.

Historically Denmark has had a special role in EU-enlargement. The Copenhagen-criteria were adopted at the European Council in 1993 and Danes are still proud that our capital gave the name to the criteria that are still the benchmark for EU-accession.

In 2002 the European Council held in Copenhagen decided to accept 10 new member states to join the EU in the biggest enlargement in EU's history. As part of this enlargement process Denmark had a comprehensive pre-accession program with a special focus on technical assistance to the EU-accession for the Baltic States.

Now, twenty years on, we are teaming up with our friends from Lithuania, one of the new entrants from 2004, to support Ukraine on its European path.

It is a very appropriate partner that will bring relevant expertise to the table and which has experts, who have been part of Lithuania's accession process

themselves. For me this is a true symbol of the success and the power of EU-enlargement.

Our support will have a special focus on the role of civil society in the accession process. Ukraine's civil society is strong, dynamic and resilient, and we firmly believe that its active participation - together with the government and parliament of Ukraine is vital for a successful EU integration.

Let us not forget that it was civil society activist who were instrumental in Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity in 2014 that became the starting point for Ukraine's European path.

Since then, Ukraine has achieved remarkable progress under very difficult conditions, not least since the full-scale Russian aggression in 2022. I have been here since 2020.

I cannot think of a period of time where more progress has been achieved. It did not happen by itself. It happened thanks to the unbreakable political will and determination of the Ukrainians.

It also happened thanks to fearless and visionary officials and political leaders, who worked hard to make Ukraine's European path possible in wartime conditions.

Let me thank Deputy Prime Minister Stefanishyna and her entire team for all the work that you have accomplished since your started to fill out all the papers needed to file and application, just four days after the full-scale Russian aggression. Denmark is proud to support you in this endeavor.