

Welcome speech at the EU2012 event, April 23 with José Manuel Barros and Helle Thorning-Schmidt. By Rector Ralf Hemmingsen

Dear President,

Dear Prime Minister,

Dear guests.

Welcome to the University of Copenhagen.

And to our two main speakers, I should say welcome back!

You have both visited the Ceremonial Hall before.

And though your respective visits took place quite recently, the European agenda has changed dramatically since then.

Perhaps the European Union now faces its most decisive hour.

George Soros, who visited the University of Copenhagen just last week, has warned that the Euro zone has entered a "more lethal phase" - and recommends measures that go further than the recently adopted Euro pact.

Maybe Mr. Soros' analysis is too gloomy.

Nonetheless, the current economic crisis has certainly underlined the necessity of promoting sustainable European growth.

Politicians and citizens alike wonder how strategies, pacts and restoration plans will affect the individual member states.

And we ask ourselves: will the union be further divided or further unified in the years to come?

And are the member states politically willing and able to make reforms?

The EU has adopted the Europe 2020 growth strategy for the coming decade. The purpose is to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy.

And of course at this university, we are pleased that the strategy maintains an important research target with 3 % of the EU's GDP to be invested in research.

Along with the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, it sends a clear message that research and education are essential in promoting growth.

President Barroso and Prime Minister Thorning-Schmidt, we hope you agree.

We have been looking forward to hearing you debate how the European Union should proceed and what can be done to meet the current challenges.

Now, I will give the floor to International Editor at Politiken, Michael Jarlner, who will guide us through today's program and introduce the speakers.

Michael, the floor is yours.