

The visit of the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, was inspired by the "changing of the guard" in Brussels – the new composition of the European Parliament was given a mandate in spring and the new members of the European Commission will assume office soon.

President Ilves met several former and current commissioners to ensure the sustainability of Estonia as an e-country and to ensure the compatibility of the development trends of Estonia and Europe, more specifically with Siim Kallas, Neelie Kroes, Jyrki Katainen, Andrus Ansip and Günther Oettinger. The functions of the last three commissioners are directly linked to economic development and improving the competitiveness of Europe in the digital era.

Aside from the commissioners, President Ilves also had meetings in the European Parliament with the President, Martin Schulz, delegates involved with digital issues and members of the Permanent Representatives Committee of the European Union (COREPER I).

The digital future of Europe was the headline issue on which the meetings of the President focused. "When speaking of the European Union digital strategy, we should plan ahead more and act faster. Development in the digital sphere is ultra-fast and competition in the economy is tough. Europe has a population of about 500 million people. Therefore, it is a market with huge potential, even when compared to the markets of the US and its population of 300 million. However, Europe can only remain competitive by operating in unison instead of being cut up into 28 pieces," said the Head of State.

It was admitted by all the parties involved, at several meetings, that the slow development in building up the uniform digital market will restrict Europe's opportunities for economic growth. Our ways of thinking and, therefore, also regulations are often still stuck in the pre-Internet era.

We have already made an important step towards the common market – a regulation on electronic identification and confidentiality services has been adopted. Yesterday, at an event where the new regulation was officially proclaimed, President Ilves admitted the importance of the trans-European harmonisation of electronic identification: "In the shipping sector, for example, everyone understands that the use of cargo containers simplifies the lives of people living in Asia, Europe and America. Figuratively speaking, similar standard building blocks that are interchangeable with each other are required in Europe for the purpose of e-services."

The head of state will return to Estonia tonight.

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