

The Head of State of Germany, Joachim Gauck, met with the presidents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Dalia Grybauskaitė and Andris Bērziņš, who arrived in Berlin and will tonight accept the Golden Victoria prizes in the European of the Year category awarded by Verband Deutscher Zeitschriftenverleger, a reputable association of German magazine publishers. This represents acknowledgment for restoring our independence, promoting European values, integrating with Europe and the successful economic and political reforms of the three countries.

President Ilves recalled, at the meeting of the four head of states, that he recently visited the Berlin Wall at Bernauer Straße. On Sunday, 9 November, 25 years will pass since the fall of the Wall.

"The fall of the Wall was a wonderful moment that offered hope for all of us who for too long had remained on the wrong side of the wall. This gave us hope that Europe could one day be uniform, undivided and free," told the Estonian Head of State.

"Unfortunately, we can see today that Europe is not undivided and free. We can still see the shadows of the last century – the very shadows we hoped never to see again. We can see the demolishing of the past Cold War – and, World War II, in general – security architecture, and rules and agreements between countries once again being replaced by brute force," told President Ilves.

"The splitting of Europe, which broke Germany in two and left the Baltic states behind the Iron Curtain, was started 75 years ago with the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. We must never again allow secret treaties to determine the fate of people and countries. We must never again split the world into spheres of influence that destroy independent countries," emphasised the Head of State. "No country must be treated as the backyard of another country, devoid of its own will or goals."

According to the President, we have the best possible allies; we are not standing alone, as we did 75 years ago. He added: "We are happy that our colleagues in the European Union and NATO have supported freedom, democracy and the right of nations to choose their own path and their allies, by taking decisive steps to end the aggression of Russia in Ukraine."

The Estonian Head of state emphasised that the leading role of Germany in Europe is really important. "As the conflict in Ukraine is far from being solved, let us hope that Germany will use its leader's role in Europe even more actively," told President Ilves.

"We do not yet know how to restore international order and trust in rules and agreements on which we used to rely before. We must not accept frozen conflicts within the immediate region of the European Union; we must not forget the annexation of Crimea and let things remain the way they are. No democratic countries should return to common relations in a situation where acceptable solutions are not found for a conflict," told the Estonian Head of State. "A secure world for all countries – both large and small – is a world in which even small countries can feel safe, without having to be afraid of their larger neighbours."

Our strength depends on strong democracy. By protecting free and fair elections, the principles of a state based on the rule of law, freedom of speech, adoption of transparent decision, tolerance and openness, we also protect our freedom and security, the Estonian Head of State said.

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