

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, met today at the Office of the President with a member of the Board of the Estonian Union of People with Mobility Impairments, Tiia Sihver, a member of a civic organisation Pane oma meeled proovile (Test Your Senses), and Sven Kõllamets and Monika Haukanõmm from the Estonian Chamber of Disabled People. The Head of State thanked everyone who has taken part in the proceedings related to the reforms of the capacity for work and has clearly and purposefully highlighted the problems arising from the implementation of the reform.

The representatives of disabled people have asked the President to put a veto on the law and return it to the Riigikogu for new proceedings.

The President of the Republic explained that he could not see any conflicts with the Constitution that would give the Head of State the grounds required to refrain from proclaiming the law in the act concerned. The package of laws will enter into force in 2016 and most of the expostulations are related to possible failure of the preparations made for the implementation of the laws. "Legislative and executive bodies must work together to avoid the insecurities of disabled people, who are highly vulnerable members of our society, with respect to the implementation of the laws and their situation," told President Ilves.

"However, it is obvious that we cannot stick to the current system. It is just not humane to offer the required opportunities to people with special needs who want to work, but this will also support the development of Estonian society in general. This represents one of the structural reforms," he added.

At the meeting, it was discussed as to what measures should be adopted to ensure improvement, not impairment, of the situation of disabled people as a consequence of the reforms. The National Audit Office has made some specific and well-considered proposals: to decide, within 2015, how the system of benefits for incapacity for work should be funded after the completion of the reforms; testing of the methodology for the assessment of incapacity for work within a scope that would ensure the compliance of the methodology for individuals from a different background who have lost their capacity for work for various reasons; initiation of reforms of the support system available for disabled people, ensuring that they have the required services and aid within a scope sufficient to allow them integrate in society.

## **President Ilves met today in Kadriorg with representatives of disabled people**

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The President of the Republic asks the Riigikogu and the Government as well as disabled people themselves to become seriously involved with the preparations for launching the reforms. "We must not allow the situation for disabled people to deteriorate as a consequence of the reforms," President Ilves emphasised. "Reform must not deprive disabled people of the security that financial support for a fixed period offered."

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