

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and the First Vice-President of the European Commission today debated the topic of "Europe Today" at Tallinn University.

The debate between the Estonian Head of State and one of the top leaders of the European Union focused on the tense relations between the European Union and Russia as well as the growing instability in the south of the EU.

At the debate, President Ilves and Timmermans discussed how to strengthen the unity of the European Union in a situation where, apart from foreign policy issues, intolerance and extremists are rearing their ugly head.

"We need a Europe that will guarantee the protection of human rights, stand for the principles of a state based on the rule of law and pursue values that do not put economic profits first," told President Ilves.

When commenting on the events in Ukraine and the terrorist attacks by Russian-backed separatists, the Head of State found that the European Union must remain united and determined in reining in the aggressor and its supporters.

"If we allow Russia to determine state borders in Europe, we can be sure that they will win," he added.

The debate include long exchange of ideas about digital issues, including data protection and exchange between states and e-governance as well as the implementation of related principles in the European Union in general.

Both President Ilves and Timmermans agreed that our current laws and sceptical approach are the biggest obstacles for the digital development of countries.

Timmermans also stated, in his address, that Estonia's position in the common digital market should set an example for the European Union in general. He added that a fully functioning common digital market is highly important in terms of the future, and the earlier member states acknowledge this the more beneficial it will be for the EU in general. "Please, do help the rest of Europe realise the importance," he added.

President Ilves has emphasised, repeatedly, that Europe will lose its global competitiveness without a digital common market.

The debate between President Ilves and Timmermans took place in the English language and was moderated by Andres Kasekamp, a board member of the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute.

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229