

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves who today began a state visit to the Federal Republic of Germany, which is to last until Thursday, confirmed that Germany is the embodiment of political reason in democratic Europe.

"Two years ago, as Federal President Gauck paid a state visit to Estonia, we jointly agreed that the responsibility Europe currently expects from us is not a burden but a challenge and an opportunity to make Europe stronger," said the Estonian Head of State.

Today, this is even more obvious, as our security situation has drastically changed, he added after his meeting with President Joachim Gauck.

"Europe needs the example set by Germany, and its leading role in upholding the finances of Europe and foreign policies. Europe needs more Germany," assured President Ilves, in emphasising the importance of the role of the Federal President Gauck and Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel in protecting Europe's common values.

He described the attempts of Chancellor Merkel to put an end to the bloodshed in Eastern Ukraine as remarkable. At the same time, the European Union has remained uniform in observing the policies of sanctions and, hopefully, this is how it will remain.

Estonia highly values Germany's contribution to our regional security, which also has a visible component – participation in the NATO-led Baltic air security mission and in the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, said President Ilves.

He and the Federal President Gauck also discussed a common problem shared by Europe in general – the refugee crisis along the southern shores of the EU. Estonia must demonstrate solidarity here; however, the principles applicable to the adopting of decisions that concern the admittance of refugees by the European Commission must be more transparent, said President Ilves.

When responding to a question by ERR, he addressed the public of Estonia, saying that we can hardly expect solidarity from others regarding our problems unless we take part in solving the problems that others are facing.

President Ilves will be accompanied by a business delegation of 42 members during his state visit to Germany, confirming the significant interest of Estonian entrepreneurs in Germany, our second-largest trade partner. According to President Ilves, the ambitious Industry 4.0 programme of Germany, which could also be described as smart industry, has the potential to become one of the focal points of economic relations between Estonia and Germany as it offers lots of opportunities. This would allow us to combine the IT solutions developed in Estonia and the industrial performance of Germany, explained the Estonian Head of state.

Today and tomorrow, the Estonian Head of State will meet in Berlin with the President of Germany, Joackim Gauck; the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel; the President of the Bundestag, Norbert Lammert; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier; and the Minister of Finance, Wolfgang Schäuble. He has also scheduled meetings with the National Defence Committee, the European Union Affairs Committee of the Bundestag and with members of the Baltic friendship group.

In Berlin, President Ilves will lay a wreath at the Neue Wache memorial that commemorates victims of war and violence, the Bundeswehr Memorial to fallen soldiers and the monument to the people's uprising that took place in 1953 in East Berlin.

President Ilves will speak about e-integration in Europe at the umbrella organisation of German chambers of commerce, DIHK, and at an influential think-tank, Körber Stiftung, and he will also pay a visit to the Bayer Pharma research centre in Berlin.

An Arvo Pärt composer concert will be organised to honour the visit of the Estonian Head of State at Berlin Concert Hall, followed by a reception by President Ilves to honour Federal President Gauck.

On Wednesday, President Ilves will visit Kiel to meet with the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Schleswig-Holstein, Torsten Albig, and visit the University of Kiel and the research centre, GEOMAR, which focuses on the Baltic Sea and ocean studies.

The Estonian Head of State will be in Hamburg on Thursday to meet with the sitting Mayor, Olaf Scholz, and speak at the conference of euro ministers of the federal republics of Germany and Hamburg-Estonian business forum, which is being organised to celebrate the state visit. He will pay a visit to HSBA business school to learn about the options for combining studies and practice and visit the Kühne&Nagel company.

The official delegation that accompanies the Head of State includes the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Riigikogu, Hannes Hanso; the Chairman of the Committee of European Affairs, Kalle Palling; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Keit Pentus-Rosimannus; the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Urve Palo; the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Indrek Saar; the Chancellor of Justice, Ülle Madise; the President of Estonian Academy of Sciences, Tarmo Soomere; the Rector of University of Tartu, Volli Kalm; the Commander of the Defence Forces, Lieutenant General Riho Terras; the Chairman of the Board of the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Toomas Luman, as the head of the business delegation; the Secretary General of the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Paavo Nõgene; Director General of the Estonian National Heritage Board, Siim Raie; the Mayor of Tartu, Urmas Klaas; and the Deputy Secretary General for Financial Policies and Foreign Relations of the Ministry of Finance, Märten Ross.

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