

"Europe needs more of the Germany of Gauck and Merkel – today's Germany combines moral values and determination and hides the source of Europe's competitiveness," stated President Toomas Hendrik Ilves upon the completion of his state visit.

The tightly scheduled four-day state visit to Germany made us – two friends – even closer and more understanding of each other as states, said President Ilves.

At all meetings, there was discussion of possible connections between Estonia's successful digital economy and German industry.

"Germany has been the engine for integration in Europe; we need more of this solid confidence in Europe, in the European Union," explained the Estonian Head of State.

"In particular, Europe now needs solidarity and responsibility through compliance with both financial discipline and the jointly established rules in both foreign and security policy, and in standing for our shared values," emphasised President Ilves.

When speaking about the current situation, he used the expression "tricky period" in reference to the solutions to Greece's debt issues, the refugee crisis, Russia's activities in Ukraine and the growing popularity of extremist forces in a number of EU countries.

On his state visit to Germany that started on Monday, President Ilves met 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, the Minister of Finance, Wolfgang Schäuble; and the Minister of Defence, Ursula von der Leyen.

"All these meetings between friends were open and frank," said President Ilves. "Estonia and Germany have a similar understanding of Europe and the world in general, and even if there are some differences, these will only serve to make our related discussions more substantial and our co-operation stronger."

In all the meetings, Estonia felt the support of Germany in foreign and security policy issues, including enhancing NATO's deterrence along the eastern wing of the alliance and Estonia, in turn, confirmed its support for Germany's powerful leader's position in the European Union.

The Estonian Head of State was accompanied by a business delegation of 42 members during his state visit to Germany.

President Ilves spoke about e-integration in Europe at the umbrella organisation of German chambers of commerce, DIHK, and at the influential Körber Stiftung think-tank, and he also paid a visit to the Bayer Pharma research centre in Berlin. An Arvo Pärt composer concert was 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.

Yesterday in Kiel, the Estonian Head of State met with the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Schleswig-Holstein, Torsten Albig, and visited the University of Kiel and the GEOMAR marine research centre, which focuses on the Baltic Sea and ocean studies. Today, in Hamburg, he met with the sitting Mayor, Olaf Scholz, and spoke 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 paid a visit to HSBA business school to learn about the options for combining studies and practice, and he visited the Kühne&Nagel company.

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