

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who yesterday arrived in Tbilisi for a two-day official visit, emphasised that the successful euro-integration reforms of Georgia will bring the country closer to the European Union and increase the everyday living standards of people, while also representing an important and long-term investment into the security of the country.

"All of this is a part of building up a democratic country," he said.

Yesterday, the Estonian Head of State met with the President of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili, and today, with the Speaker of the Parliament, David Usupashvili, and all the representatives of the various parliament parties, including the Prime Minister, Irakli Garibashvili.

According to President Ilves, the European Union Eastern Partnership summit in Riga gave Georgia a clear perspective on visa-free travel. Hopefully, the final decision regarding visa-free travel will be adopted at the end of this year; however, for Georgia this will mean the fulfilment of a number of technical recommendations, but also more substantial compliance with the principles of a state based on the rule of law and the development of a transparent judicial system.

However, today we can feel the way the enlargement fatigue of the European Union has increased demands towards those striving to become members of the EU, stated President Ilves. "However, this should not cool down Georgia's strive for euro-integration. Just the opposite – it should prove the sceptics wrong. Being frank, this is the opportunity for the Georgian people and the duty of Georgia's political leaders," he said.

Last night, during the joint press conference of heads of state of Estonia and Georgia, President Ilves assured that, "Georgia has set its course for Europe; the only issue now is when it will arrive."

According to the EU Treaty, the EU will remain open to all the European countries that have proved their commitment to European values, democracy, human rights and respect of a state based on the rule of law. This is what the President of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili, confirmed, by telling President Ilves: "Today we are building up a free, democratic, European Georgia."

Relying on Estonian experience, President Ilves described strong internal co-ordination of the public sector and efficient communication with both the public and between government authorities as important for the purposes of euro-integration: "In Estonia, even the changing of governments maintained the consistency of euro-integration and maintaining civil servants is one of the important keys to that. Each government continued to build on the foundation laid by its predecessors and never started to demolish it."

President Ilves repeated that the support from friends of Georgia will not depend on the politicians who find themselves in government or opposition after democratic elections; we believe that Georgia wishes to change, and we believe that Georgia has a future in Europe.

The Estonian Head of State also confirmed, in Tbilisi, Estonia's support to Georgia's trans-Atlantic integration and approach to NATO.

President Ilves today gave a public presentation entitled "Walking the European path. Challenges of State Building" at the Atlantic Council of Georgia, and he met with the best of the competition for start-up companies in Tbilisi, which was organised with support from the Estonian development co-operation project, and at which 300 students from 23 universities attended.

Office of the President
Public Relations Department