

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves gave a presentation today at the University of Helsinki at the invitation of Väino Tanner Foundation on the influence of regional security in Europe's current security environment.

In speaking about the migration crisis that is currently testing the limits of the European Union, President Ilves recalled that 30,000 refugees asked Finland for asylum last year and some of them came across the border with Russia. Such volumes of refugees involves numerous challenges for society, and Finland has coped with the situation with extraordinary calmness and efficiency, stated the Estonian Head of State, adding that this cannot continue for ever. However, President Ilves also admitted that while Finland has already received 96 refugees from Italy and 44 refugees from Greece, through relocation within the European Union, Estonia is only beginning to consider the acceptance of the first refugee to be relocated.

The Estonian Head of State admitted that the unity of the European Union has never been under as much pressure as it is currently. Calculations by the Bertelsmann Foundation show that the economic price for the collapse of the Schengen visa space would amount to 1.4 trillion euros over the next ten years. Openness will give the European Union both political and economic power at international level, whereas encapsulation and isolationism will only serve to diminish it, said the Estonian Head of State.

When speaking about the so-called hard security, he emphasised that although Estonia and Finland have made different choices to ensure their respective security, we are joined by decisiveness in standing up against threats, and the threats that we face are largely the same.

President Ilves also spoke about IT co-operation between Estonia and Finland, describing it as an economic amplifier where the partnership between our countries could be a good example and foundation for both regional and wider IT co-operation.

The Estonian Head of State also met with his Finnish colleague in Helsinki: President Sauli Niinistö and his wife invited the Estonian presidential couple to a working breakfast to discuss the factors that influence security situation in the Baltic Sea region and the future of IT co-operation.

Väino Tanner was an outstanding Finnish statesman, the Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Winter War in 1939-1940 and one of the important developers of the Finnish defence resolve.

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