

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves left for a working visit to the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Finland today.

In the second half of the day President Ilves met with the President of the Republic of Finland Tarja Halonen to discuss bilateral cooperation between the two countries and cooperation within the European Union, including issues related to the EU Constitutional Treaty, the Schengen visa space and energy security.

Both parties concluded that Finnish-Estonian relations are developing well and cover an exceptionally wide range of fields. President Halonen found that although the relations are intensive and do not need to be controlled on the state level any more, even the most natural relations need to be taken care of. The heads of state concluded that close cooperation in Finnish-Estonian economic relations is taking place, but it is necessary to jointly develop economic cooperation also with third countries.

President Ilves thanked Finland for all-around support and assistance both at the time of Estonia's accession and also today when Estonia is a member of the European Union. In the words of the Finnish President it was easy to support Estonia as Estonia used to be one of the strongest candidate countries and has also shown itself well as a new member state.

At the meeting with the Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen the EU Summit in Lahti was discussed at greater length. The Finnish Prime Minister underlined that Europe must talk with one voice. The issues related to the EU's further enlargement and the modernisation of the Northern Dimension, including the importance of the Narva Bridge were also discussed. Both parties also reconfirmed the necessity to support Georgia.

President Ilves met also with Max Jakobson, his long-standing friend and a well-known public figure in Finland.

During lunch with President Halonen the heads of state discussed issues related to the environment of the Baltic Sea, Estonian-Finnish education and science cooperation, and the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the morning President Ilves met with the President of the Republic of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga. The meeting focused on the cooperation of the Baltic states within the European Union and NATO, especially the messages of the NATO summit meeting in Riga, cooperation within the framework of the EU Neighbourhood Policy, joining the Schengen visa space and cross-border cooperation. Also energy related security issues were discussed.

In Riga also a photo session of the two presidents was held and after that President Ilves signed the guest book. The heads of state also gave a joint press conference.

The head of Estonian state returned to Estonia tonight.

Public Relations Department of the Office of the President
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