

At the invitation of Michael McFaul, a former U.S. ambassador in Moscow and Professor of Political Science at Stanford University, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves visited the university and spoke to students and faculty members about the challenges that Europe is facing.

President Ilves was greeted at Stanford University by former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, with whom the President developed close ties during the events of April 2007, when Rice was in constant contact with Tallinn.

The President told the students that, "past crises seem like small headaches compared to the challenges facing the European Union today."

He spoke about the changes in the landscape of political parties in Europe and discussed the use of referendums as an important democratic tool. "We have seen how the electorate does not answer the question posed by the government at the ballot box, but instead reacts to other concerns."

Speaking about the migration crisis, the Estonian head of state conceded that this has been a serious trial and test of solidarity for the European Union. He recalled that solidarity does not only mean receiving noteworthy special purpose grants from the EU; for example, for building infrastructure in the member states, or supporting agriculture, education and research. Solidarity also means sharing the burden with those who have to shoulder more of the load in receiving war refugees, said President Ilves, adding: "Many complicated discussions await us as European Union members in regard to this question, among the individual states and with the citizens of each individual state."

Speaking about the EU's relations with Russia, the Estonian head of state said he believed that the EU's joint sanctions against the Russian state apparatus would be renewed in the summer.

"Russia's behaviour has changed the thinking on security policy in the West. This is illustrated by the fact that public support for NATO has increased significantly in some countries in the Baltic Sea Region," the President stated.

In answer to a question about the importance of the deterrence policy, President Ilves stated that deterrence in the 21st century does not need to be military in nature, but economic levers can also be employed as successful deterrents.

Office of the President
Public Relations Department