

"Just as we need the ongoing, professional efforts of the police authorities and special services of every single country that are supported by daily, close international co-operation to prevent terrorism, the external border of the European Union will only hold if the efforts of Member States at the EU's external border are supported by efficient joint projects inside the European Union," said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves today as he visited the modern Piusa cordon on the external border of the EU and took part in the installation of border post no. 1 on the triple Estonian-Latvian-Russian border point.

The Estonian Head of State emphasised that the border post marking the border between Estonia and Russia represents one of the steps taken to secure the external border of the European Union and is a part of the process to ensure the internal security of the European Union. "Both the recent terrorist attacks in Europe and the massive migration pressure from Russia on the Finnish and Norwegian borders have demonstrated the fragility of the security," he commented.

According to President Ilves, borders must keep away those who are not welcome in the European Union Member States, hope to abuse the visa free travel in the Schengen area and just come here in search of a better life.

"On the other hand, our external border is a gateway for those who escape from war and violence along the arc of instability that reaches from North Africa to the Middle East and who are welcome to make a permanent or temporary new home in the European Union," said the Head of State, adding: "The European Union will require the secure control of its external borders and common asylum policies, particularly in regard to the rejection of falsified applications and sending back unlawful immigrants."

He stated that as long as we are unable to agree on these basic aspects, sooner or later we will face a threat to the Schengen system in general.

"We can see today how extremist parties enter parliamentary politics and gain strength by shouting louder and louder for reclusiveness and the abandonment of openness. The European Union can only retain its current openness if we can agree upon rules that will tell us how the openness can be maintained in a new situation," explained President Ilves.

President Ilves, who placed a corner stone for the Piusa cordon building a year ago, as the border guards still worked and lived in temporary shelters, emphasised the importance of finally having a modern cordon on an important and sensitive edge of the external border of the European Union.

"The officials who defend our borders, as with all the other individuals who stand up for our security, deserve the best possible training, equipment and remuneration according to their work. They are professionals who do their job well and the internal security of Estonia relies on those people. They must be sure that our country appreciates them," said President Ilves.

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