

On a state visit to the Republic of Finland, the Estonian Head of State Toomas Hendrik Ilves met yesterday morning in Helsinki with Finnish President Tarja Halonen, with whom Estonian-Finnish relations, the future of Europe, and the situation in the neighboring countries of the Union were discussed.

“The connections between our countries are closer and more diverse than ever,” President Ilves declared, using the expression “the unprecedented Estonian-Finnish special relationship” to characterize the cooperation.

“Looking towards the future, our cooperation in the fields of research and innovation should be promoted, in order to jointly contribute to making the Baltic Sea Region more knowledge-based and competitive,” said the Estonian Head of State.

Speaking of energy issues, President Ilves said that, in addition to the Estlink sea cable, additional connections need to be created between Estonia and Finland for the internal market to prosper. Estonia, for instance, is interested in the establishment of the Estlink 2 electrical cable.

Speaking about the Russian-German gas pipeline, Presidents Halonen and Ilves found that all the environmental concerns must be assessed before construction begins. “Currently, there is the impression that the developer regards the assessment of environmental impact as a formality,” said the Estonian Head of State. President Ilves emphasized that as yet no cooperation has been initiated with Estonia regarding the planning of the pipeline, although its projected route is in the direct proximity of the Estonian economic zone.

Discussing European Union topics, President Ilves stated that Finland sets an example for Estonia on how to arrange European Union coordination and to strive toward being included among the effective and predictable member states.

Both Presidents agreed that a strong European Union is definitely in the interests of small countries like Estonia and Finland. “In the name of this goal, we should knowingly increase cooperation, and not take the European Union for granted,” said President Ilves. “We want to

belong to the core of the European Union, which comprises respectable, predictable, and effective countries.”

Speaking of the European Union Neighborhood Policy, the Estonian Head of State said that it is important to prevent a feeling of disappointment and neglect in the reforming countries. However, this requires evident dedication and visible contributions to these countries.

Speaking about Russia, President Ilves repeated his earlier thought that the Russian attitude of viewing democratic developments in its vicinity as threats to its security and damaging to its “legitimate” interests does not affirm adherence to the common values that are the basis for the strategic partnership between the European Union and Russia.

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