

At a meeting in Tallinn yesterday, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Austrian Head of State Dr. Heinz Fischer focused on a discussion about the future of Europe and the Union's neighborhood.

"Estonia is thankful that Austria, and especially the Federal President Dr. Fischer, has always been a strong supporter of Estonian development and our ambitions regarding the European Union," said President Ilves. "I am very happy that I can call Estonian-Austrian relations good in the fields of political, cultural, and economic dialogues."

The Heads of State acknowledged that Estonia and Austria have become good partners in the European Union and expressed the hope that the process for the European Union Constitutional Treaty will reach a positive solution in the future.

Separately, they discussed research-based cooperation between the two countries, which takes place through direct contacts between universities and scientific institutions, as well as within the framework of European Union cooperation networks.

Speaking about the Union's future enlargement, the Estonian Head of State said that enlargement has been one of the most successful policies of the European Union and it deserves further support. "The strategic importance of enlargement cannot be sacrificed to the unfinished internal reforms of the Union, although we agree that upon enlargement, the acceptance capability of the Union must be guaranteed," said the Estonian Head of State.

In regard to the European Union Neighborhood Policy, Presidents Ilves and Fischer concentrated their attention on Ukraine, and expressed concern about the internal political crisis that has developed and conveyed their hope for a democratic solution.

"Estonia primarily supports those neighbors because they have chosen a European road to development," said President Ilves, speaking about Georgia and Moldova, as well as Ukraine. "We acknowledge the aspirations for reform of these countries, but also emphasize that reforms which deepen the traditions of democratic governance are important first and foremost for the countries themselves."

Speaking about Kosovo, the Estonian and Austrian Heads of State supported the proposal for the future status of Kosovo presented by Martti Ahtisaari, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General, noting that it is not directed against Serbia in any way.

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