

Yesterday, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met with the Riigikogu National Defence Committee to discuss the proposal made by the Head of State to amend the Constitution, which among other things would regulate the appointment of the Commander of the Defence Forces.

The Head of State has said that the current procedure, according to which the Commander of the Defence Forces is appointed by the Riigikogu, based on the proposal of the President, is a structure adopted from the pre-war Constitution which has today become a ceremonial solution that has not rational basis.

“Due primarily to the status and appointment procedure prescribed by the Constitution, the cooperative relationships of all the Commanders of the Defence Forces with the executive power—the Ministry of Defence—have been problematic,” said President Ilves at the meeting with the members of the parliamentary National Defence Committee.

The proposal for amending the Constitution prepared by the Head of State would delete the reference to the institution of the Commander of the Defence Forces, and thereby provide the opportunity to regulate the status as well as the appointment procedure by law.

“In order to reduce fears regarding the politicizing of the office of the Commander of the Defence Forces, the qualification criteria for the person to be appointed to this office should be prescribed by law,” said President Ilves.

Last week the Head of State met with the representatives of all the Riigikogu factions regarding this question, and yesterday, he met with the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces. Next week, the National Defence Council will meet in Kadriorg. President Ilves also wishes to meet with the parliamentary Constitutional Committee regarding the proposal to amend the Constitution.

“Since national defence is a field of activity in which a broad consensus is more than welcome, I will do my best to arrive at such a consensus,” the Head of State affirmed.

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