

“Joining the Schengen visa and legal zone must finally eliminate our feeling of being peripheral, of course, only if we ourselves make the effort,” President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who is on a visit to Valga County, said at the Valga-Valka border checkpoint today.

As of December 21st – when Estonia will join the common Schengen space – the edges of Valga, Võru, Viljandi and Pärnu Counties that butt up against Latvia will no longer be on the edge of Estonia, but in the interior of the European Union, the Head of State opined.

“I hope that local governments and businesses will energetically make the most of the opportunities provided by Schengen,” said President Ilves, mentioning the Lübeck-Narva corridor and Pskov-Livonia euro-region as examples.

Speaking of internal security, the Head of State emphasized the need to compensate for the visible disappearance of the border guards on the Estonian-Latvian border.

“This entails very close cooperation between the police, special services, customs and tax officials, and of course the border guards of the two countries,” said President Ilves. “And naturally, this cooperation to manage risks must not be limited to Estonia and Latvia, but must be internationally as extensive as possible.”

The disappearance of border controls on the Estonian-Latvian border must leave behind our readiness to temporarily restore these controls if necessary, as has happened in the European Union, said the Head of State, in answer to a question regarding the fate the present border control and customs buildings.