

“Control of one’s borders is an inseparable part of any country’s sovereignty,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves yesterday at the Estonia Concert Hall, when he greeted the Estonian border guards who are celebrating their 85th anniversary.

“Is there a place for border posts in the era of the Schengen visa zone and borderless Europe, or are they destined to stand only in museum courtyards?” asked the Head of State. “The abolition of visible border controls does not eliminate the borders between countries. Estonia will remain Estonia and Latvia will remain Latvia. Accession to the Schengen visa zone is marked by three important words—freedom, opportunity, responsibility. The freedom to travel. An opportunity for local government, tourism companies, and entrepreneurs. The responsibility to control what is happening in one’s country in cooperation with domestic power structures and foreign allies. To control who arrives here and departs from here.”

We—Estonia, Latvia, and all the other Schengen states—need our border guards exactly as we did earlier, said President Ilves, adding, “Even more so—the 338.6-kilometer Estonian-Russian border is now a part of the external border of the entire European Union. It is the responsibility of the Estonian border guards, of all of you, to ensure that the European Union border remains strong. Naturally, one should add the obligation to conduct rescues at sea and on Lake Peipsi.”

The Estonian Border Guard, which was celebrating its 85th anniversary yesterday, has borne this responsibility well, said the Head of State.

He recalled the beginning of the 1990’s, when Estonia had just restored its independence—the border was as good as non-existent, heated shelters substituted for border checkpoints, border guards even slept on short old beds from children’s camps, and their most menacing weapons were truncheons. Any talk of electronic surveillance, infrared sensors or rescue helicopters would have sounded like science fiction at that time.

“However, there were men that believed that there will be a Border Guard. After all, there is a border to guard and men on this border are an essential trait of any independent country. You created this Border Guard and started to guard the border of your country,” President Ilves said to the border guards. “Today we have trained border guards, good equipment, new guard posts, a strong organization, and the people’s trust in the Board Guard.”

## **President Ilves thanked the Estonian border guards**

Friday, 02 November 2007 14:14

---

In conclusion, the Head of State said, "I wish you all a sharp eye and determination! More power to your service!"

Office of the President  
Public Relations Department  
Phone +372 631 6229