

On 22 December, along with representatives of Viljandi County and Latvia's Valmiera Region, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves opened the Penuja border crossing on the Abja-Ruhja Road.

"If in Valga and Valka there was a barrier before December 21st, but you could cross the border by showing a passport, then here, in Penuja, there was nothing. There was a ditch and the dug-up Abja-Ruhja Road, which did not connect, but took us to dead end, said the Head of State. "However, now this road and the Penuja border crossing are the connectors of something important."

President Ilves expressed hope that the border roads that have been reopened after accession to the Schengen visa space will provide an opportunity for closer cooperation between the border areas in South-Estonia and North-Latvia.

"I call upon you, dear people, to rediscover North-Latvia and you, dear Latvians, to rediscover South Estonia," said the Head of State.

According to President Ilves, the European Union values cross-border cooperation and this affords financial support to the joint activities of the Estonian and Latvian rural municipalities in the border area, however, people's own ingenuity and enterprise is important.

As example, the President of the Republic mentioned possible cooperation between the Defence League and Latvian sister organizations, the joint activities of the promoters of village culture and educational life, as well as cooperation between entrepreneurs, in order to make this region a trade and tourism route.