

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who started a two-day visit to Lääne County yesterday, met today with local government leaders, nature researchers and protectors, local tourism entrepreneurs, and promoters of village life and enterprise.

At the Matsalu National Park and in conversations with owners of tourist farms, the Head of State said that the strength of Lääne County as a tourism region is its unspoiled nature, as well as the opportunities for birdwatching and nature tourism more generally.

“This is a strong trademark, which, if carefully promoted, should define Lääne County as an interesting tourism area,” President Ilves said. “Furthermore, I believe that the current economic situation fosters the preference of Estonian people for domestic tourism and benefits smaller tourist farms.”

For instance, the Head of State praised Maarika Mann, who deals with the promotion of nature tourism, by bring birdwatchers from everywhere in Europe to Estonia and thereby introducing Estonia as an extremely interesting country for nature tourism.

In Matsalu, the Head of State acknowledged the national park’s cooperation with the community, the most telling example of which is Lihula’s plan to convert its boiler house to use local renewable fuels—Matsalu wetland reeds, floodplain hay, underbrush and straw—and for the park’s close ties with many of Estonia’s schools.

“If boys or girls have not been to Matsalu by the time they graduate from secondary school, they have not seen Estonia,” the President said.

At a meeting with Lääne County’s local government leaders the possible merger of local governments was discussed.

“When all residents, regardless of local government, pay an equal part of their income as taxes to the government, then the government should guarantee services of equal quality to

everyone, regardless of the local government,” the Head of State stressed.

According to President Ilves, the merger of rural municipalities must not intensify provincialism nor worsen people’s opportunities. “Along with discussions about what the picture of our territorial administration should look like, we must speak clearly about the fact that the provision of local government services must continue to be guaranteed in the current rural municipality centers,” he said.

The Head of State also visited the Handicraft Shed in the village of Üdruma, the production facility of the upholstered furniture manufacturer OÜ Resvok in Variku village, and the State Forest Management Center information point in Peraküla. He also met with the representatives of the Nõva Rural Municipality and its villages at the local community hall.

In Nõva, President Ilves said it is important that proper roads lead from larger centers to local magnet centers that are farther away and more isolated. Thus, the Head of State expressed his hope that one of the greatest current problems of the Nõva Rural Municipality—the asphaltting of a 15-kilometer stretch of road—will soon be resolved.

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