

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met with Prime Minister Andrus Ansip last evening in Kadriorg, to discuss Estonia's economic situation and the national budget. They also examined the positions of the different government parties regarding the stabilization of the situation.

The Head of State stressed the need to arrive at an agreement regarding the necessary measures needed to contain the budget deficit and fulfill the state's obligations.

"The continued large-scale growth of unemployment requires that any bureaucratic obstacles would be eliminated in order to insure that every unemployed person has an opportunity to participate in retraining or other employment programs as quickly as possible," said President Ilves.

According to the Head of State, during the last few weeks there have been signs that the global economic downturn may be coming to a halt, and some of the principal indicators of the US economy, which is at the centre of the crisis, have pointed to the fact that the worst of the crisis may be over.

"Despite this we must be prepared for the situation in Estonia worsening for some time, thereby further increasing pressure on the national budget," said President Ilves. "Thus, we must base the planned changes in this year's budget on the most conservative projections regarding the economic recession, and we must immediately start setting clearly defined goals for putting together the next year's budget."

During the last two weeks, the Head of State has met with representatives of the other coalition partners, the Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica, as well as the Social Democratic Party.

# The President of the Republic met with the Prime Minister

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