

The Head of State stressed that in this coming week we must expand our view from our local domestic politics to problems that affect all of Europe. President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who started to two-day tour of East-Viru County today, voted in the European Parliament elections in Jõhvi on the first day of early voting.

The Head of State stressed that in this coming week we must expand our view from our local domestic politics to problems that affect all of Europe, and we must elect representatives to the European Parliament, who are hard-working; know how common European interests develop and are formed; have the prerequisites to become opinion leaders in their field of activity in the European Parliament; and know how to make their voices heard in the parliamentary committees as well as factions.

“This assumes the will and skill to cooperate. The brawling, oversimplification, and labelling typical of Estonian politics will accomplish nothing in Brussels or Strasbourg,” President Ilves said.

He also said that this time, the election results will undoubtedly be influenced by the situation that has developed in Estonian domestic politics, the economy and political culture.

“I recollect that issues related to Estonian domestic policies are not discussed in the European Parliament, and we as voters should be interested in what ideas the political parties have regarding European problems,” the Head of State said. He called it worrisome that the European Parliament election campaign in Estonia has lacked any debate about issues such as financial perspectives and Estonia’s priorities, including the free movement of services, the liberalisation of which is very important for Estonia.

“Unfortunately, I have not noticed these topics in the debates,” President Ilves said.

He called upon all franchised European Union citizens to vote in the elections.

“This is one of the few opportunities that citizens have to participate in high-level politics. Unfortunately, this is currently true in Estonia at least. By not voting you deprive yourself of the opportunity to criticize the choice made by others,” the Head of State added.

Commenting on the polemics that have erupted regarding the legitimacy of e-voting and the “voting tents”, President Ilves said that it is the practice in democratic countries to make the voting procedure as simple as possible, while strictly monitoring the established requirements regarding elections.

Voting by mail outside of polling places is a very common practice in many countries, and the secrecy is equivalent to voting by Internet. In Estonia and elsewhere it has been found that the principle of secrecy is intended to guarantee the freedom of choice. The Estonian Supreme Court has clearly stated that the freedom of choice is guaranteed by the fact that an e-vote can be replaced, and violations of the freedom to vote, buying votes, or the use of someone else’s ID card, etc. are criminal offences. Thus, voting by Internet is constitutional.

President Ilves voted in the European Parliament elections

Monday, 01 June 2009 23:34

“If some political powers want to return to voting with paper and pencil only on election days, this would contradict the principle of the universality of elections. The wish to prevent some people from making their choice is not compatible with a democratic way of thinking,” said the Head of State.

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