

“The Rescue Board is a part of our integrated internal security, which – and this is important to remember – in the European Union is not just a domestic matter,” President Ilves said, at the 90th anniversary of organized fire-fighting in Estonia. “Just like the officials of the Police, Border Guard, Citizenship and Migration Board, or the Security Police, so too the Rescue Board is a part of our integrated internal security, which – and this is important to remember – in the European Union is not just a domestic matter,” President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said, speaking at the Estonia Theatre on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of organized fire-fighting in Estonia.

The Head of State conceded that the global economic crisis has not left the Estonian fire-fighters and rescuers untouched – their incomes have been reduced like everyone else’s in the country, and their budget has been cut. Nevertheless their team is intact; no one has been laid off.

“However, the next round of budget cuts could mean that some rescue companies will be closed. The greatest impact would be felt in rural areas, where it would take many times longer for rescue vehicles to arrive,” President Ilves said. “This is a line that politicians must not cross. This would weaken Estonia’s domestic security. This would curtail people’s sense of security and sorely reduce their faith in the state’s ability to protect them.”

Even a “thin state” must fulfill the functions of a state, the President of the Republic said, and added, “One of these functions is to provide security for its citizens. No one had the right to forget that the money in the national budget belongs to the taxpayers, not to the parliament, government or the ministries. People pay taxes to the government so that the government can perform its functions. I reiterate that one of the most important functions of the state is to ensure the security of its citizens.”

Therefore, even during economically difficult times, the government has the responsibility to defend the officials that maintain domestic safety – and thereby internal security and all the citizens – just as vigorously as it defends, for example, parental benefits, President Ilves said.

“We are told that this increases the well-being of many people. However, we are fooling ourselves because one cannot speak of wellbeing if internal security is uncertain,” the Head of State said. “Only a secure state makes wellbeing possible for each of us.”

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