

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who is on an official visit to Turkey, met yesterday with the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Mr. Mehmet Ali Sahin. President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who is on an official visit to Turkey, met yesterday with the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Mr. Mehmet Ali Sahin.

The Estonian Head of State and the head of the Turkish government described the current economic and trade relations between two countries as modest, but they admitted that the entrepreneurs of both countries have a reason to show interest in each other's markets and possible investments.

"I do hope that the Turkish confectioner Güllüoğlu, which entered the Estonian market, will encourage many other Turkish investors and will give impetus to bilateral economic relations, in turn inspiring Estonian entrepreneurs," said President Ilves.

The Estonian Head of State sees the launching of direct flights as an important aspect for the development of relations between the two countries; Turkey has repeatedly shown its interest in this aspect on a high political level. Such a regular line would most definitely increase the mutual number of visitors, as last year only 2,745 Turkish tourists stayed overnight in Estonian accommodation establishments. At the same time, Estonian travel agencies sent 27,384 tourists to Turkey.

The possible simplification of the visa procedure for Turkish citizens to enter the European Union was repeatedly raised at President Ilves's today's meetings.

"Estonia supports visa free travel for Turkish citizens in the European Union," President Ilves assured. "Let us take a wider, more strategic look at the situation and ask: does the future of the European Union lie in becoming a museum or into a really dynamic region? And then let us ask: can we be a dynamic region without Turkey? The answer is no."

The Estonian Head of State invited the representatives of Turkey to Tallinn to familiarise themselves with the opportunities offered by e-governance, reminding them that Azerbaijan, one of Turkey's most influential neighbours, is about to adopt several solutions of the X-tee safe data exchange layer, which was developed in Estonia.

Yesterday evening, President Ilves gave a presentation to the professors and students of Bilkent University, where he discussed the history and future of relations between Estonia and Turkey.

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