

At his bilateral meetings last night with Polish president Bronisław Komorowski and European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso, Estonian president Toomas Hendrik Ilves discussed the problems of the transport connections of the Baltic States with the rest of Europe.

“A railway with the European gauge should stretch from the western border of Poland all the way to the Baltic Sea,” said President Ilves during his meeting with his Polish counterpart. “That would see us lose our cul-de-sac status – somewhere you either can’t get into in the first place or can’t get out of again on the other side.”

The Estonian head of state remarked that the connecting corridors running through the Baltic States and Poland today have not improved since the Cold War era. “It just doesn’t fit in with the picture of Europe as it is today, where we talk about a developed, integrated and competitive European Union,” the president said.

President Ilves stressed the importance of close cooperation among the governments of the four countries involved in searching for the best possible solutions to their transport problems.

“The Via Baltica project has ground to a halt,” he said. “All of us – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland – need to dedicate ourselves to the project and make it work. After all, Via Baltica isn’t just about physical transport routes, but much more than that.”

In describing the way the four countries need to work together, President Ilves said, “It’s in all of our interests that we make an equal contribution, and that what we each contribute supports the contributions of the others. There’s no room here for digging our heels in about what we all individually want. We’re supported by the opportunities made available to us by the European Union, but we have to work together, in a highly coordinated way, if we’re to get anywhere.”

President Ilves praised Poland, which has shown that it recognises the value of close cooperation at the Central European level, including as part of the Visegrad group and with other countries in the region: “Those we joined the European Union at the same time as, and those who are very likely to aspire to membership of the union in the future, such as Ukraine. Working with these countries will make the EU a more dynamic place.”

Speaking of Poland in particular, President Ilves described the country as “one of the great nations of the European Union, and one of Estonia’s most unwavering allies.”

At his bilateral meeting with European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso, President Ilves discussed how to achieve a situation in which “from Portugal in the south to Estonia in the north we can all be connected to the heart of Europe in the same way”.

“Estonia is one of the most politically integrated Member States of the European Union, but not economically,” the president said. “We need both the union’s support and cooperation at the regional level to develop transport and energy connections with the rest of the European Union.”

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