

“Serbia’s future lies in the European Union, where integration among European countries around shared values has enabled Member States to enjoy peace and prosperity thanks to the shoring up of democracy, human rights and the rule of law,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves to Serbian head of state Boris Tadić, who is in Estonia on an official two-day visit to the country.

The Estonian head of state described Serbia’s progression towards the European Union since it submitted its accession application almost a year ago as “a clear indication of its commitment”.

“Now is the right time to take the next step on the path towards Serbia’s integration,” President Ilves said. “And that step is the decision of the European Union’s Foreign Affairs Council to forward Serbia’s accession application to the European Commission, who then need to present their own views.”

In speaking of the benefits of EU support for Serbia, President Ilves said: “We can show our near neighbours that we understand and support countries that are successful in their approach to the European Union. This will strengthen relations based on our shared values and increase stability, not only in the western Balkans, but throughout Europe.”

In discussing Kosovo, the Estonian president welcomed the recent resolution of the United Nations General Assembly and the willingness of the European Union to mediate a dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

“I welcomed your words, President Tadić, following the ruling of the International Court on the independence of Kosovo, when you said that Serbia will continue to move towards the European Union and that the union needs the kind of Serbia that is able to resolve the Kosovo issue constructively,” said President Ilves. “The key words here – as elsewhere in the European Union – are good relations with neighbours, regional cooperation and dialogue.”

The Estonian and Serbian heads of state agreed that the political and economic ties between their two countries had grown significantly stronger in recent years.

There has been important cooperation between Tallinn and Belgrade in the fields of information and communications technology and the development and use of oil shale processing technology. In the case of the former, Serbia already has the Estonian state's X-roads software at its disposal, and a number of Estonia's ICT companies are interested in launching or expanding operations in Serbia. In the case of the latter, Estonian companies are looking to work with Serbia on the use of the country's oil shale reserves. Here Serbia also wishes to make use of Estonia's know-how, as can be seen in the close ties that exist between the Viru Chemistry Group and the University of Belgrade.

During his trip to Estonia, President Tadić will also be meeting with President of the Riigikogu Ene Ergma and Prime Minister Andrus Ansip. The Estonian head of state will be hosting an official dinner in his Serbian counterpart's honour.

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