

“If we want to maintain the European Union and the euro area, we must insist that all the European Union Member States follow the established rules. We must share a common understanding of fiscal responsibilities; this is the only way to ensure the stability and sustainable development of the EU,” told President Ilves, who today arrived in Finland on a working visit, where he met with the President of Finland, Tarja Halonen, Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Erkki Tuomioja.

According to the Estonian Head of State, one of the cornerstones of the good relations between Estonia and Finland is close co-operation on European issues. “We share concerns and understanding regarding the future of the European Union and the euro area on the issues of the financial crisis, which involve a number of countries. We need responsible behaviour within the European Union in this specific crisis, combined with an attitude that is focused on solutions. Countries in difficulties need to be helped; the only alternative would be a catastrophe,” told President Ilves, who also paid a visit to the Finnish Parliament within the framework of his visit, where he met with the Parliament Speaker and chairmen of the various political parties.

President Ilves emphasised at today’s meetings that apart from common problems arising from the financial crisis in the euro area, we are also linked by close co-operation between the Baltic Sea countries. The Estonian Head of State admitted the importance of the Baltic Sea Strategy of the European Union, as this notably influences the region’s policies in the spheres of both environment and competitiveness, adding that Estonia highly values Finland’s active approach to this topic and good co-operation between the countries, which is aimed at achieving the objectives.

“It is important to maintain political focus on the Baltic Sea Strategy of the European Union, especially as we consider the budget of the European Union for 2014–2020. At present, we need to decide how to proceed with the Baltic Sea Strategy – how do we perceive its future and how could the strategy’s action plan be updated in such a way that it could be construed as a realistic foundation for planning the budgetary means of the European Union,” stated President Ilves, who was one of the founders of the Baltic Sea Strategy during his term as a member of the European Parliament.

During his visit to Finland, President Ilves also touched upon security policies and the European Union region. “Countries on the verges of the European Union that apply the principles of democratic governance and comply with the principles of a country based on the rule of law represent an important security policy issue. The more secure and democratic our neighbouring

countries are, the safer the European Union can feel," told President Ilves.

President Ilves invited Finland to increase co-operation within the sphere of cyber defence and added that Estonia welcomes every step that Finland takes in the direction of Trans-Atlantic security co-operation.

"I am pleased that Finland has expressed its intent to become involved in the NATO Centre of Excellence for Co-operative Cyber Defence. As I have previously emphasised, Estonia, Finland and Sweden could pool their resources in cyber defence matters and pursue common issues within the European Union," told the Estonian Head of State.

The visit to Finland is the second foreign visit for President Ilves since he began his second term in office by taking an oath of office in the *Riigikogu* on 10 October, and the visit is to emphasise the importance and closeness of relations between Estonia and Finland. Five years ago, when first elected to office, Toomas Hendrik Ilves also made one of his first foreign visits to Finland.

Tonight, President Ilves will take a plane to Brussels for a working visit, where he will visit the European Parliament and meet with Jerzy Buzek, the President of the European Parliament, and candidate for next President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz. They will discuss the budget of the European Union, including the issue of agricultural subsidies.

President Ilves will also participate in a representation conference in Brussels, which is dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the restoration of the independence of the Baltic states.

The Head of State will be back in Estonia on Tuesday evening, 18 October.

Office of the President

President Ilves in Finland focuses on euro area crisis

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