

“In resolving the financial crisis, we have to think beyond the existing institutional framework, which is not sufficiently well-adapted to reality,” President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said at the opening panel of the annual meeting of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) in Warsaw.

According to President Ilves, it is important that, in the name of preserving the euro area, all the European Union member states follow the established rules and share a common understanding about fiscal responsibility, but it is also clear that the resolution of the crisis requires more than just solidarity.

“An inseparable part of this ‘more’ is a sense of responsibility before the European Union as a community and before each of the member states,” he said.

President Ilves added that the financial crisis in the euro area is not a local, but a global, crisis and if we do not want to or are not able to resolve it, it may finally result in a crisis of democracy: the citizens of the responsible countries are not willing to endlessly assist irresponsible countries and this dissatisfaction will start to endanger the internal stability and security of euro-minded countries.

“At the same time, Europe must come to grips with determining its own role in the world’s changing power relationships,” Ilves said.

According to the Estonian Head of State, it is worrying that although we are in the middle of a constantly changing Europe that is being fundamentally reorganised, we are still speaking about “new” and “old” member states of the European Union.

“Today, Estonia and Poland have been in the European Union just as long as Sweden, Finland and Austria had been when we joined the EU. Yet no one has ever referred to them as “new member states”. This outdated understanding of East and West is slow to disappear in the European Union,” the Estonian Head of State noted.

The eighth annual meeting of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) taking place in Warsaw focused on various current topics related to foreign relations, such as the European financial crisis and the future of the European Union.

President Ilves participated in the opening panel of the annual meeting along with former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, British politician David Miliband, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski and Alexander Stubb, Finland's former Minister for Foreign Affairs and current Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade.

In the course of the working visit to Poland, President Ilves is also meeting with President Bronisław Komorowski and Foreign Radosław Sikorski.

The head of state arrives back in Estonia tonight.

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