

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, met today with members of the Council of Rectors, Cultural Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu and Ministry of Education and Research to discuss the amendments to legislation that regulate higher education.

“Higher education is a topic so important that one cannot rush reforms in this area. If we want to raise the quality of higher education, this can only be done by means of top level laws, which have only been passed once all the sensible proposals have been discussed – if we expect quality from universities, laws must also meet the same standards,” said President Ilves, acknowledging the current discussion in the Parliament and society in general.

According to President Ilves, it is important for the reforms to improve the quality of our higher education in the long term, considering various important aspects such as the value of higher education and the education allowance system, which considers the needs of students.

“It is highly important for talented Estonian gymnasium graduates not to be forced into adopting decisions regarding their universities, whereby they could only continue their studies based on the thickness of their wallets. We must also realise it is not only Estonian universities that are competing with each other; we also compete with institutions offering higher education in other countries. If our young people lack a good reason to study in the Republic of Estonia, they will go abroad,” told the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves also raised the issue of duplicated curricula at national level and subjects within universities. “Duplication is quite common all over the country and this may not result in the required quality,” he stated.

At today’s meeting with President Ilves, the following members of the Rectors’ Council were present: Alar Karis (University of Tartu); Signe Kivi (Estonian Academy of Arts); Andres Keevallik (Tallinn University of Technology); Mait Klaassen (Estonian University of Life Sciences); Peep Lassmann (Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre); Tiit Land (Tallinn University); Urmas Klaas, Chairman of the Committee of Cultural Affairs of the Riigikogu; and Aadu Must, Deputy Chairman and Mart Laidmets, Head of Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Research.

The law for the amendment of the University Act, the Institutions of Higher Professional Education Act and other acts 89 SE I have passed the first reading in the *Riigikogu*; proposals for amendments are welcome until 6 December.

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