

“The Baltic and Nordic countries will only be successful through joint action within the Baltic Sea framework, which will make us visible and audible throughout Europe,” told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who is hosting a meeting of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian heads of state together with the President of Poland, which began in Vihula Manor last night. “We are joined by the Baltic Sea identity.”

At the meeting, the leaders of the Baltic states and Poland, Dalia Grybauskaitė, Andris Bērziņš, Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Bronisław Komorowski, focused on joint transport and energy projects that would bring all of us closer to Europe.

“Estonia knows that Baltic co-operation within the European Union will only be useful for the citizens of three countries if our parliaments and governments understand the need to pay for both cross-border transport infrastructure and common energy projects,” President Ilves emphasised, while mentioning the Rail Baltica project, which received support from the European Commission, together with the new nuclear power plant project planned for Lithuania, of which Estonia, Latvia and Poland have announced their intention to become a part. “Here is no place for pettiness and crude calculations – how much profit will each party reap – we should stay focused on general interests and the security of the region.”

For example, the Estonian Head of State regards the import of electricity from countries outside the European Union as important because, otherwise, individuals investing into the production of electricity in the Baltic region will have no security; also, imposing restrictions on importing electricity is needed to develop the Visaginas nuclear power plant project.

When speaking about the security of the region and, in particular, securing a permanent NATO air security mission here, President Ilves confirmed that the contribution of all the Baltic states to strengthening national defence will be required in this area.

“Estonia will be spending two per cent of its GDP on national defence next year, as this is the assurance we have given. This will also give us the moral right to demand the support of the permanent air security missions of NATO member states,” President Ilves said. “We would not be credible to our allies without making our own contribution.”

If we want the European Union and NATO to stop categorising the members of their organisations into new and old counties and to treat both the Baltic states, which restored their independence 20 years ago, and Poland, which shook off the influence of the Soviet Union at the same time, as mature nations, we need to start behaving as such, told the Estonian Head of State.

When speaking about the financial and debt crisis, which has hit a number of European countries, President Ilves described the situation as “extremely worrying”, as the trust that markets have in the euro and the euro zone is plummeting; however, all the Member States have not yet realised the seriousness of the situation.

“We need immediate decisions that would restore the trust of markets. However, we do not need new institutions or forums to achieve that purpose; let us trust the European Central Bank and the European Commission,” told the Estonian Head of State.

At the meeting, which continues today in Vihula, the Commissioner for Transport and Vice President of the European Commission, Siim Kallas, will present to the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish heads of state the Rail Baltica project, which is planned to connect the Baltic states with the rest of Europe.

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