

The Estonian Head of State, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, said at today's meeting with Cecilia Malmström, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, that individual European Union Member States have a number of important cyber initiatives, but the EU lacks a complete vision of modern cyber security and common policy.

"The European Union needs a common cyber policy to recognise cyber security as one of the most important issues that embraces the energy and transport sectors as well as the operation of societies and our communities in a most general sense," President Ilves emphasised. "Now is the time for the European Union as a whole and every single Member State to realise that cyber problems are not some niche issues, but a common challenge and opportunity."

The Estonian Head of State and Commissioner Malmström stated that the cyber awareness of the European Union Member States and their readiness and capability to cope with new threats is highly unstable.

"Currently, we lack a comprehensive EU Strategy on cyber security and the European Commission is the very place for its development," told President Ilves. "However, it is quite clear that a strategy alone will not improve the situation; Member States must take some initiatives themselves."

The Estonian Head of State acknowledged the persistence and success of Commissioner Malmström in raising cyber issues and fighting cyber crime; this year, reviewing the directive on the defence of the critical infrastructure of the European Union forms a part of it.

"This is essential, as without the attention of the Member States to critical infrastructure it is difficult to ensure the safety of IT services that support this very infrastructure," President Ilves said. He assured that Estonia, Great Britain, Germany and other states that have successfully worked with cyber issues to date can offer their support to both the European Commission and the Member States.

The European Commissioner for Home Affairs shall visit Estonia in relation to the first session

of the Administrative Committee of the IT Agency of the European Union, which opened its head office in Tallinn. The tasks of the IT Agency involve the operative management and development of large-scale IT systems of the European Union security sphere and the administration of communication infrastructure. The IT Agency will be administering the Schengen Information System (SIS), Visa Information System (VIS) and Eurodac applicants for the asylum database. The agency is also expected to administrate the future justice and home affairs databases. Apart from the head office in Tallinn, the data centres of the IT Agency are located in Strasbourg, France and Sankt Johann im Pongau, Austria.

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