

At the opening of the 70th international session of the European Youth Parliament (EYP) in Tallinn today, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves urged attendees to bear in mind that the days of populist policies of borrowing ever more to get re-elected are gone.

The head of state remarked that it is easy to demand that one country some other country, say Germany, bail out those who have borrowed too much or let their finances get out of control. "But Germany is not an authoritarian government," he said. "Every government, every parliament beholden first and foremost to its electorate. So what do we do when voters don't want to pay?"

Ilves called on the attendees of the EYP to themselves think long and hard about decisions that could be made, reasonably and sustainably, and those that could not. "In Brussels and Strasbourg, parliamentarians, whether they like it or not are also constrained by the ability of the member states to pay, which in turn is constrained by the willingness of European citizens to support such policies," he explained.

The 70th session of the EYP is being held in Tallinn from 27 July-5 August and is being attended by over 300 youngsters from more than 30 countries. Prompted by experts and group leaders, they will debate topical EU issues before sending their proposals to the European Commission. The EYP was established in 1987 as an organisation promoting non-formal education. Estonia is hosting it for the second time: the first session held in the country took place in 2003.

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