

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who was invited to Boston as a keynote speaker at the top level "2012 Transatlantic Health IT/eHealth Cooperation Assembly", an eHealth event organised by the European Union and the United States of America, searched for answers to the following question in his presentation: what are the co-operation opportunities between the EU and the USA in the contemporary organisation of medicine, which is largely dependent on information technology?

President Ilves, who led the European Union e-health work group for a year and a half at the proposal of the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, highlighted placing the focus on citizens – both as patients and clients – as the most important aspect.

"We will give people access to their own medical records, teach them how to use this information and motivate them to take the responsibility for their own health," told the Estonian Head of State.

The President also used an analogy from banking in his explanation: ten years ago, Estonian people went to bank offices and the teller performed their transactions for them; today, most of us have assumed the role of the teller ourselves.

"Why could a citizen not make the same e-leap in the sphere of health? Citizens, above all, and not doctors or governments, should be the possessors and users of their medical records," mused President Ilves. "The organisation of health care is a field in which we lag behind with the use of information technology by approximately ten years, although the demographic developments at both sides of the Atlantic Ocean should encourage us to be more innovative."

For many years, the European Union and the United States of America have co-operated in promoting e-health; the memorandum of mutual understanding was concluded in this sphere in December 2010.

The Estonian Head of State reminded those present that the citizens of the European Union and the United States of America rely on a sufficient culture of trust towards the state and state institutions; therefore, health care services based on IT opportunities that cover countries and

extend beyond them are easier to build. "We cannot always compete with Asian producers in the sphere of technology; however, we are strong enough when it comes to the provision of a full service package, where equipment comes with links to different health care data libraries."

The technical solutions required for that purpose are available, assured President Ilves, saying that it is also important to educate people, apart from just actions taken by governments.

"We are talking about fundamental changes in our ways of thinking. We should start by taking baby steps," he said.

According to President Ilves, giving presentations at high-level conferences where the future-related issues of security, e-governance, cyber security, trans-Atlantic relations, and the future of Europe are discussed, provide an ideal opportunity to tell the story of Estonia and represent Estonia's interests. This is the policy of making Estonia more visible and stronger, emphasised the Estonian Head of State.

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