

"Estonia and Latvia, historically two of the most interlinked neighbours, have set a responsible example for many of the so-called 'old' European Union Member States in overcoming the recent global economic recession," stated the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at his meeting with the Latvian Head of State, Andris Bērziņš.

President Ilves described as remarkable the consolidation of Latvia's economy and financial sector over the last couple of years, as well as its consistent fulfilment of the criteria required to join the euro area.

"Estonia is a steadfast supporter of Latvia and your ally in you joining the euro area," assured President Ilves.

A responsible and economically successful Latvia, with the euro as its currency, will be useful for both our region and Europe; this will also be of enormous benefit for Estonia, as we have similar economic clout, stated the Estonian Head of State. Today, the President opened a veneer manufacturing company, "Kohila Veneer", which has Latvian shareholders.

"The current crisis in Europe is not just a crisis about the euro as a common currency, but it one of debt and, above all, a crisis of confidence," emphasised President Ilves.

When speaking about common interests, Presidents Bērziņš and Ilves also discussed the future of the European Union, where the decision making mechanisms must become more flexible.

"However, within the bigger picture, we must clearly see our own countries, our region and common interests connected to the infrastructure or energy issues here," told President Ilves. "One project that matches these criteria – and to which the European Commission has granted its initial approval – is most certainly the high-speed Rail Baltica network, which will start from Helsinki and pass through the Baltic states and Poland to provide us with a connection to the rest of Europe."

The presidents also discussed current affairs and the comments of the leader of the social democrats in Lithuania, Algirdas Butkevičius, whose party won the recent parliamentary elections there, who stated that Lithuania will never implement the plan for building a new nuclear power station in Visaginas.

"Estonia will not comment on this statement before the Lithuanian government has published its official position on this matter," President Ilves said.

President Ilves gave a Latvian translation of Andrus Kivirähk's Rijkuris jeb Novembris (Old Barny or November) to the Latvian Head of State.

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