

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves will depart for a working visit to Finland on Friday, 22 March. He will participate, at the invitation of the Finnish Prime Minister, Jyrki Katainen, in a high-level, unofficial meeting of European leaders in Saariselkä, Lapland. Over three days, in a relaxed atmosphere, the politicians will discuss the future of the European Union and European economic problems.

The main purpose of the discussions is to bridge the gaps between northern and southern Europe, the countries within and outside the euro area, and EU Member States and other European countries. The participants of the meeting will also discuss the reasons and possible solutions for the recession that hit Europe in 2008. They will also focus, in detail, on social problems, including unemployment, and various issues related to democracy in Europe, such as improving the participation opportunities of the citizens of the Member States.

The meeting will be independent of any political parties and no official political decisions will be adopted. The participants include the Prime Minister of Latvia, Valdis Dombrovskis; Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, Ali Babacan; Prime Minister of Denmark, Helle Thorning-Schmidt; and a member of the Management Board of the European Central Bank, Jörg Asmussen. Apart from the Finnish Prime Minister, the event is also being hosted by the Finnish Minister of European Affairs, Alexander Stubb.

The Head of State will return to Estonia on Sunday, 23 March.

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