

Today, at his Ārma farm, the Estonian head of state, Toomas Hendrik Ilves hosted the Latvian president Andris Bērziņš. The unofficial meeting of the two leaders focused on Europe and the euro area.

President Ilves recognised Latvia's successful preparations to join the euro area.

"I, however, understand the concerns of many Latvians when it comes to giving up your national currency. Yet the experience of Estonia and many other countries clearly proves that joining the euro area benefits our economy and general development," the Estonian head of state said. "In Latvia's case, the euro would be a sign of your strength and success. It would conclusively show which choices are important for Latvia as a member state of the European Union and NATO."

President Ilves emphasised that the bold and decisive economic and financial policy of the Baltic and Nordic nations, as well as Poland, during the last crisis – which was a tough tightening of our belts – could today set an example for many a European Union member state.

"A crisis does not solve itself, inactivity only deepens the crisis," claimed the Estonian head of state.

The Estonian and Latvian presidents also spoke about the Rail Baltic high speed railway that would connect our region to the rest of Europe, and which is important for all Baltic nations, as well as about energy connections to other European Union member states, which would put an end to the Baltic energy island status.

The two heads of state agreed that the European Union needs a more ambitious and visible defence and security policy than hitherto.

"Threats have not disappeared from the world. To the contrary, from time to time some of them become more acute. Therefore, there are no distant lands or foreign nations, there is only a

narrow perspective," President Ilves said.

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