

"Estonia and France support a strong Europe, strong euro area and strong common defence policy of Europe," told President Toomas Hendrik Ilves at today's meeting with the President of the National Assembly of France, Claude Bartolone.

"If the European Union has a strong economy and a strong common currency, Europe will also remain strong," told President Ilves.

Estonia is keen to maintain the unity of the euro area; co-operation and adherence to commitments and agreements by all the participating countries is required for that purpose, emphasised the Estonian Head of State. President Ilves confirmed his continued, strong support to the expansion of the euro area, saying that we will definitely see, in the coming years, the merger of our neighbours, Latvia and Lithuania, and Poland with the euro area.

"This would help to increase the weight of responsibility in the European Union and overcome the gap between the northern and southern regions" told the President.

President Ilves admitted that a further delegation of decision-making to the European Union and the strengthening of institutions in economic and fiscal policy spheres will be required.

When discussing the defence policies, the Estonian Head of State said that though the European Union Member States do not have any internal conflict situations, there are third countries, both on the verges the Europe and further afield, that invest large amounts of money into military development and have unclear intentions.

"Threats have diminished among us, but not around us," told President Ilves, acknowledging France for its strong and, to date, successful military operations in Mali.

Cyber security and the development of cyber defence were also discussed at the meeting.

"Estonia and France both want to use information technology solutions in the interests of their countries and should enter into closer co-operation in this area," told President Ilves.

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