

"Grouping the European Union Member States into "new" and "old" still prevails, regardless of the fact that quite soon we will celebrate our 10th anniversary in the European Union. The "new" Europe must engage in more active co-operation to be rid of the status of "new" for good; we also need mutual solidarity for that purpose," told the President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who is currently, with Evelin Ilves, on an official visit to Bratislava at the invitation of the Head of State of the Republic of Slovakia, Ivan Gašparovič.

Presidents Ilves and Gašparovič stated that the Baltic states, Slovakia, Poland and Czech Republic are all among the European Union countries that complied with the agreed rules and successfully emerged from the economic and monetary crisis.

"The results are quite obvious – we don't have the problems that several "old" European countries face," stated the Estonian Head of State. "Our responsible approach to the organisation of the economic and financial policies of our countries could be an encouraging example to a number of those in trouble."

When speaking about the future of the European Union, President Ilves highlighted the importance of free trade and free movement in Europe as important factors for the recovery of the European Union.

"We must open the labour market and develop more free movement," he said.

Presidents Ilves and Gašparovič emphasised the inevitable closer co-operation and solidarity of the "new" countries, using the superb co-operation between Estonia and Slovakia on many European issues as an example.

As for the euro area, the Estonian Head of State stressed the importance of solidarity with countries that share our responsible mindset and course of action.

"The euro area must remain open, based on the compliance of jointly agreed criteria and not

political arguments or preference. This refers, above all, to Latvia joining the euro area, followed by Lithuania and then support for Poland's efforts," emphasised President Ilves.

During the official visit to the Republic of Slovakia, the Estonian Head of State will meet with the President of Slovakia; Chairman of the Parliament, Pavol Paška; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miroslav Lajčák; and the Prime Minister, Robert Fico.

President Ilves will give a presentation at the influential security forum, Globsec, in Bratislava, and introduce, at today's gala dinner, a ceremony to recognise the former Prime Minister of Poland, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki. The President will also give a presentation at a panel discussion at the conference, speaking about the future of Europe with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Vice President of the European Commission and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Franco Frattini. The Head of State will later introduce a cyber security seminar at the evening session.

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