

"In the tenth year of their membership, it is time for the so-called 'new' Member States of the European Union to start protecting their interests within the EU more strongly and adopt a more powerful position in shaping European Union policies. We must co-operate more and maintain our solidarity to decrease separate treatment of the Member States within the EU, which we can experience, regrettably, in too many spheres," told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves.

The presidents of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Montenegro, Slovakia, Austria, Estonia, Albania, Latvia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Lithuania, Poland, Croatia, Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Kosovo will take part in the traditional summit of the Central European heads of state, where they will discuss the political, economic, social and security-related aspects of post-crisis Europe.

Today's summit began with a joint breakfast of the heads of state of the European Union Member States, chaired by President Ilves and the President of Slovakia, Ivan Gašparovič, which focused on the role of the new Member States within the EU.

According to President Ilves, it is regrettable that the "old" and the "new" are still being distinguished, at Member State level, in Europe, accompanied by related unequal treatment. "While we can enjoy relatively free movement of capital and goods within the EU in the case of intra-communities trade, the protectionist attitude is still strong in the sphere of services. Unequal treatment is common in the case of both distributing support and grants and filling the vacancies in high-level positions and institutions of the European Union, where the number of Eastern Europeans gaining access to leading positions is much smaller," commented the Estonian Head of State.

When speaking about the region in general, Ilves said that we need to implement the necessary economic reforms and work to restore our competitive edge.

President Ilves admitted that the Member States that joined the European Union in 2004 and later had to strive hard to become European Union Member States. "The so-called "new" Member States are ready for reforms – this was demonstrated by the recent economic crisis – remaining not just more responsible, but also being quicker in adopting the necessary decisions. Our well-working solutions set an example for Europe in general," added the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves also congratulated Croatia for its upcoming accession to the European Union.

There is a separate programme for the spouses of the presidents during the summit. Evelin Ilves will also participate in the programme.

From Bratislava, President Ilves and Evelin Ilves will proceed to Ljubljana for a working visit to the Republic of Slovenia. During the visit, which is taking place at the invitation of the Slovenian Head of State, Borut Pahor, President Ilves will also meet with Janko Veber, President of the Public Assembly of Slovenia, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Alenka Bratušek, and the President of the Constitutional Court, Ernest Petrič. Presidents Ilves and Pahor will also give a joint lecture, the Future of Europe, at Bežigrad Gymnasium.

Evelin Ilves will visit the Regional Hospital of Ljubljana University, which is a leading medical institution in Slovenia and also one of the largest hospitals in Central Europe.

The presidential couple will return to Estonia on Sunday, 16 June.

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