

Higher voter turnout at the European Parliament elections in 2014 would mean greater trust and understanding in regard to the European Union, said Estonian head of state Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who met today with European Parliament president Martin Schulz. In order to achieve this, the union needs to get closer to its citizens – which would mean enhanced understanding of how decisions are made in the union and how they affect us all.

President Ilves remarked that it was worrying that there was still a lack of clarity in regard to agreement on the union's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

"The postponement of the vote in the European Parliament will directly affect the amount of time Member States have to take the funding for the new period into use," he said.

"Estonia's prepared to support the proposal for the additional budget of the European Commission, because we understand that obligations that have been assumed need to be covered. Our additional budget won't hamper expedited proceedings, so it'll be regrettable if the MFF package is delayed because of other decisions."

Speaking of the Cohesion Policy (CP), President Ilves said that it was especially important from the point of view of making the necessary investments in smaller Member States. He added: "We feel it's important for CP resources to be able to be used flexibly, including beyond the themes outlined in the 'Europe 2020' strategy. Estonia considers it necessary to contribute CP resources for 2014-2020 to reform the health care network, which in turn will contribute to the more active involvement of people in employment."

During their meeting Presidents Schulz and Ilves also discussed developments in the European Union's financial and economic policy and banking union.

Two areas in particular are important to Estonia, President Ilves confirmed: the sustainability of state financing and successful structural reforms.

"We don't support concessions in the budgetary policy of European Union or Eurozone states, which must continue to be characterised by a sense of responsibility," he said.

According to the Estonian head of state, swift progress must be made with banking union proposals in the hope of soon reaching an agreement with the European Parliament in regard to the EU's Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive, with unified banking supervision being launched in 2014.

Speaking about energy security, President Ilves underscored the importance of creating an internal energy market and diversifying both suppliers and sources. In terms of the EU's Fuel Quality Directive, Estonia expects the European Parliament to comprehensively consider the negative effects the act may have on the future of shale oil production.

The Estonian head of state thanked the parliament for its support for the Rail Baltic project, adding that the Baltic States plan to submit a funding application for the project as soon as the next round is opened in early 2014.

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