

"Estonia and Bulgaria share a number of positions with respect to European Union issues: we support the ambitious European Neighbourhood Policy and integration of the Balkan region and we stand for one of the main freedoms – the freedom of movement of individuals," stated President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and the Bulgarian Head of State, Rosen Plevneliev, at today's bilateral meeting in Sofia.

In 2018, Estonia and Bulgaria will hold the Presidency of the European Union for the first time and preparations for fulfilling the respective tasks and mutual discussions are becoming closer, stated both heads of state. "Being allies in both the European Union and NATO, we share a common understanding of the surrounding world. The out-dated approach to the east and west as well as new and old member states in the European Union is changing. Member states are being seen against the background of responsible fiscal policy instead of the period spent as a member state of the union," told President Ilves.

Presidents Ilves and Plevneliev emphasised the importance of further and deeper integration of West Balkan with the European Union. "Estonia and Bulgaria will continue to support Serbia's integration towards the European Union and merger negotiations and we will stand for the enlargement of the union," stressed the heads of state.

According to President Ilves, e-issues have a material place in further relations between Estonia and Bulgaria. "Estonia is always willing to share its e-governance experiences and solutions with Bulgaria," added President Ilves. President Plevneliev confirmed Bulgaria's continued interest in Estonia's e-governance solutions and promised to significantly contribute to the development of this sphere.

The Estonian Head of State confirmed his continued support towards Bulgaria becoming a member of the Schengen visa area and its wish to join the OECD.

After a bilateral meeting, both heads of state took part in an economic conference, organised by the leading Bulgarian weekly newspaper, Kapital, involving a joint debate on European issues. Kapital's annual conference focused on the current situation in the European Union and Bulgaria's future, including opportunities that would ensure Bulgaria's economic growth. President Ilves shared Estonia's economic choices and experiences with e-governance with the entrepreneurs and politicians who took part in the conference.

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