

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who chaired the European e-health working group in 2011-2012, spoke in Davos to the global economic and political leaders who had gathered at the World Economic Forum about the challenges faced in Europe in the sphere of health care. He admitted that information technology development is lagging at least 10 years behind.

President Ilves introduced the positions stated in the report of the European Union e-health working group, "Redesigning Health in Europe for 2020", which focused on measures that the European Union Member States can adopt to ensure affordable health care with the best quality for patients in Europe in the future, without placing excessive burden on the economy of countries yet keeping up with the development of medicine and technology.

President Ilves admitted that health care in Europe, compared to other spheres, lags at least ten years behind in the implementation of IT solutions. "In a situation where health care expenditures of the European Union Member States will increase, simply due to demographic reasons, in the coming years, the more extensive implementation of e-health solutions would enhance the efficiency of the system and save millions of euros," he told.

President Ilves has formed a position that the digital health records of every individual must be the property of the individual concerned; he/she must have access to such information at any given moment and exercise, where appropriate, the right to look for the best treatment options from any member states.

The Estonian Head of State added that issues related to health records and other delicate personal data of individuals, related proprietary rights, distribution, disclosure and processing such data represent a highly complicated sphere, which is regulated by both national and trans-European laws. "This means that we need a new legal space that match the requirements of a digital era," President Ilves commented.

Last year, the OECD and the European Commission published a report on comparative analysis on the implementation of ICT in the sphere of health care. Estonia holds a leading position in this ranking of 30 countries.

In Davos, President Ilves took part in high-level panel discussions that focused on economy, e-health, the development of information technology and geopolitics. The Estonian Head of State also had a number of bilateral meetings within the framework of the World Economic Forum, including a meeting with Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD. The Head of State will return to Estonia tonight.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) is a Swiss non-profit foundation that organises a summit every year in January, in the mountain resort in Davos in eastern Switzerland. International business leaders, top world politicians, intellectuals and journalists will meet at various events that are taking place during the forum to discuss the economic issues faced by the world.

* Report by the e-health work group, which was led by President Ilves, "Redesigning Health in Europe for 2020", is available as a full text from the website of the President. The introduction is translated into the Estonian language; the text of the report is available in English from: <http://www.president.ee/et/meediakajastus/intervjuud/8123-2012-10-31-14-53-20>

Additional information about Estonia's leading position in the sphere of e-health services is available at: <http://www.tehnopol.ee/et/Uudised/Arhiiv/1137/eesti-asub-e-tervise-teenuste-kasutuselevotus-euroopas-liidripositsioonil>

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