

President of Latvia: Latvia and Lithuania share the same strategic vision on electricity networks

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President of Latvia Egils Levits paid a working visit to Lithuania today and met with the President of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda to discuss the bilateral relations between the two countries and positions on regional energy supply and other issues.

Presidents of both countries discussed bilateral relations and President Levits underlined that sea border issue has not been resolved in the past 20 years, which has had an indirect effect on the bilateral trade cooperation agreement. Egils Levits pointed out that these issues need to be resolved, and both presidents agreed that they share the political will to sort out these issues while both of them are still in the office.

Although these agreements have to be signed by governments of Latvia and Lithuania, and ratified by respective parliaments, presidents of both countries agreed to closely monitor the progress with these agreements to ensure that the deadlock is broken and sustainable and fair solution for both states is found. "I am certain that this issue can be resolved in a way that makes both countries 50% happy with the outcome. That is the only fair and sustainable way to address this," said President Levits.

Meeting also focused on purchasing of electricity produced by Astravets nuclear power plant. Egils Levits stressed that Latvia's and Lithuania's strategic vision completely overlaps, and this issue should be resolved by 2025. That would ensure that both countries are no longer dependent on the electricity supplied through the power supply system of the former Soviet Union and are fully synchronised with the continental European system. "We have to make the shift as soon as possible, but not later than 2025. We, indeed, share the same strategic vision on that," pointed out Egils Levits.

According to the President of Latvia, both countries have the same concerns about the safety of Astravets NPP. Vilnius is only 50

kilometres and Daugavpils is about 110 kilometres away. "Safety is paramount," said President Levits.

President also indicated that this matter must be handled by the European Union (EU) and the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is necessary to involve experts in the evaluation who would then verify that Astravets NPP meets all applicable security standards.

Egils Levits also added that the tactics employed by each country are currently slightly different, but the overall strategic understanding is the same. Full energy independence must be achieved.

Presidents of both countries also discussed various issues on the common agenda of the EU, including cohesion policy. Egils Levits said that EU must keep the cohesion funding at the current level. The whole of the EU will benefit from convergence, which will balance out growth across the whole Union.

Another topic discussed by President Levits and President Nausėda was regional security. Presidents of both countries expressed their pleasure that Latvia and Lithuania are among the countries that have raised the national defence spending to 2% of the GDP. "All three Baltic countries share the same goal of promoting regional security. All countries, including NATO, will benefit from better regional security," added President Levits.

During the meeting, presidents of both countries also discussed Latvia's and Lithuania's re-emigration experiences. President of Latvia referred to the Diaspora Law as one of the key drivers of a forward-looking diaspora policy.

In conclusion, the President of Latvia Egils Levits mentioned that despite the fact that both presidents have met already three times in the past four months, this is President Levits' first official visit to Lithuania in the capacity of President of Latvia. He underlined that previous meeting have also focused on a broad range of common issues. Egils Levits thanked Gitanas Nausėda for inviting him and for the productive exchange of views.



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