

Presidents of Latvia and Germany discuss current agenda of EU and NATO in Berlin

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Today, President of Latvia Egils Levits, who is in Berlin on a working visit, met with Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany. Meeting focused on current priorities of the European Union (EU) and NATO, as well as further steps towards recovery from the pandemic.

Egils Levits and Frank W. Steinmeier had an in-depth discussion about how European countries are dealing with COVID-19 and gradually easing into post-pandemic recovery. Both presidents underlined the importance of solidarity between European nations and Eastern Partnership countries in these difficult times. They acknowledged Ukraine's European aspirations. On the current EU agenda, President Levits pointed out that it is necessary to continue fine-tuning standards and raising awareness about the rule of law, and thus promote unity within the EU and uniform understanding of these principles across all member states. Presidents of Latvia and Germany underlined the importance of media freedom in the context of the pandemic and fight against disinformation.

President Levits and President Steinmeier then moved on to security in Europe, underlining the role of NATO 2030 and responsibility of EU member states to take care of their national defence capabilities. They also talked about the agenda of the forthcoming NATO Summit in Brussels on 14 June.

On Latvia-Germany bilateral relations, both presidents emphasised the symbolic importance of the meeting as this year marks centenary since Germany recognised Latvia *de iure* and 30 years since Latvia regained its independence and restored diplomatic relations with Germany.

Meeting also focused on several cultural cooperation initiatives. Egils Levits thanked Frank W. Steinmeier for agreeing to join him in becoming a patron of the Riga Wagner House. As regards to the future of the Riga St Peter's Church, both presidents agreed

that it is crucial to find a sustainable management model.

President Levits also told President Steinmeier about his yesterday's working meeting with Jürgen Boos, CEO of Frankfurt Book Fair, in Frankfurt, in which he urged fair's management to consider making Latvian literature and publishing industry a market focus of one of the coming book fairs. This would be a very symbolic gesture for Latvia, which is celebrating 500 years since publishing of its first printed book in Latvian in 2025.

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