

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves has called Turkey the “best example” of a country that represents liberal democracy in the Islamic world, despite its shortcomings.

In a keynote speech delivered at the Lennart Meri Conference in Tallinn last week, Ilves said Turkey has its imperfections and problems but that it is “by far the best example out there in the ‘Islamic world’ and, I would argue, better even than some members of a European Union doing their utmost to keep Turkey from becoming a member,” he added.

The Estonian president's speech was titled “Getting to Turkey or Aquaria from Fish Soup” in an apparent cynical reference to the EU position on accepting new members, for which Ilves urged the audience to reflect on “what the hell we [EU members] are thinking in our cranky crabbiness regarding EU enlargement.” He called Turkey “far and away the most successful of all countries in the Islamic world on the road from despotism to liberal democracy.”

He went on, saying, “We can always find some whining member of the gotcha gang to say, ‘but Turkey isn’t there!’ but then again there were all kinds, when [Francis] Fukuyama posed the metaphoric getting to Denmark construction, who found reason to say that Denmark also had not reached the Platonic ideal of the perfect state.”

Estonia is strong supporter of Turkey's EU bid.

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