

Estonians are e-believers. We are proud to be pioneers and leaders in e-government. We have developed and implemented innovative solutions that improve the lives of millions, and we intend to develop more.

In Estonia we can see a version of the interconnected and computerized future that is inextricably a part of the fundamental operations of society: 25% of the electorate votes online, nearly 100% of prescriptions and tax returns are done online, as is almost all banking. Estonians have given 140 million digital signatures, and last December, Estonian and Finnish PMs signed the first international treaty digitally. Adding to this near 100% broadband coverage and countrywide Wi-Fi, Estonia is one of the most wired countries in the world.

As a country so dependent on digital solutions, the whole of ICT infrastructure must be regarded as an "ecosystem" in which everything is interconnected. It functions as a whole, thus it needs to be defended as a whole. The more digitized we are, the more vulnerable we are. It is therefore crucial to understand that cyber security is not just a matter of blocking the bad things a cyber attack can do; it is one of protecting all the good things that cyber insecurity can prevent us from doing – in other words, cyber security should not be seen as an additional cost but as an enabler, guarding our entire digital way of life.

However, even though we cannot take security issues lightly, they cannot be used as an excuse to limit freedom of expression. Freedom and security need not contradict each other: on the contrary, secure online interactions, enabled by a secure online identity, is a precondition for full internet freedom.

The freedoms we value are equally valid online as well as offline. Those of us, for whom democratic values are important, want to find a balance between security, privacy and free flow of information. An encouraging example is Estonia, where all residents are provided with a secure e-services system while Estonia has also been ranked as the first or one of the first in Internet freedom for several years in a row.

Cooperation has been the guiding principle of our IT success. As we prepare for the new opportunities and challenges that will arise in the coming years, we recognise that cooperation with and among the Baltic Sea states and in transatlantic and international forums will be crucial to our success. We are stronger and our reach is wider when we work together and combine

our efforts in pursuit of our common goals.

I am glad that Estonian ICT Week 2014 will seek to demonstrate the interconnection between innovation and the culture of start-up companies, the awareness of net neutrality issues and the capability to implement IT solutions within states and over state borders.

Toomas Hendrik Ilves,
President of the Republic of Estonia