

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, signed a resolution that proclaimed the Civil Partnership Act, which was passed today by the Riigikogu.

"The foundation document of democratic Estonia – our Constitution – stipulates the equal treatment of all people. Estonian society will not endure intolerance towards its own people. Our number is too small to discriminate against anybody," the Head of State said.

"The Civil Partnership Act provides regulations for proprietary relationships, maintenance obligations and other mutual rights and obligations of all cohabiting couples, including the rights and obligations that concern children of such unions. In practice, contracts in private law are not sufficient in achieving the same objectives. This law will not alter the definition of a family: changes have already taken place, both in Estonia and elsewhere. All of this is supported by the practice of the European Court of Human Rights: the unequal treatment of couples of the same sex and children raised in their families, in comparison to other family units, is forbidden. The rights of children must be equally protected, regardless of whether they are raised by biological mothers and fathers, single or foster parents, including the biological mother or father and her or his partner of the same gender," said President Ilves.

He stated that the Civil Partnership Act has been drafted and discussed for years, with greater intensity since spring of this year.

In a society that respects human rights, couples of the same gender also have the right to lead family lives instead of having to experience disdain and unequal treatment from society, the Head of State emphasised.

"The passing of this law will not change the sexual preferences of anyone; it will not break up or bring together families of people of the same gender nor will it change the fact that these families raise children. There is no connection – whatsoever – between the passing of this act and the survival of the Estonian people," said President Ilves. "Estonia has to be the best possible place for all Estonian people. For us, every individual is important. A caring and understanding attitude towards each other and the choices that other people make must make Estonia bigger, better and more secure."

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