

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves opened Estonia's national day at the Expo Milano universal exhibition today.

"This year, food is the headline issue of Expo Milano and where else could we discuss food as a pleasure other than Italy. However, we also have to admit that hunger still remains a serious issue in several places and represents a responsibility shared by the world in general, even if the suggested solutions are local by nature," stated President Ilves in his opening address.

"Most of the food is raised, grown, processed, sold and eaten at regional level, which means that as countries we should support rural areas, their infrastructures and technological development to give small-scale producers access to larger markets," added the Estonian Head of State.

Also, according to President Ilves, more and more countries suffer from food related problems – obesity, overweight and food allergies, suffered by the general population. According to the Head of State, we must seriously contribute to increasing nutrition related awareness among consumers.

Loud applause and words of gratitude from the Head of State greeted the Estonian cyclists, known as the Exporide, who had cycled about 750 km through Italy to arrive at Expo Milano and deliver the blue, black and white national flag to celebrate the day.

At the dinner hosted by Italian Deputy Secretary of State, Ivan Scalfarotto, the Estonian Head of State raised the issue of unlawful immigration over the Mediterranean Sea, stating that the European Union Member States must have solidarity with all the members who suffer the strongest pressure. President Ilves and the Deputy Secretary of State, Scalfarotto, both admitted that the threats posed by regions to the east and south of the European Union should be addressed in unison.

The key words that describe the Estonian exhibition pavilion are Nordic intelligence, clean food and nature, outstanding design, and world-class music lead by Arvo Pärt.

The doors of Estonia will remain open in Italy for six months – from May until October – to millions of people from hundreds of different countries. Estonia is the only Nordic country to take part in Expo Milano.

The companies present at the exhibition include Snakefloors and Bolefloor (floors), Reliefwalls (wall covering materials), BORG (sofas), Renard (motor bike), Viks (bikes) and Estonia (pianos).

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