

"In times when religion, extremism, refugees and terrorism form a weight of negative information, schools will be required to become involved in the level-headed explaining of events and phenomena. All of these things do not happen somewhere at a safe distance, such as France or Syria. This is all Europe; these are issues and problems to be handled here, as the fate and welfare of today's students will depend on the outcomes," said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves who presented the Educational Awards for 2015 and the special Physical Sciences Award at the Office of the President.

The Head of State emphasised that this is not a message to the today's laureates alone, but to teachers and Estonian schools in general: "Explaining the colourful and intriguing world, speaking about the background and reasons for events."

In 2015, President Ilves presented educational awards to Lilian Tambek, a physics teacher at Viljandi Vocational Education Centre and leader of Taibukate Teaduskool (Science School for the Smart); Hele Kiisel, a long-serving teacher of mathematics at Hugo Treffner Gymnasium; and Hendrik Agur, the Director of Gustav Adolf Gymnasium. A special Physical Sciences Award was presented to Erkki Tempel, a chemistry and physics teacher at Miina Härma Gymnasium.

"You are not just teachers. You are instigators and inspirers, who make mathematics, chemistry, physics and sciences in general interesting for your students. You give your schools a face – as either directors or teachers but mainly as outstanding and diversified personalities. School and learning must be interesting," told President Ilves.

The Director of Gustav Adolf Gymnasium, Hendrik Agur, who spoke on behalf of all the laureates, thanked the country for recognising and acknowledging teachers. "We perform our work with passion; this is our hobby, our lifestyle. If you choose to do things in your life that ignite passion, this will not be complicated," he added.

For all the laureates of the Educational Awards, the award money will be 4,000 euros, which is funded by Danske Bank. According to Ivar Pae, CEO of Danske Bank, we must distinguish and thank those people whose immense commitment creates more value than is expected of them. "These promoters of education will encourage us all to be more open, pay attention to new ideas and help society to progress," Pae added.

The special Physical Sciences Award, which is 4,000 euros, is funded by Skype Estonia. The CEO of Skype Estonia, Andrus Järg, said that the interest young people have in science and their curiosity to pursue activities in the world of physical sciences is a precondition we need to meet in Estonia to foster a smart, science-based economy. "Therefore, it is significant that the Physical Sciences Award of Skype Estonia will go to Erkki Tempel from Miina Härma Gymnasium, who has disseminated knowledge for years by combining theory and study processes with inventive moments and practical aspects. The educational system needs people like Erkki, who put their soul into teaching and who have found a hobby and love in their jobs," he added.

**Lilian Tambek** is a teacher of physics at Viljandi Vocational Education Centre; her teaching career has lasted for 52 years and she has a science degree in didactic physics. She has worked in different educational establishments and at various school levels. Her students have successfully participated in physics competition in regional rounds, national and international level. In the teaching process, she pays special attention to developing learning motivation and meaningful learning in order to create a positive attitude towards learning in her students. Ms Tambek has also been consistently involved in the training of teachers. In 2014, she established the Taibukate Teaduskool NGO (Science School for the Smart), which has become popular and created interest in physical and natural sciences among many students.

**Hele Kiisel** is a long-serving teacher of mathematics at Hugo Treffner Gymnasium, teacher-methodologist and a promoter of educational life. Ms Kiisel has worked at Hugo Treffner Gymnasium as a teacher of mathematics since 1977. Apart from being a teacher, she has also been a developer and implementer of various educational innovations that have influenced Estonia in general. Ms Kiisel has been one of the developers of the traditional Five School Competition in physical sciences. She is the leader of the School Mathematics Association of the Estonian Society of Mathematics, has played an active role in the publication of various books on mathematics and co-operated within the framework of trainings for teachers organised by the University of Tartu and Tallinn University of Technology. Her students have successfully participated in Tartu town competitions and national Olympiads. Her former students include the authors of „Matemaatika õhtuõpik" (Evening Maths Textbook), which garnered significant attention.

**Hendrik Agur** has been the Director of Gustav Adolf Gymnasium since 2006. Some words that characterise his work are initiative, innovativeness, creativity and social activity. Agur introduced the system of chairs at his school, which allowed all the teachers to be involved in decisions that are important for the school and management process in general. This resulted in the

much-improved quality of teaching and educational work. Several technological solutions have been initiated by Mr. Agur, including the first electronic student card in Estonia and m-student card; new solutions are being adopted to diversify education and make it more interesting. Mr. Agur established the Gustav Adolf Foundation in 2006 to offer additional development opportunities and hobbies to students as well as additional work and development for teachers. The Foundation also includes a training centre and a music school was subsequently opened. In co-operation with various Estonian schools, he has launched a number of co-operation projects in the sphere of music, quiz shows and sports.

**Erkki Tempel** has worked at Miina Härma Gymnasium since 2005. He teaches both chemistry and physics on the basis of Estonian national curricula and chemistry, in English, to students taking their studies according to the international curriculum. In teaching, Mr. Tempel attempts to relate the subjects to everyday life and include as many practical exercises as possible in the study process; he uses digital teaching materials and has developed a number of applications that can be used in smart devices for teaching chemistry. His students have achieved outstanding results in Olympiads of natural sciences in both Estonia and at international level. Mr. Tempel participates in the development of international curricula; he is also one of the leading organisers of an Internet-based chemistry quiz and chairman of the organisational committee that organises state-level physics contests. He has developed educational literature and methodological materials for teaching physical sciences and organises related trainings on various subjects. This year, he was awarded the profession of a Master Teacher. Mr. Tempel belongs to the Estonian Physics Society and is a member of the Board of Estonian Association of Teachers of Chemistry. He is also a lecturer-mentor at Taibukate Teaduskool (Science School for the Smart).

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