

We have the obligation to do much more than just record and preserve to ensure that the Finno-Ugric languages and cultures survive; in fact, the progress and development of cultural life will ensure the perseverance and growth of our nations, said the President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who attended the transfer of the title of cultural capital to Veszprem and Iszkaszentgyörgy in Obinitsa today, accompanied by Ieva Ilves.

The Head of State thanked everyone who worked hard last year and contributed to Obinitsa being a successful and future-focused capital of the Finno-Ugric people.

"It is important to live within our culture, not to attend museums to experience culture. When visiting Setomaa, we see that your language is alive, and your culture is alive," he told.

According to President Ilves, the cultural capital of Obinitsa gave faith and support to many. Faith in the fact that it is possible to hold out and develop our cultural heritage.

We have another example from a country just next to us, Latvia: the culture of the Livonians is making a comeback, from the very verge of fading, and it is about to come alive again through the support of kindred people and the Republic of Latvia, said the Head of State.

In 2014, the first cultural capital of approximately 25 million Finno-Ugric people was Bõgõ village in Udmurtia; this year, the throne will be passed from Obinitsa to the Hungarian town of Veszpremi and Iszkaszentgyörgy village.

The President invited people to take notice of the power emerging from the co-operation between Finno-Ugric peoples, as we can only achieve something when working together. Hopelessness is never of any use; it is just something to be overcome.

President Ilves recalled the greetings sent to his Finnish and Hungarian colleagues last October – on Kindred Peoples' Day – where he emphasised that the Finno-Ugric people who have their own country have the obligation to support smaller kindred people.

"As we represent the three nations that enjoy the incredible luxury of having our own country, we have the obligation to help others," he confirmed.

The Head of State described as pleasing the civic initiative to establish a forum of Finno-Ugric villages that will support kindred people and promote our co-operation in a more diversified and practical way.

The unbound activities of free people will help us to survive hard times and achieve big things, like the Finno-Ugric cultural capital in Obinitsa, emphasised President Ilves.

The Head of State also met with the active leaders of the Seto people to discuss the year of Obinitsa as the cultural capital, promotion of entrepreneurship in Setomaa and the promotion of local culture as much as possible. The people who met with President Ilves included the Regent of Peko, Jane Vabarna, her predecessor, Annela Laaneots, Mayor of Cultural Capital of Obinitsa, Evar Riitsaar, Kauksi Ülle, Rieka Hörn, Aira Tarros, Rein Järvelill, Margus Timmo, Kaja Tullus.

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