

"In October of next year, many young people will be able to vote in local elections for the first time in their lives, as voting rights have been extended to 16 and 17 year olds. They were born in 2000 and 2001 and, as such, are the electorate of the new century. If we wish for solid arguments to dominate future social discussions, we must begin to teach debating skills at school level," said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, when inviting school students to take part in the 'Let us give voice to the future!' debating competition. The competition is organised by the Estonian Debating Society and the Office of the President of the Republic.

"Estonian history proves that words carry weight and there is power in the mind. We need more peaceful and semantic debates, well-argued positions and knowledgeable choices. Reasonable solutions can never be reached by getting mad at each other and through simple criticism," stated the Head of State.

The debating competition of the President offers participants the opportunity to develop logical thinking, public performance and, of course, debating skills. All students from grades 8-12, who have not previously taken part in a debating competition, are welcome to take part in the competition.

The debating competition of the President of the Republic will consist of two debating schools, followed by five debating competitions. The debating schools, which will take place at the end of February, will provide students with some basic knowledge of argument and debating in general and tips for teachers on mentoring debating teams. Five competitions will take place in April, with four being first-round competitions and the fifth being the final. Each team can take part in one first-round competition. The eight best teams from each competition will participate in the finals in Tallinn.

Each competition will feature a different topic of debate; the information needed to prepare for the topic will be disclosed at the beginning of March. The competition is for teams with three members. Teams may also consist of four members; however, only three young people can take part in each debate; competitors can be changed between rounds. The competitions will observe the high school debate format, meaning that every member of the team will give a six-minute speech.

More information about debating, debate format and the competition rules can be found at the

President's Facebook page and the subdivision of the 'Let's Give Words a Future!' debating competition: [www.vaitlus.ee](http://www.vaitlus.ee)

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