

In his speech today in Tartu at the Estonian University of Life Sciences conference President Toomas Hendrik Ilves called on the Estonian public and politicians to start a public discussion on regional development issues.

“What kind of Estonia do we want? Do we want one big city, a couple of so-called regional centres and vast empty environs? Or, do we want such an Estonia where one can live, work and bring up children everywhere. It is a matter of choices,” the Head of State said referring to prognoses according to which in case the current processes continue, about half of Estonian population will soon be concentrated in Tallinn and its surrounding area.

The President of the Republic added, “When we have made our choice let us then act. In a sense it is easiest to let everything simply drift, as then you do not have to do anything. But it seems to me that the current processes are unreasonable and at times even detrimental. Therefore we cannot reduce it to the level of “liking” or “not liking”.” Soon the consequences of sweeping urbanization can leave people who would really like to return to the countryside without any alternative, President Ilves said.

In the words of the Head of State one of the roles of the Estonian University of Life Sciences is to develop a vision and cost calculations for modern rural production, including that of alternative energy production. He also called on the University of Life Sciences to participate in formulating Estonia’s proposals that would facilitate designing of the future European common agricultural policy.

“Why should Estonia not be the country to offer solutions? In this case the argument that a small country is not able to do anything is untenable. Both Finland and Luxembourg have offered several initiatives that are now guiding the activities of more than 400 million Europeans,” President Ilves said in his speech and urged Estonian experts to actively participate in the shaping of the future of Europe.

The full text of the speech delivered today by the President of the Republic is available at: www.president.ee.

The future conference of the University of Life Sciences, which motto is “Estonia – Liveable and Everlasting”, is part of the process of developing the University of Life Sciences development plan for 2007-2015. The conference is held in the main building of the University of Life Sciences in Tartu.

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