

Speaking today at the celebration of the 89th Anniversary of the Republic of Estonia at Tallinn University, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves announced an essay contest entitled "What Kind of Estonia Do I Want to Live In?"

"Estonia has restored its state and regained its position in the family of democratic Western nations. Yet, Estonia is still not exactly the way we would have wished. Instead of complaining that this is not the Estonia we wanted, we should talk about the kind of Estonia we want," said the Head of State.

"It is time to express one's opinions about the kind of Estonia we want. Let's jointly consider what's currently good about Estonia and what is disappointing. What can we learned from the past? What experiences from other countries should we adopt? How do we achieve a situation in which all the people living here consider Estonia to be their home? What can I do to make Estonia a place where it is good to live, where children are awaited, where young people do not want to leave to go abroad, and where the elderly can enjoy a peaceful old age?" President Ilves said, listing the possible questions that could be considered within the framework of the discussion. "Let's turn our gaze to the future, and let's think about how to go forward. What could Estonia be like 10, 50, 100 years from now?"

The idea for the essay contest originated with Professor Margit Sutrop, the head of the Ethics Center at the University of Tartu, and the idea was discussed by the President's Academic Advisory Board, whose members agreed to serve on the panel of judges. The Office of the President and Akadeemia magazine have also promised their support.

The exact rules of the contest are available on the website of the University of Tartu Ethics Center at www.eetika.ee and on the website of the Office of the President at www.president.ee. The deadline for submitting essays is St. George's Day on April 23rd and the judges will make their decision by June 23rd for St. John's Day. The essays by general education pupils and adults will be evaluated separately.

"I am convinced that hundreds and thousands of our compatriots want to express their opinions about the future of Estonia and know how to do so. This is not merely the privilege of politicians and opinion makers, for whom providing visions is often a job or even an obligation," said President Ilves.

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