

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Mrs. Evelin Ilves, who arrived on a state visit to the Republic of Finland yesterday, were visiting Oulu today, which the Estonian Head of State called one of our northern neighbor's most important innovation and research centers.

The President of the Republic, and the business delegation accompanying him, met with Oulu County and City leaders, visit the University of Oulu, Kaleva Publishers, a research park and the PKC Group.

"This is a city, where traditions and the realization of bold ideas meet," said President Ilves at a lunch hosted in his honor at the City Government. "This day has confirmed my conviction that it is possible to implement innovative ideas and live a satisfying life outside metropolises. Oulu — a rapidly developing and youthful city with its vision and daring experimentation — is an eloquent example."

The Estonian Head of State added that Oulu, where the first research park in the Nordic countries was built, is also a good example of how to combine high technology and people's well-being.

At the University of Oulu, where Estonian is also taught, President Ilves said that Finland has done two important things to secure its future — established a very competitive educational system and developed a knowledge-based economy.

"I think it is important that higher education and research not be concentrated in the capital and its direct vicinity," said the Estonian Head of State. "For it is true that when young people leave for the capital to obtain higher education, it is very probable that they will find work and stay there."

According to President Ilves, the University of Oulu is invaluable for all of northern Finland as a provider of higher education, as well as the creator of a knowledge-based environment and jobs that require high qualifications. "This is an important aspect of regional policy — to provide young people with the stimulus to remain in their home area; if you have the opportunity to study and live in a motivating environment, you have no reason to go elsewhere to search for a

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Thursday, 15 March 2007 20:01

better life,” said the Head of State.

This evening, President Ilves will host a reception at the Estonian Embassy. The Head of State and Mrs. Evelin Ilves will arrive back in Estonian tomorrow afternoon.

Office of the President, Public Relations Department
Kadriorg, 15 March 2007