

“Estonia does not have any oil or gas deposits. Just like many other leading research and industrial countries in the world. In our actions, we must be guided by the fact that the most valuable resource in the world today is brains,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves today in Kadriorg, at a reception for the country’s best university graduates. “Our wealth is our knowledge; our smartest people are our wealth. You are Estonia’s wealth.”

In the globalizing world, this is a resource that is in great demand, is well rewarded, and therefore, is very marketable. “In other words, the doors to the world are open to you,” said the Head of State in his address.

“Open one of these doors and continue your studies in Estonia or at the leading universities and research centers of the world. Your academic journey has just started,” said President Ilves. “However, those who continue this journey outside Estonia—please remember that this door opens in both directions. Come back to Estonia to seek and find challenges in academic work. You are the ones who have the opportunity and responsibility of providing the content for the economic model that we hear so much about, the key phrase for which is a knowledge-based Estonia.”

The Head of State appealed to the university graduates by saying the following: “If you can, don’t give in to the very human temptation to immediately head toward salaried employment, which is scantily, or in the best case, only partially related to your education and abilities.”

According to President Ilves, the Estonian state has the responsibility to create and expand the opportunities for study, while it must also be guaranteed that fraudulent products are not offered under the label of education. “Today, lifelong education and self-improvement is unavoidable—a fundamental issue for the life and future development of a small country,” said the Head of State.

“There are countries in the world that are immeasurably better off than Estonia, but where knowledge, research and innovation are totally backward,” said President Ilves. “Where, for political, cultural or ideological reasons, a free and critical exchange of ideas is not promoted. In those countries, a person’s individuality and originality, which is an indispensable precondition for new knowledge and discoveries, is repressed.”

“Sooner or later—but rather sooner and already now—this attitude will take its revenge on these countries,” said the Head of State. “The relativity and impermanence of their wealth will become clear—their inability to successfully cope in a post-petroleum world,” said the President.

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