

According to President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, without the University of Tartu Estonians would not have become a cultural nation and would not have been able to create their own state in 1918.

In a speech given at today's ceremony marking the 375th anniversary of the foundation of the University of Tartu, President Ilves called upon the University of Tartu to pursue the ideal of a universitas, an environment that provides a universal education.

"It would be erroneous to think that universitas only means a wide choice of courses. What a university offers is not important. What is important is the kind of education the students receive," said President Ilves.

Drawing a parallel with the concept of paideia known from Ancient Greece, which only considered people that were educated in every possible way to be perfect, President Ilves referred to the excellent education received by the founders of the nation at the University of Tartu. "If we had not had our own intelligentsia at the end of the 19th century—our own doctors, journalists, clerics and lawyers—we would not have been ripe to create our own state in 1918," said the Estonian Head of State.

The entire text of the speech by the President of the Republic is available at www.president.ee

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