

On a working trip to Pärnu last Friday, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves conducted a class in social studies for the seniors at Sütevaka Upper Secondary School, speaking to them about the relationship between freedom and responsibility.

“I was inspired by the motto of your school—Freedom, Creativity, Responsibility—when choosing the topic for today’s lecture,” said the Estonian Head of State to open the class.

“A trait of a mature society is that people perceive the freedom to do and say what they want, but also comprehend the responsibility that accompanies that freedom,” said the Estonian Head of State.

“On the other hand, in non-free societies the lack of freedom is used as an excuse—since I have no freedom to choose, then I am also not responsible for anything. This neglectful mentality worries me. People do not think enough about the relations between freedom and responsibility,” said President Ilves.

During the discussion with the students, the Estonian Head of State brought belligerent and injurious Internet commentaries as an example. “Is the freedom to write anonymous Internet commentaries something that we must protect at any cost?” President Ilves rhetorically asked the students.

The Sütevaka schoolchildren actively asked the Head of State questions about current affairs and the guarantee of Estonian security by the European Union and NATO was discussed at length.

“If we ask whether Estonian security is guaranteed by the European Union and NATO, then I would ask in return—compared to what? No one has total security, not even the United States. However, we can be sure that today we are safer and our security more profound than at any other time on this territory,” confirmed President Ilves.

The students were also interested in Estonia's official position regarding the events in Georgia, which the President answered by saying that Estonia adheres to the European Union's official position—it would like to see dialogue between the Georgian authorities and opposition, and a peaceful solution to the situation.

At the end of the lesson, the Estonian Head of State called upon the students to read a lot and to be active in community affairs. "The earlier people start thinking about such abstract issues as responsibility and freedom, the better for the society," the President said.

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