

Neighborhood movements, members of the Defense League, volunteers, active youth associations—all the organizations created by civil initiatives have become the backbone of local life, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said, as he opened the Cities and Rural Municipalities Day in Tallinn today.

The Head of State called upon the representatives of local authority to cooperate closely with the representatives of nongovernmental organizations, because “Let’s value what we have. Appreciate self-initiative. This makes communities strong. This keeps people happily in their hometowns and rural municipalities.”

According to President Ilves, one active person, by setting an example with his or her activities, can save an entire village, but he or she needs the help and understanding of the rural municipality.

“Today, we do not know exactly what the long-term effect will be of Estonian Post’s decision to close 95 post offices throughout Estonia. But together with you I am worried,” said President Ilves. “What will happen to the villages where the post office is the only place for social intercourse, the only place to purchase basic necessities? The place where people come to warm up in the winter and chat among themselves. Secondly, I am naturally worried about the people who will lose their jobs. And thirdly, many people are used to getting their pensions from post offices.”

According to the Head of State, we cannot allow the closing of a post office to result in misunderstandings on pension day, in unsent greeting cards to friends or acquaintances, or in the reduction of an accustomed sense of home. Therefore, he hopes that the rural municipalities and local government associations, in cooperation with Estonian Post, the county governments and corresponding authorities, will find answers to these questions and will alleviate these worries.

In Estonia’s jubilee year, the President of the Republic called on people to look forward. “There is only path going forward—the path of developing the country through cooperation,” the Head of State emphasized.

According to the President, maximum use must be made of the money coming from the European Union for as many local projects as possible.

“In other words, regions must be developed by standing together,” said President Ilves. “Regardless of where the borders run between cities, rural municipalities, and counties, there is one Estonia. And we have an obligation to make sure the people living here are satisfied and proud of their country, their municipality, their city.”

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