

At a meeting with President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Urve Palo, the Minister of Population Affairs, introduced the national integration plan for 2008-2013 to the Head of State, the goal of which is to support the sense of belonging of every permanent resident, based on the common values of Estonian society and proficiency in the official language.

According to the President, it is apparent that the adoption of the country and contributing to its development assumes mutual respect on the part of all the people living in Estonia along with an inner conviction that Estonia is a secure place to live, work, and raise a family.

“Among the bases for understanding each other, proficiency in the official language, European value judgments and knowledge of Estonian history are the focal points,” President Ilves said. “Regardless of the fact that the people and ethnic groups that live here often have differing histories, we have a common future—a secure Estonia, a country of free and aware citizens.”

According to the Head of State, without the active contribution of the population, the integration plan will only be a piece of paper, “I hope this plan will not be viewed as a governmental directive, but as a compendium of ideas provided by scientists and experts for all the people living in Estonia to participate in and act on.”

At the meeting, Minister of Population Affairs Urve Palo expressed her conviction that if people in Estonia feel comfortable with each other they will adopt the country and contribute to its development. “The more people participate actively in the society the greater are the developmental opportunities for the entire country” said the Minister of Population Affairs.

“Integration Plan 2008–2013” is a continuation of the national program entitled “Integration in Estonian Society 2000–2007”. About 100 people at various levels were involved with the development of the new strategy and implementation plan. This included the consortium formed to compile the strategy and develop the implementation plan comprising the PRAXIS Center for Policy Studies, University of Tartu, Hill and Knowlton Eesti, the Institute of Baltic Studies, and OÜ Geomeedia; a working group comprising officials from the relevant ministries as well as an expert commission, which in turn consisted of representatives from among national minorities, scientists, ministries, political parties, employers and employees.

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