

In today's speech about the future of interethnic relationships, President Ilves called on the state and the Estonian population to treat each other as free citizens, not as groups differentiated by nationality, language or other attributes of identity.

According to the Head of State, the intellectual background system for relationships between ethnic nationalities must be depoliticised. "An ethnic Russian who is a resident of Estonia is not a priori the supporter of Russia's national policies, just as every Estonian is not automatically a supporter of the Ansip government. Citizens of democratic countries do not connect their love of country with the person of the prime minister or president who happens to be in power at the time." Ilves said.

According to the President, an Estonia based on common and shared values will need more openness, understanding and tolerance in the future, in other words, simple respect. At the same time, this means that willful insults and vilification must be condemned, especially in respect to issues of cultural and linguistic identity.

"Estonia can be home to all the people who live here only if its residents care for and protect this home. And do not try to sell it or burn it down. The challenge for Estonian society in the field of interethnic relations is the creation of just such a sense of home," the President said.

According to the Head of State, future integration activities should focus on developing and supporting leaders for tomorrow's civil society, and spokespeople for a free society.

President Ilves spoke today at the conference entitled "Different Memories—Common Future" organized by the Estonian Cooperation Assembly.

President Ilves: integration means working with people, not with groups

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