

In his speech opening the Education Forum on Friday, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves proposed that open classes be organized in general education schools on the eve of the 91st Anniversary of the Republic of Estonia, in the course of which the schools' alumni and parents could speak about their experiences related to Estonia.

According to the President, the future of Estonia will be determined by the education of our young people, and their ability to make smart and considered choices years from now. Therefore, the President believes there are no impersonal concerns, no division between "us" and "them."

"Students and parents are not clients that demand and receive a service from the schools and teachers," said the President. "Education is our mutual concern. This is a national-public issue."

According to the President, civil society, which is ever more forcefully perceiving its role, should participate in the discussion of Estonia's educational issues and contribute its knowledge and, if possible, donations.

The Head of State suggested that general education schools could open their doors to so-called "new teachers": for instance, to parents and alumni, who could conduct a class for each grade, at a time and on a topic agreed in advance.

"Guest teachers—parents, alumni or even those who have no direct relationship with a specific school—could speak about their attitudes toward their country and society, based on their own experiences, or find experiences based on their specialties that deserve to be communicated," the Head of State said. "Estonian schools need functioning networks of relationships, constant and increasingly strong ties to the rest of society."

There are more than 4,000 grades in Estonia's almost 600 general education and upper secondary schools providing basic school education.

“Can we find these 4,000 or slightly more volunteers, parents and alumni?” President Ilves wondered.

According to the Head of State, open classes organized on the eve of the Anniversary of the Republic could develop into school innovations, into workshops where volunteers could participate in classes in order to transmit their practical knowledge and provide instruction on the implementation and validity of theoretical knowledge in everyday life.

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