

In today's Independence Day speech, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves called upon the Estonian public to understand the nature and reasons for the crisis that has shaken the global and Estonian economies. He also encouraged everyone to strive to overcome these difficult times together and not to look for culprits.

"We are in a crisis that is largely out of our control," President Ilves acknowledged in his speech at the Jõhvi Concert Hall on the occasion of the 91st anniversary of Estonia's independence. "Since the fourth quarter of last year, the situation in Estonia, and in the countries where the banks active in Estonia have their headquarters, has passed the point where someone or something could be blamed for what has happened in this country."

In his Independence Day speech, President Ilves spoke about his own responsibility and that of the citizenry, government, parliament, opposition and entrepreneurs. He also called upon everyone to shoulder the responsibility for what has happened together, instead of looking for culprits, since it will then be easier to make a common effort and change our attitude. "Estonia is going to do well in the future if our citizens make wise choices in the elections, if those elected behave like statesmen and our entrepreneurs opt for innovation."

According to the Head of State, the negative supplementary budget, with all its faults, was inevitable and predicted that we have not seen the last of such budget cuts.

"Therefore I wish that those least affected by these cuts at the moment would not concentrate on their losses, but would realise that others have suffered more," President Ilves said.

In his speech, he called upon the government and the parliament to preserve the credibility of our financial policy and the foundations of a democratic country.

"Economic decline cannot suspend the Estonian Constitution. Smaller funds must not affect the transparency of our decisions in any way," the Head of State affirmed, calling on the coalition and opposition to conduct a full and open debate in the course of drafting next year's budget.

The absence of an open debate involving the whole society can amplify the disappointment in Estonian democracy and the institutions upholding it, warned President Ilves. Democracy is one of the first victims of crises, because that is when democracy suffers due to populism, added the Head of State.

According to the Head of State, in difficult times Estonia first and foremost needs solidarity and a realisation that we cannot manage without the support of others. President Ilves called upon the Estonian people to see solidarity as a way to pay our debt for Estonia's independence and statehood, which, despite the current crisis, has allowed us to live in a manner that one dared only dream about half a century ago.

"This is the time to realise that for a while, we have confused the freedom to consume with the freedom to decide in favor of human values. The sum of our quality of life is composed of intellectual values, rich human relations, a healthy lifestyle, happy children and strong feelings of fellowship. This is where we must invest our time, intelligence, emotions and will," stated President Ilves at the formal concert to mark the 91st anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Estonia.

The full text of the speech is available [here](#) .

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