

“I would like to thank all the people at Radio Free Europe for everything RFE-RL has been doing for almost sixty years now to ensure that there is a free press – or air – where the free flow of ideas is restricted,” President Ilves said. “I would like to thank all the people at Radio Free Europe for everything RFE-RL has been doing for almost sixty years now to ensure that there is a free press – or air – where the free flow of ideas is restricted,” President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said yesterday at the opening of the new broadcasting headquarters of Radio Free Europe in Prague.

President Ilves worked at Radio Free Europe in Germany in 1988-1993 as the Head of the Estonian Desk and in 1984-1988 as an analyst for the research unit of Radio Free Europe in Munich.

“Twenty years ago, within the space of two years, the entire conception of life in the Post-War Europe collapsed,” the Estonian Head of State said, speaking of the end of the Cold War. “This was a fundamental re-ordering of the European and world order.”

“Yet, of the 28 countries in Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union, only 8 are rated today as having a free press.” President Ilves said. “Ten are „partly free“, and ten „not free“.”

President Ilves said he is therefore exceedingly proud that Estonia, as rated just a week ago by Freedom House, was rated to have one of the freest presses in the European Union.

“But freedom of expression, freedom of the press as the foundation of an informed public and hence democracy, remains under threat,” President Ilves stated. “As you know all too well – for why would RFE-RL still be in business if it were otherwise – freedom of expression is not the norm in much of the world.”

President Ilves noted that even in free countries journalism faces a new threat – the orientation to entertainment.

“The enemy of quality journalism and honest journalists is the “entertainmentalisation” of the media.,” the Head of State said. He added that with the movement of the print media to the virtual world of the net, the business model is now based not on sales and subscriptions but on how many times an individual story is looked at. “With this journalistic business model, serious journalists and serious journalism are under increasing pressure to dumb-down, to go for fluff, to eschew serious analysis and investigative reporting.”

“Yet without serious journalism, without a free press in printed, broadcast or web form, no society can long remain free or just,” President Ilves stressed.

Read more:

[Interview](#) with President Ilves by RFE/RL

[Speech](#) by President Ilves at the Opening Ceremony of RFE/RL New Broadcasting

Headquarters in Prague

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229