

“There’s no need for us to compare Tartu teachers against Tallinn or vice versa. We can only compare whether the information technology education that is delivered in Estonia is better or worse than the education provided in Sweden, Germany, Shanghai, Singapore, or California,” said the President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, today in opening the “From Visions to Solutions” conference at Tallinn University of Technology. “To remain competitive within this reference system, the universities of Tartu and Tallinn must stand together, back to back, and forget about competition amongst themselves, as any possible winner would be as a miserable loser within the bigger picture.”

For this very reason the Head of State welcomed yesterday’s notice that Tartu University is prepared to give serious consideration to its current admittance procedure for new students.

“Therefore, I invite all of those who have been involved in the debate on whether university education should be available for free in Estonia or for a charge, with or without a tuition fee, to stop and think about the whole situation. This discussion will not make any sense until we have agreed on what the content of higher education is and what sense it makes in the competitive 21st century world – and this applies to engineering sciences, mathematics, and political science,” President Ilves told.

“Foreign students must also sit in our lecture halls to bring us the breath of the world. And foreign professors must stand in front of them,” said the Head of State. “Every student must spend at least one, and even better several, semesters in some university abroad at some stage of his or her studies, to get to know other languages and cultures and gain new rich experiences. At the same time, the level of education at home must be good enough to give them reason to return, without any hesitation. Those who have returned must get as much support and encouragement as possible.”

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