

The President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who described wooden architecture as contemporary and enriching our living environment, awarded the prize for the best wooden structure of 2010. The prize was presented at KUMU Art Museum today to architect Mihkel Tüür for a wooden summer house on Muhu Island.

According to the Head of State, substantial changes have taken place in Estonia over the last decade and wooden settlements have become highly valued areas while the need to protect and tidy up these unique settlements is now recognised.

"But we should also face the other side of the truth. While approximately 90 per cent of new small structures are built of wood in the Nordic countries, the respective number is smaller – by several times – in Estonia," President Ilves told.

"And, it happens only distressingly seldom that a state agency or local government, when launching a public procurement, sets the requirement for the new building to be built of wood. Sõmeru Rural Municipality serves as a highly positive example here and I do believe they are satisfied with their recently completed wooden municipality building."

According to the Head of State, Estonian architects, builders and, importantly, their clients must be encouraged to use more wood in the field of construction and recognise the different opportunities that are offered by wood.

"Hopefully, we will not have to wait too long until the majority of small houses are built of wood, as is common in the Nordic countries, and then will be the turn of large apartment houses and public buildings," President Ilves told.

The Head of State reminded that using Estonian wood – as one of our renewable sources – more extensively in the local building sector would provide employment to our timber industry and our people; this is one of the opportunities for promoting life in Estonia as well as for reducing unemployment, stimulating the domestic economy, and increasing the exports.

President Ilves awards prize for best wooden building of the year

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"Estonia can only use its intellect and spiritual strength to compete with countries that are rich in raw materials. Innovation can only rely on good ideas and the courage to bring them to fruition," said President Ilves, adding: "Architecture is exactly that very field, as it demands such intellect and research, and I'm glad that our architects have the courage to use their ideas. I do hope that their clients share their courage."

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