

“We need to understand that a local authority figure, official and council member must stand out as a moral example, aside from dealing with his or her professional functions. He/she is the business card of authority. If the face of authority is unblemished, it will serve to increase the faith that citizens have in their state,” said the President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, today in Tallinn, where he opened the day of rural municipalities and cities.

“I am not referring to situations where the officials of local authorities are blamed for taking a bribe or being paid off. Using local government funds to facilitate the election campaign of a political party also constitutes theft and the abuse of power and office,” the Head of State said, adding: “I do not want to generalise. Estonia has achieved so much because, in principle, our local power is honest and transparent. Do not allow single dishonest individuals to spoil this image; let us protect the honour of this office.”

According to President Ilves, he regrets that the need for administrative reform has not found a worthy place in the platforms of political parties in the upcoming elections, and therefore, this is a matter that has not been discussed during the election campaign.

“In-depth focusing on this subject and facing the truth will hardly win any votes on election day. This may rob votes instead,” the Head of State said. “I have the impression that the subject of adapting the administrative order is avoided due to the negative undertone of the issue. People are used to this matter being discussed this matter and have a sense of abandonment and loss. People feel they are being deprived of their rural municipality, their city, a piece of their identity. We have lacked the skills to speak the language of victory, when discussing administrative reform. And here, the blame should be shared by all of those who have been entrusted by the people to work on the prosperity of all. This starts from the council members of small rural municipalities up to the President himself.”

The need for strengthening the administrative structure should be quite obvious, President Ilves emphasised, as: “The availability of public services and their quality in Estonia is, currently, directly dependent on the place where a person lives. And this definitely conflicts with the concept and substance of the Constitution.”

The Head of State hopes that the new composition of the Riigikogu and the new government will find the strength to finish this inescapable project, which has been, regrettably, only

discussed for the last decade and even longer.

“I can only imagine the pain that accompanied the efforts and abandonment that Estonian local governments had to go through as the consequence of the harsh recession. I thank you for keeping your heads above water,” the Head of State said, in addressing the heads of local government.

The most recent information from the Tax Board shows that tax receipts from both state and local budgets are bigger than at the beginning of the last year.

“As tax receipts are restored and improved again, local governments should definitely think whether the discussions held with the Estonian government should focus on restoring the situation we once had. This means that restoration of the income tax ration that is available to local governments should be the goal,” the Head of State told. “Or the time has come to have a new start and a peaceful revision of the duties and opportunities that are available to the state and local power.”

Full text of the address of President Ilves is available [here](#) .

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