

Today at the Estonian Literary Museum, the Head of State, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, opened the "In and Out – Through Estonia's Doors" essay-writing contest of the Centre for Ethics of University of Tartu in cooperation with the President's Academic Advisory Board, and he invited people to write down their story about leaving Estonia or coming back home after spending a long term abroad.

"Hopefully, we all wish for the kind of Estonia where we would want to live ourselves, above all. And this is the Estonia from where all of these people who left – hopefully on a temporary basis – either to work or learn, would want to return. How would you describe Estonia against this criterion?" President Ilves asked. "Does this translate into merely high wages and a favourable tax climate? Or would this be the general living environment, open and tolerant people, or our ways of thinking? You must think carefully before you answer this question – and be honest; otherwise, it will be pointless. Discussing this topic should not solely be the patrimony of opinion leaders and politicians."

According to the Head of State, Estonia needs a more comprehensive and diversified approach to discussing the reasons for leaving and returning to this country.

"This essay writing contest aims to find answers to questions: why are people leaving Estonia and why are they returning? And also, why are some people not returning? What should be done better and differently?" President Ilves said. Of course – and above all – we are looking forward to the stories of people who have walked this path, who have the experience of living abroad for a long period, of leaving and returning to Estonia. This will contribute to greater understanding of our values and our less flattering attributes."

According to Mrs. Margit Sutrop, the Head of the Centre for Ethics of University of Tartu, the doors of Estonia are wider open today than ever before: "We want to know what we should do to avoid Estonia becoming empty of people? What should we do to enable our prodigal sons to return? For all of our people who wish to live in Estonia, what should we do to make Estonia a better place for living and self-realisation, bringing up our children and growing old."

Therefore, we are looking forward to receiving writings from Estonians at home and abroad who have the experience of living abroad for a long period. The essay writing competition will give everyone a chance to be heard and, therefore, contribute to shaping the development of

Estonian society.

The final deadline for the submission of essays is 9 May 2011.

Prizes will be awarded to the winners of the essay-writing competition, and they will be presented by the Ministry of Education and research within the National Programme "Value Development in Estonian Society 2009-2013", Digira, Estonian Language Foundation and Petrone Print publishers. All the participants will be given a signed photo of the President.

The winners will be invited to a reception of the President of the Republic in June and the best essays will be published in the Akadeemia (the Academy) magazine or a separate collection; the best student essays will be published in the Akadeemiake (Little Academy) magazine.

More information about the background to the competition and specific conditions are available at the website of the Centre for Ethics at: www.eetika.ee/arendus/aktuaalne/konkursid/kirjatalgud2011/

The President's essay writing contest is taking place for the third time. In 2009, essays about "What Can I Do for Estonia?" were collected and in 2007, "In What Estonia Do I Want to Live?".

For additional information about the essay-writing contest please contact:

Triin Käpp

Project Manager, Centre for Ethics of University of Tartu

Tel: 737 5426

Triin.Kapp@ut.ee

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