

Faith in our country, family and fellow citizens is our greatest asset; it is especially politicians – the President, members of Parliament and Government, representatives of local government, and all other elected officials – who are responsible for maintaining this trust, said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves at this year's opening session of the Riigikogu.

Any gambling with this trust weakens, undermines and damages Estonia, the Head of State warned. "And that is why I am worried when connections between money and politics are no longer impeccably clear and transparent. It worries me when the electorate and the people begin to suspect that political parties and their representatives in government offices follow their own set of rules, rules that only they know about and that only apply to them."

President Ilves once again emphasised the need to tidy up how parties are financed and to foster political diversity: "The places of authority cannot be closed in a free society. On the contrary, healthy competition, honest criticism, and clear responsibility must remain in place. The system whereby political parties are financed, the organisation of elections and the Parliament's working rules have started to limit competition; moreover, a sort of corrupt type of competition has emerged in elections."

President Ilves called upon the people to be critical in those cases when politicians or the state authorities treat citizens with disrespect, fail to listen to them or refrain from explaining their decisions. And when politicians are picked on, it is usually the outcome, as expected, of "prior attitudes, a cumulative distaste that in the end results in overreaction."

It is we – the electorate and the citizens – who decide what kind of political culture and atmosphere we want, claimed the Head of State. "A Byzantine atmosphere of fear in which citizens are considered state property and slaves? Or cunning attempts to twist laws to conform to politicians' whims which then become an example for the whole of society? Or do we, as it seems to me, want and demand – and I really do mean demand and work for – a truly Nordic honesty and transparency, in which the state is our common property."

According to President Ilves, in order to keep Estonia in the best possible shape, we must restore trust as completely and as swiftly as possible.

"We must end this culture of outdoing each other by base means, we must respect and pay as much attention to our people as possible, find a way to support those who are in need, and to reaffirm their trust in Estonia's future," said the President in the Riigikogu.

Read the full text of the speech [here](#) .

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