

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, took part in a presentation of the Livonian-Estonian-Latvian dictionary in the Estonian Embassy in Riga.

"The long-awaited Livonian-Estonian-Latvian dictionary will bring to an end to the boundaries that have stood between the Livonian, Estonian and Latvian languages. In this sense, we can describe the dictionary as a new era Livonian civic centre, in the 21st century, which confirms that Livonians are carefully preserving their roots, and we can bring something back from the brink," told the Estonian Head of State.

He acknowledged the Latvian Government in considering it important, despite its austere budget, to support the first-time publication of this capacious and extensive dictionary of a tiny nation.

"However, this is the obligation of free and democratic societies – to stand up for smaller cultures giving them the courage to survive and develop," President Ilves stated.

The "Livonian-Estonian-Latvian Dictionary" was published with support from Republics of Estonia and Latvia, the University of Tartu and the Latvian Language Agency; the dictionary was compiled by professor emeritus of the University of Tartu, Tiit-Rein Viitso, and a research specialist of the University of Tartu, Dr.phil. Valts Ernštreits.

The collection of the material required for the dictionary began approximately four decades ago; scientists from Estonia and Latvia started to compile the manuscript in 2003. This is the first dictionary of the Livonian language to be published in Latvia, as the first two were published in Russia (1861) and Finland (1938).

One of the editors of the dictionary, Valts Ernštreits, said: "For the Livonian language, this is not just the event of the century; this is a first and an historic turning point."

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