

"It makes me proud of my country to see Estonia take first place in the ranking for the third year in a row," commented President Toomas Hendrik Ilves from Google's Studio G in New York via video bridge to Washington D.C., where the presentation of the Internet freedom report by the US human rights organisation, Freedom House, took place.

"In Estonia, freedom of expression is seen as a cyberspace human right. In cyberspace, fundamental rights must be defended with dedication equivalent to the commitment exercised in every other sphere," told President Ilves, on the live feed.

According to President Ilves, Estonia's success can be explained by the fact that unrestricted access to the Internet has been a national priority since Estonia regained its independence. "For us, it is important to ensure access to the Internet everywhere in the country, schools included. This is the first step. From there on, we have focused on transparency and openness, which also provide the foundation of our public e-services," added the Estonian Head of State.

At the presentation of the Freedom House report, it was mentioned that imposing restrictions on Internet freedom has become more widespread in many countries since the previous report was compiled. According to President Ilves, this trend should concern us.

"Far too many countries are speaking about Internet freedom as a threat to security. Cyber security is necessary to restrict criminal activities, but not the exchange of ideas and information among people or to limit virtual gatherings. Despite the fact that Estonia experienced a cyber attack five years ago, we do not support regulation or censoring of Internet freedom. No security, including cyber security, can be provided at the expense of fundamental freedoms, including Internet freedom," said president Ilves.

At the event that took place in the offices of Google in Washington D.C., entitled "Freedom on the Net 2012: Shifting Methods of Internet Control", Freedom House introduced its third report on Internet freedom, which assesses access to the Internet, censorship and user rights in 47 countries, as well as the main trends noted in digital media.

Estonia ranked first in the Internet freedom report, for the third year in a row, followed by the

United States of America and Germany. Australia, Hungary and Italy were placed after the first three. Internet freedom is worst in Iran, Cuba and China.

For additional information, please go to: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

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