

"Attaching value to our past and heritage, the national self-confidence that grew with it and joint activities were all the pre-requisites that made the birth of the Republic of Estonia possible," told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, today in the Great Guild Hall of the Estonian History Museum, in a speech given at the event organised to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Estonian Heritage Conservation Society.

President Ilves recalled that twenty five years ago – just before the decline of the Soviet occupation began - thousands of people in different places all over Estonia attached a much wider meaning than solely maintaining and preserving the 'old' under the word 'heritage conservation'. "The heritage conservation movement became one of the catalysts that led our way towards restoring our republic," told President Ilves.

"Once again, the heritage conservation movement brought together the creative community and many open-minded people all over Estonia to protect our historical memory and heritage, to stand up against anything wrong and alien. This was a fusion movement and public initiative in the best possible, altruistic sense. The Heritage Conservation Society became a vaccine against lies and an entity that shed light on our hidden past, disclosing it to the public," President Ilves emphasised.

Even today, the Heritage Conservation Society, as a non-governmental organisation and third sector representative, has not lost its goals, President Ilves told. "Our heritage still needs to be maintained and taken care of, and as an independent country we cannot rely on anybody else but ourselves here. We must do this for the sake of our future and our descendants," stated the Estonian Head of State.

"In this, the Heritage Conservation Society can adopt the role of a wise tutor – someone who explains the importance and meaning of the past, the compliance of modern requirements and the protection of our heritage in an understandable way," added President Ilves.

President Ilves also stated that we must protect our heritage in such a way that it would be conserved, not as an empty shell but by adopting measures that will allow people to live with the heritage. "For that purpose, we need to raise the awareness and skills of people, on the one hand, while being an effective, intelligent, contemporary consultant and advisor, not a warden, on the other hand," President Ilves said.

The Honorary Chairman of the Estonian Heritage Conservation Society, Trivimi Velliste, and the Chairman of the Estonian Heritage Conservation Society, Jaan Tamm, today awarded a decoration of the Estonian Heritage Conservation Society to the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Estonian Heritage Conservation Society.

Apart from the official conference, several other anniversary-related events are taking place in the Great Hall Building to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Estonian Heritage Conservation Society; the anniversary collection on the important role of the heritage conservation movement in the history of Estonia was also published. For additional information, see: <http://www.muinsuskaitse.ee/>

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