

"In times when people are voluntarily giving up a large share of their privacy by using social networks, search engines and mobile applications, we should also speak about the new reality and Europe's ability to ensure operable data security in the situation described," told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who today gave the opening address at an international conference on cyberspace privacy and ethical issues in data security, which is being organised by the Centre for Ethics of the University of Tartu and the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate.

"None of us would be prepared to return to the pre-digital era. We want to use a free Internet, free social networks and mobile phone applications. At the same time, we are also voluntarily giving away important information about our consumption patterns and preferences, as this data is gathered by providers of the respective services and sold to those who can then make us targeted promotional offers," President Ilves states.

"In other words, the Orwellian fear of people – that the government is watching them and will collect too much information about its citizens – is completely outdated. In times when the private sector, which is involved in data processing, and cyber criminals or just malevolent individuals have endless opportunities to collect and use our personal information, governments are no longer the entities that represent the biggest threat to our privacy. In fact the opposite is the case, as it is the function of a government to protect us from the abuse of our data in cyberspace – as a protection of privacy represents an important public benefit," emphasised the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves is a patron of the Ethical Issues of Privacy and Data Security, Global and Local Challenges conference that takes place at the Estonian National Opera Estonia, at which ethical and legal issues related to electronic data collection, use and storage are being discussed by officials and academicians, philosophers and lawyers. Foreign contributors to the conference include Peter Hustinx, European Data Protection Supervisor, and academic specialists from universities in Amsterdam, Bergen and Tilburg. The vision of Estonians towards values and privacy are presented by the Director General of Data Protection Institute of the Republic of Estonia, Viljar Peep, and the Head of the Centre for Ethics of the University of Tartu, Margit Sutrop.

For additional information, see: <http://www.eetikakeskus.ut.ee/1174469>

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