

"Decisions made shortly after regaining independence, such as computer classes in schools and ensuring free internet all over the country, along with functioning IT solutions and e-services, have made Estonia greater beyond its geographical borders," President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said today at the Google conference Zeitgeist 2013.

President Ilves was speaking about the success story of Estonia's democracy and e-state and the possibilities of e-democracy in Hertfordshire near London at the conference of Google's think tank Google Ideas, an annual conference that brings together thinkers from around the world and delves into the current state of affairs in the world. "We are a small country, but with a fast, free internet connection. Thanks to that, we see new possibilities and create innovative IT solutions, which are also our biggest article of foreign aid," President Ilves said.

President Ilves is participating in the conference Zeitgeist 2013 at the invitation of the organisers. The discussion with him was led by the founder and head of Google Ideas, Jared Cohen, who is one of the authors of the recently published book, 'The New Digital Age', which analyses the digital age. Jared Cohen asked the President about how to reduce corruption in communities. The Estonian Head of State emphasised the importance of transparency of data. "The more openness we have in a society and the more data – on government spending, for example – are public and freely accessible via the internet, the less we have of corruption. You cannot bribe a computer," President Ilves said.

"The most important thing as a country is not losing your will to do things differently. The loss of such will leads to stagnation," the Estonian Head of State concluded.

Tomorrow, at the invitation of the think tank The Henry Jackson Society, President Ilves will visit the House of Commons of the British Parliament, where he will meet members of the think tank. He will give a speech to the members of parliament, policy makers and opinion leaders about cyber defence and more broadly about the challenges a country must face in the 21st century. At the parliament, the discussion will be headed by one of the best known experts in cyber security and security policy and the former head of BBC, Baroness Pauline Neville-Jones.

The Henry Jackson Society is a British think tank named after the US Senator Henry Jackson, who supported humane and democratic values in his homeland and also a forceful foreign policy of unconditionally defending democratic values. The think tank analyses foreign policy

based on these values.

While in London, President Ilves will also give an interview to the renowned current affairs programme "Quest Means Business" on CNN.

The Head of State returns to Estonia late night tomorrow.

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