

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, opened today at the Estonian Academy of Sciences the symposium "Quo vadis, Estonia?", which was part of the Estonia's Friends International Meeting. He focused on Estonia's success in the sphere of information technology, the Internet freedom of Estonia and also the threats that the new technologies pose.

President Ilves spoke about the range of opportunities offered in Estonia in the sphere of digital services: e-Tax Board, digital prescriptions, e-elections, success in the sphere of cyber defence technology and also of the fact that he is currently digitally signing the new legal acts. The Head of State also introduced the Public Assembly process as an example of the use of digital services to promote democracy.

When speaking about technology, the Head of State also highlighted some of the threats it brings, saying that instead of the "Big Brother" we should be worried about the "Little Sister", as we tell her everything and she is a big gossip: "People are voluntarily sharing information on the Internet and on different apps about themselves; later, different companies will use this information to earn money."

The foreign visitors speaking at the event were the expert of deliberative democracy of Stanford University, Professor Dr. James S. Fishkin and the CEO of Ericsson, Hans Vestberg.

Dr. Fishkin introduced the method of deliberative polling, which he developed and which has been used in 18 countries. "If people can deliberate on certain issues together and are well informed, they will reach different conclusions than if they try to form an opinion rapidly and without any deliberation. People are very wise, if suitable conditions are present, and they can make well-considered decisions," said Dr. Fishkin.

Hans Vestberg spoke about the technology revolution that is brought about by the increasingly rapid spread of cloud technology, mobile communications and broadband connections. He emphasised the importance of a good IT infrastructure in today's society and the opportunities for solving global problems that it opens.

"The Estonia's Friends International Meeting will contribute to increasing the share of the smart

economy in Estonia. Let us consider the fact that 100 jobs with payroll expenses of 1,000 Euros each will be the same, in monetary terms, as 20 jobs with payroll expenses of 5,000 Euros. Those jobs that are seemingly smaller yet represent higher added value and foreign investments is what we have been bringing and will continue to bring to Estonia. Software and product development units like Navionics, Ericsson and Lampserve are all good examples in this regard," said Martin Hirvoja, Member of the Executive Board of Enterprise Estonia.

"Everything we showed and told to our friends at this gathering will help to prove that Estonia has the knack for innovative thinking; we do everything faster and differently from other countries. The format of the gathering allows us to have discussions that may result in the emergence of large initiatives, future foreign investments and co-operation projects," Hirvoja emphasised.

The traditional Estonia's Friends International Meeting was opened yesterday by a seminar organised by Enterprise Estonia, "Estonia – Contributing for a Smarter World", and continued in the evening with the concert by Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, Great Summer Gathering: Friends, which was conducted by Anu Tali. A meeting with the Prime Minister, Andrus Ansip, took place after the symposium and in the evening, the band Noorkuu will give a concert at Oandu water mill. This year, 120 entrepreneurs, scientists and politicians from 20 countries all over the world gathered at the Estonia's Friends International Meeting. This year the meeting focused on the development of e-democracy and Estonia's success in the sphere of information technology.

The idea of the Estonia's Friends International Meeting dates back to 2010. The gathering is intended to thank entrepreneurs, politicians and cultural figures who have contributed to Estonia's development into an European country with a dynamic economy and open-minded cultural environment.

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