

"I wish smart, competitive governance for Estonia," told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, today at the opening session of the new working year of the Riigikogu.

"Honest agreements and arrangements could be the tool to help deliver on promises that cannot be kept and avoid sowing hostility. Political parties and coalitions suggesting goals that can be accomplished and the electorate ignoring candidates that cheat, provoke or offer empty slogans – this could be our ideal," the Head of State told.

He admitted that the population wants to think along and publicly discuss the well-considered position that was demonstrated by the Popular Assembly at the Opinion Festival. The Head of State also encouraged the Riigikogu to take the reviewing of the proposals by the Popular Assembly and the introduction of the required law amendments seriously, particularly with respect to those considered eligible by the Constitutional Committee of the Riigikogu

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When speaking about local government and educational reforms, President Ilves emphasised the importance of a small country philosophy: "Estonia does not have enough people and resources to copy the administrative models of large countries and spend time on replacement activities. Estonia has the unique opportunity of being flexible, innovative, simple and logical. Let us identify the real problems, find the best solutions for them and implement the required changes boldly. /---/ Let us not be afraid of change, but let us also not count on results that cannot be achieved. Let us not be afraid to correct decisions that have turned out to be wrong, considering today's experiences. The closeness of elections should not be a reason for preventing the implementation of reforms."

The Head of State recalled that on 14 September, 10 years will have elapsed since the referendum on joining the European Union. Also, Estonia is a member of NATO; Estonian Heads of State sit at the same table as the leaders of the world and are definitely not timid, silent partners.

"I am worried by the fact that in Estonia we can still encounter public opinion, which declares that the protection of human rights is not our business. Do we really have the moral right to give up on supporting humanity? Treat someone as less valuable, close our mouth and eyes in

situations where people are persecuted, exercising the power of government? And I reply: no, we do not, above all, as we recall the experiences of our people in the 20th century. We all know about repressions. The recognition of human dignity all over the world and compliance with international agreements should be our ideal," President Ilves confirmed. "The steadfast protection of values is the useful and correct way for us. The same goes for the mental protection of the society. We must not allow ourselves to be paralysed by the fears of the past or illusions. We must also not become buried under ultimate pessimism or the 'old-barnyism' mentality, we should not contribute to the belittling of Estonia. Each and every one of us is an ambassador for Estonia. Each and every one of us takes part in creating and distributing our self-image and the individuality of the real Estonia."

The Head of State concluded by telling about the campaign to promote the elections of local governments; many members of the Riigikogu and several ministers are taking part in the campaign as candidates, although many of them have no intention to start working in local governments.

"Advertising – when we know that candidate, if elected, will not accept the position – is a direct way of discrediting our party system. This is a hypocritical and alienating method. This is what creates the attitude that we can hear and read from our media on a daily basis. You all know that this is how it works," President Ilves told. "Be honest with your electorate. There are two opportunities. The Riigikogu may restore the right of its members to participate in local councils. Then we have to discuss the situation properly to ensure that it complies with the constitution but this is something we should not be afraid of. The other option is to abide by valid law. This means that local leaders should rule city and rural councils. And this is why they should be in the spotlight during the election campaign."

The full text of the speech by President Ilves is available [here](#) .

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