

"Every good teacher has the ability to inspire curiosity in students and make their journeys towards new knowledge and skills as exciting as possible. You have achieved that," President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said when presenting this year's educational awards to the initiator of the Estonian student satellite programme Mart Noorma, the long-time violin teacher Tiiu Peäske and economics teacher Epp Vodja. The President's special award in sciences was awarded to physicist Jaan Kalda.

"Someone has said that in order to get to the Moon, one must reach for the Sun. And even if you don't reach the Moon, you are still close to the stars. This simply means that in order to meet ambitious goals, one must have the courage to think big," the Head of State said at the ceremony held in the Office of the President, adding: "Your activities have taken us closer to the Moon, the Sun and the stars. Striving for perfection and wholeness is an essential part of music, but it spurs on young entrepreneurs, physicists seek proof for it and finally – the student satellite actually takes us there."

According to President Ilves, the sincerest thanks and recognition for teachers come from their students: "The greatest recognition for your work comes when your best students become your colleagues to carry on the dedication that you, in turn, received from your teachers."

Speaking on behalf of the winners, Mart Noorma, the initiator of the student satellite programme recalled that a certain courageous and outspoken man made an appeal to get Estonian affairs in order by its 100th anniversary. "This appeal is understood differently by different people, each according to their own conscience. A state that is in order means that the resources of the state are used for the benefit of its people. Educational staff contribute to this on a daily basis – this is how we have educated people," Noorma said and added that it is a good feeling indeed when the state gives praise for it; and he thanked the President and the donors of the prize for this recognition.

The educational awards amount to 4,800 (Mart Noorma), 3,500 (Tiiu Peäske), and 2,900 (Epp Vodja) euros and they are funded by **Danske Bank**. Aivar Rehe, the Managing Director of the Estonian branch of Danske Bank noted: "As a bank, we place special value on education in finance, having created useful tools for it, from children to entrepreneurs. We also continue to value the contribution others have made to education. Most of all, these financial awards are a sincere message of gratitude to the people whose sense of mission has no doubt moved them to do more than what is expected of them in their day-to-day work."

The special award in sciences (Jaan Kalda) is funded by **Skype Estonia** and amounts to 3,900 euros. "Skype considers it important to support people who have made sharing knowledge their lifework," said Andrus Järg, Head of Skype Estonia. According to him, it is thanks to teachers like Jaan Kalda that Estonia has become renowned for its smart businesses in the world.

Mart Noorma is the Head of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at the University of Tartu, the Vice Dean for Studies at the Faculty of Science and Technology, the initiator and head of the student satellite programme and a promoter of science. The concept of the Estonian student satellite, conceived and supervised by Noorma, where students from various universities are involved in a common goal of national importance, is novel not in Estonia alone but the entire world. More than one hundred undergraduate and postgraduate students from the University of Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonian Aviation Academy, Estonian University of Life Sciences and Tallinn University have formed a united inter-school team. As the Head of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Noorma has been responsible for organising in-service training in the field of teaching across Estonia for the past five years.

Tiiu Peäske is the Head of the Department of Stringed Instruments at the Tallinn School of Music, a long-time violin teacher and a teacher of renowned performers. In addition to her long career at the Tallinn School of Music (since 1965) and the string of her students that currently shape the culture of stringed instruments in Estonia, her prolific work at Rakvere School of Music should also be noted.

Epp Vodja is the Head of the foundation Junior Achievement Estonia, a teacher of economics and business at the Tallinn 21st School and the manager of the student companies' programme. She can easily be named the founder of systematic business education in Estonian general education. She compiles learning materials for business and economics, trains teachers, is the soul and leader of the student companies programme, is one of the authors of the national curriculum in economics and business, the business education expert at the European Commission, a member of the board of the organisation that manages business education in Europe and was its chairman in 2011-2013.

Jaan Kalda is a physicist, a senior researcher at the Institute of Cybernetics at Tallinn University of Technology, and the pedagogical director of the Estonian team at international physics olympiads since 1994. Since 2008, he has been a member of the Advisory Committee of the International Physics Olympiad and a member of the jury of the World Physics Olympiad

since 2011. Kalda has published a booklet on preparing students for olympiads, "Formulas for IPhO", which, in addition to English, was also published in Estonian, Arabic, Portugese, and Indonesian; he has also published numerous learning materials on the solving methods for exercises of physics olympiads.

Additional information on the educational awards is available [here](#) .

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