

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who today gave a public lecture to the students of the University of Warsaw, entitled "25 years on: changes in mental geography in Europe", invited the students to become the new Europe, one that is open and innovative and will not attempt to find excuses for doing nothing.

"We have seen that one has to build up freedom; it will not be just presented to us," confirmed the Estonian Head of State in speaking about the changes that have taken place in Europe over the last quarter of a century.

25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the elections in Poland that broke the sole power of communists it is obvious that the choice in favour of democracy was not automatic or taken for granted by countries that had released themselves from the communist system.

"Compared to what follows, the exchange of a regime can be the fast and easy part. Everything that we need to create a free society – democratic institutions, a state based on the rule of law, civil society, fundamental rights and freedoms, economic growth, low corruption – takes years to create and requires lots of political will – together with political capital," told President Ilves, who also encouraged the closest neighbours of the European Union to take the bold and necessary steps to promote democracy, a state based on the rule of law and free economy.

"If I was to name a county that Ukraine should take as an example, it would be, above all, Poland," he added.

The President quoted a past dissident of Poland, Adam Michnik, who said that it is easier to make fish soup from an aquarium than to make an aquarium out of fish soup: "But this is exactly what Estonia and Poland have succeeded in doing – they have built a working democracy from the ruins of a totalitarian regime."

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229