

Esteemed Governor, and Mayor,  
Chairman of the Council,  
Esteemed Director,  
Good Friends of Estonia,  
Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am especially glad to be able to visit, for my first state visit, your country - Finland. And I am especially glad also to come to Oulu on this visit as Finland's most important center of innovation. A place where traditions and where innovation come together to realize something completely different, something new, but something which I think we all need much more of, and will need much more of in the future, when we are faced, as small countries with low population density, looking at these global economies and countries of scale where there are billions of people, where they have a high population density, and where the cost of labor is completely different from what you have today and where we are approaching.

What my visit to Oulu has convinced me of, once again since I've believed in this for a long time, is that life in a country like Estonia or Finland does not need to be concentrated in the capital. Part of my six months so far in office have been dedicated to the idea that one can, and in fact should, live outside the capital. And that it is possible not only to live outside the capital, but in fact, to be a leading center in innovation, and my visit to Oulu has convinced me of this today.

It's quite clear when we look at where our cities are, our countries are—we're in Europe, but we look at the world—that knowledge, science and innovation is going to be the key to where we are in the future, the key to the world where our children will be living. Finland is clearly an example of a country that has found a solution, or has found multiple solutions. In the Lisbon Strategy Report just released, Finland is number one. You are not surprised, neither are we; but perhaps you might be surprised to know that in the top group of countries in the European Union that received the highest marks, another country, and in fact the only new member in that group, is Estonia. Estonia is clearly going the same way pioneered by Sweden. We have our own innovations. Some of you know that Skype, the telephone, the Internet-telephone system was something that was developed in Estonia. It's not quite yet Nokia, but you know—we are working on it. We have in fact become leaders in a number of areas and we hope to continue to do the same. You might be amused to know that we invented our own computerized banking

system. When our banks being sufficiently successful were bought by the Swedes, they sent their computer people over to teach us how to do it, and then when they saw the way we were already doing it, they said, we're bringing you to Stockholm. I think this is something Finland has experienced as well, and we're very pleased that we're both moving in that direction.

Of course, high tech is not enough. We need to have societies where citizens feel connected to each other, where they feel they have a role to play, both in their local government and in their national government, and with each other. And here again, Oulu is a fine example of this, and of course, especially the very strong connections between Oulu and Estonia. Which I'd also like to raise here as something that is a particular example to all of us. Estonian- Finnish relations, of course, has been good for... well, I think historically, at least since Elias Lönnrot and Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald were both engaged in collecting the mythology of our respective countries and they corresponded with each other and before that, before the time of history, Matti Klinge thinks that we had a single sea state that we had among us, or between us, but especially important again for us is that it's not only a matter of Tallinn and Helsinki. But that Oulu actually is one of the Estophile centers of the world. But certainly, of Finland, where your university is the main university for studying Estonian in Finland—the first university to have a Chair of Estonian Studies in the world outside of Estonia. And there are not many, there's one in Canada, there's one in Budapest, but you are the first. So I hope that this visit, it's hardly the first between Estonia and Oulu, but certainly I hope it marks another step in developing relations between Estonians and Finns living in the Oulu region. We are also especially grateful, of course, not only for the fact that the University has a Chair for Estonian, but also that your newspaper, Kaleva, is probably the one newspaper that most actively and with the deepest understanding of Estonia has covered our country for all these years. Not to mention, you write well about me. But, even before I came on the political scene, Kaleva was the one newspaper that really understood our country far better. It's no accident that there's a strong section of the Friedebert Tuglas Seura in Oulu, which is again another sign of a deep and fundamental understanding of our culture.

So I hope that this visit has brought us closer. I invite you all to come to Estonia. Come often, visit us, and we will be visiting you as well and I do hope that your spirit of innovation, which is so apparent in the University here, in your companies, is something that will spread more in my country. We are doing it already. But I think that we have much more to do. So as the world becomes more and more globalized, and we are faced with more and more competition from all over the world, it's good to know that there are people who speak almost the same language, who are dealing so successfully with the same issues and to that I'd like to raise a toast!