

Dear citizens of the Republic of Estonia,
good friends.

I am extremely pleased to award certificates of citizenship of the Republic of Estonia to almost 60 new citizens of our state today. You are making the Republic of Estonia bigger and richer.

I respect your time and your hard work and above all, your will and your drive. You put yourself above the fear that the exams you need to take to qualify for citizenship are difficult. You overcame the prejudice that citizenship of the Republic of Estonia has no practical value in the world that is becoming more open than ever before.

Let us all ask instead: what is the practical value of love? What can you earn from friendship?

Belonging somewhere is human nature – people want to be with someone. This is why we have families, colleagues, friends. Citizenship is what meets the need to belong on the level of state and society better than anything else. Similarly to your homes and families, being a full member of the state and society also means almost equal amounts of rights and obligations.

But even listing all of them does not outweigh the inner joy and security given by the opportunity to declare, loud and clear: Estonia is my country! My country that I make better, fairer and more beautiful with my work, my care, my commitment and, above all, my love.

My ladies and gentlemen.

The majority of Estonian people, who were born as citizens of Estonia, see citizenship as something they do not need to think about that often. And if we do think about it, we often wonder about those who do not dare or want or cannot pass the process of applying for the citizenship of Estonia.

Instead of wondering, we should help and encourage them. If each citizen of Estonia helped at least one person who lives here and holds the so-called grey passport to become a citizen, then there would be about ten helpers for each person who is currently not a citizen of any country.

We could reduce the number of people without citizenship considerably in just a couple of years if we opened up and looked around through more helpful eyes; if we started communicating more and breaking the barriers between different nationalities.

The state of Estonia has to ask – have we done all we can to allow people who have not made this decision yet to become citizens of the Republic of Estonia without changing the foundations of our citizenship policy?

We have to remove the obstacles caused by bureaucracy and insufficient information that prevent people from deciding in favour of becoming citizens of the Republic of Estonia.

There are approximately 3000 children in Estonia both of whose parents are stateless persons. As we know, these children could become citizens of Estonia by simplified procedure.

Will their parents submit the relevant applications? Do these young people themselves wish to become citizens of Estonia?

It is the interest of our common Estonia that these choices be made in favour of Estonia. This is why we should call all stateless parents to apply for the citizenship of Estonia for their children.

I am very pleased that the state of Estonia does not regard its citizenship procedure as something flexible and eternal. The new procedure for citizenship examinations was approved in the Government last week. I hope that the new procedure will eliminate the complex wording of the simple questions asked at the examination.

Every state must look after its citizens. The interest of every country is to contribute to the increase of the number of its citizens. No state that truly respects its citizens will hand out citizenship randomly; it has not been done so far and it will not be done in the future.

Every person has to express the will to become a citizen.

Your will shows that you trust and need the state of Estonia. I assure you that the state of Estonia also trusts and needs you. The state of Estonia recognises your will.

My ladies and gentlemen, dear countrymen.

Estonia is a free democratic state and we respect the free choices of our people. This is why we also respect the choice of some people who live here to become citizens of some other country.

We respect this choice, but we do not understand it. We cannot understand it, because the state of Estonia treats its citizens well and equally.

It is hard for us to understand the reasons that make people reject all the benefits that a democratic and free state offers all of its citizens for self-realisation and security. However, the laws, traditions and customs valid here are those of Estonia and not of any other country.

This means that the message of the state of Estonia can only be one: we support the will of every stateless person living here to become a citizen of Estonia and to become a full member of the Estonian society. It is a privilege that belongs only to citizens of the Republic of Estonia.

This privilege now belongs also to you, the new citizens of Estonia. To recognise this, we are awarding the certificates of citizenship in this festive atmosphere to you, who dared, tried and above all, wanted.

I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart.