

Distinguished recipients of state decorations and family members,  
Dear friends,

The Republic of Estonia cherishes traditions that represent our values and aspirations. In this spirit, we express gratitude and acknowledgement to our compatriots and friends and supporters abroad. We honour those who have served as inspiration for many others, who have helped make Estonia better, smarter, safer and more secure.

Among you are people from very different walks of life, but you are all united by your dedication – to your profession, volunteer activities, your home place. Your dedication to Estonia and the values that free Estonia believes in and rests on. For this Estonia is grateful to you.

Your stories are the building blocks of a successful, energetic, bold, compassionate and mutually supportive Estonia. An Estonia that thanks in part to you is largely already a reality, and the Estonia that is the still-ungained object of our strivings.

Such an Estonia, overachieving yet caring, can only be created by all of us together, by participating confidently in dialogue, listening to others, being tolerant and having respect toward our fellow citizens even when we disagree with them. This is the source of Estonia's true wealth and strength.

You, my good recipients of Estonia's state decorations, have taught us all that, no matter what the field, success requires an unwavering commitment, a deep level of engagement, an eye for the essential and the readiness to dispense with the inessential.

Here, in the hallowed Assembly Hall of the University of Tartu, people are gathered, people who have stood on the delicate footbridge of destiny and felt the chill of non-existence, but have remained strong and helped those around them. Thank you for your courage.

I would also like to thank our friends and supporters in many other countries from Finland to Japan. A number of you have helped Estonia out of complicated situations, and your resourcefulness and resolve have made the country more secure or directly aided Estonians in distress.

The state decorations are bestowed on you individually. Yet these orders and crosses are often an implicit acknowledgement of your family members as well, for support, understanding, and on occasion, forgiveness.

Again, Estonia thanks you all. Free Estonia thanks you.