

Today, at the Office of the President of the Republic, Evelin Ilves, supported by Nordea Bank, presented the 2,100 euro Young Athlete's Prizes to chess player Mai Narva, orienteer Siim Helmoja and swimmer Maria Rein.

In her address, Evelin Ilves emphasised that studies and sports should complement each other; we cannot choose one over the other because both deserve equal attention.

"Successful young people cannot abandon school and education; on the other hand, straight As on report cards are not enough today. Even in Estonia, we have increasingly begun to see how poor the exercising habits of our students have become," said Evelin Ilves. "The situation is even more stark because this concerns ever younger children."

Nordea Bank has supported the Young Athlete's Prize for seven years. "We are extremely pleased that our support over these years has benefitted 59 talented young athletes, who in turn have inspired other young people. These are young people with far-reaching targets and bold ambitions. All business organisations, Nordea Bank included, must focus on a more general target to reach goals and this is how it also works in sports," explained Piret Reinson, the representative of Nordea Bank.

Chess player **Mai Narva** studies in the 9th class of Gustav Adolf Gymnasium, majoring in the French language. Mai's grandmother, grandfather, mother, father, uncles and sisters have all been successful chess players; however, if we look at the results, Mai is definitely the most successful chess playing member of the Rõtov-Narva chess dynasty. She has won medals in various championships since she was six years old. In 2013 and 2014, she became European champion in her age group four times and also won two silver medals and two bronze medals. Last year, Mai became European champion among young girls in classic chess. Mai is the first female Estonian chess player to have won a medal in a European youth championship. Before her, only grand champions, Jaan Ehivest, Lembit Oll and Kaido Külaots, won medals in the boys' category of the European youth championships. In 2014, Mai also won the European youth fast chess championships in absolute ranking, took second place in both the U18 age group in blitz chess and as a member of Estonian team in U18 European team championship, and third place in U16 age group in fast chess and solving chess tasks. Apart from her outstanding results in international youth championships, Mai became an Estonian female chess champion in 2014 and holds a high place among active Estonian female chess players in the FIDE rating table.

Orienteer **Siim Helmoja** studies in 9th class of Põlva Basic School. Siim is involved in orienteering, ski orienteering and relay. He became Estonian orienteering champion in 2013 in class M14 on both standard track, short track and sprint. In 2014, he won a silver medal in the Estonian championship in the orienteering M16 class run. Siim has diversified interests; he has successfully taken part in school sports events, essay competitions and Russian language competitions. And he is also very successful in his studies – his annual grades have always been straight As.

Maria Rein studies in the 8th grade of Hilarius School, Tallinn, according to the corresponding curricula. She has Down's syndrome and began taking swimming classes at the age of 8. To date, Maria has developed her swimming skills to a level that allows her to take part in competitions outside Estonia. Over the last couple of years, Maria has taken part in all the swimming competitions for athletes with special needs. Her main goal for 2015 is to take part in the European championship for swimmers with Down's syndrome in Italy.

Additional information about the award is available from: <http://bit.ly/f9VyrH>

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