

Today in Kadriorg, Evelin Ilves presented 1,000 EUR Young Athlete's prizes to Rebeca Lotta Aasmäe, for her achievements in judo, skiing and track and field, Tanel Paabo, who is skilled in karate training and track and field athlete Jorgen Liiv.

When handing over the awards today, Evelin Ilves said that we all need role models and these fine young people are certainly good examples for their peers. "However, this is not just a joy, but also a duty, as they need to become better and better. I do hope that today's three young athletes will take this challenge," Evelin Ilves told.

Evelin Ilves admitted that every year it is getting more and more difficult to go through all the applications submitted for the Young Athlete's award, as the level of candidates becomes higher every year. "We do not just focus on athletic achievements but also on the applicant's academic performance. Making choices is becoming increasingly hard, as the number of young people with titles from championships and excellent grades grows every year," she added.

The Young Athlete's Prize of the First Lady's Foundation's of the President of the Republic's Cultural Foundation is intended to acknowledge young, under-21-year-olds with very good academic achievements. The prize is to cover training and competition costs. The Young Athlete's Prize is financed by Nordea Bank and is awarded twice a year – in April and November.

"The time of the year when we acknowledge outstanding young athletes makes us think, gives energy and inspires. It is amazing how many young people we can find in Estonia who are committed to achieving high goals in sports, while demonstrating excellent academic results. Nordea is sincerely happy with the opportunity to support the realisation of big dreams and we firmly believe that these fine young people have the potential to be at the pinnacle of sports in the future," commented the CEO of Nordea Bank, Vahur Kraft, as he handed over the prizes.

Rebeca Lotta Aasmäe (born 2000) is involved in judo with Taifu Sports Club, Viljandi. Rebeca Lotta is a highly varied young athlete, who has been successful in judo, skiing and track and field. Despite her intense training schedule, she has also achieved excellent academic results. She started with judo at the age of seven and achieved 2nd place in her very first competition. In 2010, Rebeca Lotta was elected as the first young athlete of Taifu Sports Club and in May 2011, she won the title of Estonian Champion of athletes up to 40 kg.

She has been skiing since she was a young child and started to attend competitions in 2010, at which she quickly achieved good results. Rebeca Lotta is studying in the 5th

class of Carl Robert Jakobson Gymnasium, Viljandi; music is also one of her hobbies – she is learning to play a violin and flute and sings in a choir. Rebeca Lotta will use her Young Athlete's Prize to cover some of her competition expenses and to buy necessary sports supplies.

Tanel Paabo (born 1996) is involved in karate as sports in Budo Sports Club, Tallinn. Tanel Paabo started with karate trainings in 2006 in Kuusalu Sports Club IVL and is currently a 9th

grade student in Kuusalu High School. After having changed sports club in 2008, he has shown the willpower and commitment to attend training in Tallinn six times a week, for which he has achieved remarkable results in a short period of time while maintaining excellent academic results. Tanel was Estonian youth champion in karate (kumite) in 2009 and 2010; he is also double Finnish champion and won the title of European Champion in Shotokan karate in 2011. He has also finished in high places in a number of international championships. Tanel will use his award to cover his competition expenses.

Jorgen Liiv (born 1990) is a highly committed and persistent hearing impaired track and field athlete. Jorgen has been involved in track and field since 2001. He joined the Estonian Sports Association of the Deaf and Talkur sports club in 2009, getting the opportunity to train and compete with athletes with similar special needs. He won first place in the championship of the Estonian Sports Association of the Deaf in 2010; he has also secured high places in other Estonian track and field competitions and represented Estonia in the European Championships for the Deaf. Jorgen is severely hearing impaired, but he still graduated from a regular class in Pirita Economic Gymnasium with excellent academic colours and is currently studying applied architecture in Tallinn University of Applied Sciences. Jorgen will use the award for training and to participate in international championships.

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