

The charity project "Aitan lapsi" (Helping Children), which was launched a year ago, has helped 12,587 children from underprivileged families see different plays staged by Estonian theatres through donations raised by more than 60,000 people.

"I am very pleased that people have taken to this initiative – my heartfelt thanks to all the donors throughout Estonia," told Mrs. Evelin Ilves, who is a patron of the "Aitan lapsi" (Helping Children) charity project.

Evelin Ilves admitted that apart from food, clothing and medical assistance, underprivileged children also seek positive emotions and cultural experiences; however, these are the first things that families with little disposable income surrender due to the costs involved. "Donors and theatres were given a chance to do something good within the framework of the campaign – to offer children an unforgettable emotion, as this year's visit to the theatre was the very first for many children," Evelin Ilves added.

According to the Chairman of the Executive Board of the Aitan Lapsi (Helping Children) Charity Foundation, the charity project will continue with similar activities. "A year ago, we set the goal to take 10,000 children to the theatre; today we want to reach every underprivileged child through our donors and give them a visit to the theatre," commented Aschjem.

The largest number of children from underprivileged families have attended performances at the Estonian State Puppet and Youth Theatre (2,693 attendances), Russian Drama Theatre (2,300), Vanemuine Theatre (1,934) and Rakvere Theatre (1,677). The runners-up are the Estonian Drama Theatre (1,100), Ugala (1,024), VAT Theatre (846), Endla Theatre (816), Kuressaare City Theatre (176) and NO 99 (21). The total amount of donations raised with reverse vending machines amounted to 59,340 euros; at county level, donations have mostly been made in Harju and Tartu counties and in Western and Eastern Virumaa.

Donations to buy theatre tickets for children can be made throughout Estonia from reverse vending machines, which are fitted with an additional automated button. Benefactors do not have to transfer any funds; it is sufficient to take empty bottles to the reverse vending machines and push the button. Rimi, Selver, ETK Maksimarket, Stockmann, Kaubamaja and Grossi Toidukaubad are the largest retail chains to have joined the project.

Applications for visiting plays performed by Estonian theatres have been submitted since October of last year. The application form is available from the website of the Estonian Association of Performing Arts Institutions ( [www.eeteal.ee](http://www.eeteal.ee) ) under the "Aitan lapsi" (Helping Children) section, and this must be submitted to theatres, indicating the name and performance time of the children's play. Applications can be filed, above all, by social workers of county governments, towns and rural municipalities, schools, kindergartens, orphanages and other organisations that represent underprivileged children; however, applications are also received from natural persons.

The application form can be communicated to theatres by e-mail, signed digitally, or as a signed paper version by regular mail. The contact persons of theatres can be found in the list displayed on the website of the Estonian Association of Performing Arts Institutions. Individuals under the age of 18 years are considered as children.

The Aitan Lapsi (Helping Children) Charity Foundation, Mrs. Evelin Ilves and 17 theatres from the Estonian Association of Performing Arts Institutions launched an extensive charity campaign called "Aitan lapsi" (Helping Children) in May of last year to offer children from underprivileged families cultural experiences; the first donation was made on 18 May last year in Kadriorg by Evelin Ilves. On 12 October, a donation was also made, within the framework of an event that took place at Town Hall Square, by the Prime Minister of Norway, who was on a visit to Tallinn.

In total, 17 performing arts institutions have joined the "Aitan lapsi" charity campaigns – Estonian Drama Theatre, Foundation Estonian Theatre Festival, Emajõe Summer Theatre, Endla, Kanut Guild Hall, Kuressaare City Theatre, NO99, Estonian Puppet and Youth Theatre, R.A.A.A.M., Rakvere Theatre, Tallinn City Theatre, Old Baskin's Theatre, Vanemuine Theatre, Russian Drama Theatre, VAT Theatre, the Von Krahl Theatre and Ugala.

The charity campaign is supported by Eesti Pandipakend, Tomra Baltic, Tschudi Shipping Company, Norwegian-Estonian Chamber of Commerce, Statoil Estonia, DNB Pank, Europark, Bauer Veetehnika and Marienthal Centre.

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## **Donations helped more than 12,500 children go to the theatre**

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