

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves initiated the founding of the Institute, also known as the Estonian Memory Institute, in 2008. The aim of this organization is to give the Estonian public a thorough and objective overview of the human rights situation in Estonia under Soviet occupation.

The Institute's work is coordinated by an international board of experts whose members are considered authorities in the field of European history and the history of political repression and human rights.

The Institute is not a legal protection body or a court. The Institute's findings do not have a legal bearing. Instead, the goal of the Institute is to establish the events and factors that constitute violations of human rights in the given period. It is planned to create a trustworthy and authoritative collection of data that will broaden understanding of processes in Soviet Estonia and their implications for Estonian society and all of Central and Eastern Europe since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is the result of the Institute's research and likewise represents a contribution to international discourse on this subject.