

Biography

Toomas Hendrik Ilves was born on December 26, 1953, to an Estonian refugee family living in Stockholm, Sweden. He was educated in the United States, receiving a degree from Columbia University in 1976 and a master's degree in psychology from the University of Pennsylvania in 1978.

In 1984 he moved to Munich, Germany, to work at the office of Radio Free Europe, first as a researcher and foreign policy analyst and later as the head of the Estonian Service.

From 1993 to 1996 Ilves served in Washington as the ambassador of the Republic of Estonia to the United States and Canada. During this time, he launched the Tiger Leap Initiative to computerize and connect all Estonian schools online with Education Minister Jaak Aaviksoo. He then served as minister of foreign affairs from 1996 to 1998. After a brief period as chairman of the North Atlantic Institute in 1998, he was again appointed minister of foreign affairs, serving until 2002.

From 2002 to 2004, Ilves was a member of the Estonian Parliament and in 2004 he was elected a member of the European Parliament, where he served as vice-president of the Foreign Affairs Committee. As a MEP, he initiated the Baltic Sea Strategy that was later implemented as official regional policy of the European Union.

Ilves was elected president of the Republic of Estonia in 2006. Ilves was re-elected for a second term in office in 2011.

During his presidency, Ilves has been appointed to serve in several high positions in the field of ICT in the European Union. He served as chairman of the EU Task Force on e-Health from 2011 to 2012 and served as chairman of the European Cloud Partnership Steering Board at the invitation of the European Commission from 2012 to 2014. In 2013 he chaired the High-Level Panel on Global Internet Cooperation and Governance Mechanisms convened by ICANN. From 2014 to 2015 Ilves served as the co-chair of the advisory panel of the World Bank's World Development Report 2016 "Digital Dividends" and was also the chair of World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Cyber Security beginning in June 2014. Starting from 2016, Ilves co-chairs The World Economic Forum working group The Global Futures Council on Blockchain Technology. In 2017 he joined Stanford University as a Bernard and Susan Liautaud Visiting Fellow at the Center for International Security and Cooperation in the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies.

President Ilves has published many essays and articles in Estonian and English on numerous topics ranging from Estonian language, history, and literature to global foreign and security policy and cyber security. His books include essay collections in Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, Hungarian, and Russian.

International awards:

- 2013 NDI Democracy Award by the National Democratic Institute
- 2014 Freedom Award by the Atlantic Council
- 2015 Aspen Prague Award by the Aspen Institute
- 2016 Knight of Freedom Award by the Casimir Pulaski Foundation
- 2017 John Jay Award by Columbia College
- 2017 Reinhard Mohn Prize by Bertelsmann Stiftung