

Address of the President of Latvia, Egils Levits, at the highest state awards ceremony 20 August 2021

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Dear recipients, ladies and gentlemen,

The mottos of the highest Latvian state awards are concise and meaningful: *Per aspera ad astra* (*Through the Thorns to the Stars*), *Confortamini et pugnate* (*Be Strong and Fight*) and *Pour les honnêtes gens* (*For Decent People*). And you, dear recipients, are a true representation of values that stand behind these mottos. You have worked hard to make the life of fellow Latvians and our society as a whole better.

State relies on the national aspirations and commitment of its people. Each of us and each of our generations have to face the test, challenges and opportunities of the time. But it is our choice and our actions here and now that mark and make a difference in the face of the anonymous flow of time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we are honouring exceptional personalities in our culture. Art is a way to explore yourself and time you live in. But it is not the only way.

The purpose and meaning of the national statehood of Latvia is to guarantee the existence of the Latvian nation throughout the centuries. It is the bounding element, which underpinned the development of our nation, language and culture. It continues to determine them today, and will continue to determine them in future. It shapes the national identity of Latvia, which sets us apart from 190 other countries in the world. Culture and language are the core elements of our state. I want to thank everyone in this room and everyone working in our culture sector for professional and creative contribution to this very important goal for our

nation.

Today's recipients include outstanding journalists. Healthy democracy in Latvia hinges upon lively exchange of ideas and thoughts in the society. Constant, sometimes heated public debates can guide us to best solutions and illuminate deadlocks that we should avoid.

Professional journalism requires one to be able to find absurdities, hence their role in public discourse is immense. Without them there will be no efficient, well-functioning democracy. Professional and ethical reporting is therefore one of the preconditions of a well-functioning democracy.

Thank you for everything you have done. I hope you will never lose your wits and sharp and critical mind.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's recipients of the highest state awards include civil servants whose work on behalf of the newly independent Latvia has strengthened the foundation of our nation. They have helped restore Latvia's diplomatic and consular service. We are grateful to them for contributing to stronger civic society through their ideas and deeds.

We thank officers of the State Police, Border Guard, State Fire and Rescue Service, National Armed Forces for ensuring security of Latvia and its people.

We thank the members of the national resistance movement and those who continue to keep the memory of national resistance movement alive today.

We thank on behalf of Latvia our healthcare workers, education and science workers, municipal employees for their work, creativity, energy and courage.

I hope today's state honours will keep you motivated to achieve new professional heights!

Dear recipients,

Thank you for your professional and civic engagement, which has made a huge difference for the people and the state of Latvia.

Thank you to each of you and all of you together for what you have done!

Dear ladies, gentlemen and TV viewers,

I want to thank everyone whose professional and civic engagement has made Latvia better. I hope you will never lose this dedication. Thank you.

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