

Address of the First Lady, Andra Levite, at the closing workshop of Riga TechGirls initiative 'Get to know technology'

Published more than 3 years ago

Published: 28.10.2021.



Good evening, dear mentors and mentees of 'Get to know technology' initiative,

I feel elevated and deeply grateful every time I am summoned to make an opening or a closing speech at one of your programmes.

This feeling of joy and appreciation is inspired by your benevolence and drive to help build a healthier society.

You demonstrate solidarity.

One of your programmes, 'Get to know technology', is closing today. This was the second edition of the programme. You have mastered IT skills that you will now share with girls and women, boys and men all over Latvia.

At an age when many have become self-centred, you have found strength, time and desire to share your knowledge with others. No one can build their life without support and help of others. All of us depend on each other.

You seek new knowledge.

IT is a relatively new field of science, but it grows extremely fast and has penetrated almost every aspect of our everyday life. Computer science helps us with more precise predictions about the spread of virus and faster development of medicines, new types of vaccines, for overcoming public health threats faced by people around the world and in Latvia today. IT skills are a vital everyday knowledge in a contemporary society.

Science is exciting and also subdued. It is complicated. Science requires effort and time; you cannot just skim the surface for one day or read one study. Science is a calling. Without it there would be no discoveries that have and continue to make our lives better. You, my dear *Riga TechGirls*, have found excitement in exploring the depths of IT science, learning about IT trends elsewhere in the world and sharing this knowledge with Latvia. This crisis has clearly shown that our society depends on education, including fundamental science and ground-breaking innovation.

You have empathy.

Every day we must make numerous decisions, perform multitude of tasks and complete various responsibilities. Often we have neither the time nor energy to engage or profoundly explore other areas beyond everyday chores, although we do know and crave new horizons for ourselves.

You, dear *Riga TechGirls*, continuously compile and share news and knowledge about IT innovations, speaking a language, which everyone understands and likes. As you are closing one of your programmes today, you are already talking about the next steps.

For example, there is the “She goes tech” programme, another hackathon in 2022, “Google impact challenge” programme is also in the works. The magnitude of your impact and your resourcefulness is truly admirable.

That is how we educate people in a modern society that appreciates science in all the different fields. Society that follows scientific discoveries around the world and translates them in a language suitable for everyone, the laymen.

I would like to conclude with an idea for a future project that you might find interesting to explore. On 20 September, while visiting New York, I met with Pramila Patten, the then UN Under-Secretary-General and officer-in-charge of UN Women, and we discussed your incredible initiative, which has opened the IT world for women and girls all over Latvia.

She was really excited about you programmes. As the head of the UN department responsible for “Sexual violence in crisis”, she takes great interest in the fate of Afghani women and girls who are currently in a very precarious situation. She emphasised that digital training and remote learning would be a real blessing for those girls.

I wish you sound health and clear mind. Thank you very much for everything you have done to make us smarter as a society.

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