

Address to the XXV FIDE Congress in Tallinn
Märt Rask, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

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Honourable President of the Estonian Republic,
madam Vice-President of the European Commission Reding,
esteemed Minister of Justice,
very honourable colleagues Professor Skouris and Mr Tulkens,
dear President of FIDE, Professor Laffranque,
ladies and gentlemen!
good friends across Europe!

I would like to wish everyone participating in the Congress days full of fruitful exchange of ideas. It is a pleasure to acknowledge that the best representatives of European lawyers and jurists have gathered in Tallinn, the capital of small Estonia. Estonia and Estonian lawyers are honoured, 51 (fifty one) years after the founding of the International Federation for European Law, to be the first Eastern European state to organise this most important event for the Federation.

FIDE was established 51 (fifty one) years ago. The Republic of Estonia restored its independence 30 (thirty) years later. The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia was adopted 20 (twenty) years ago via a referendum. And it remains virtually unchanged to this day. Without the aid of international experts and the international legal community it would have been impossible to lay the foundation for Estonia's legal culture, to build up the legal order in a democratic state based on the rule of law. Estonia's legal culture is a tiny, yet integral, part of European legal culture.

In the life of a country, 20 (twenty) years is equivalent to the blink of an eye. However, this Congress gathered here today demonstrates that Estonia has – thanks to its openness – made its way, in a very short time, into the legal family holding fundamental European values, from which it is impossible to turn back or withdraw. Here, in this pavilion, have gathered more people than a standard conference hall can accommodate. This is a great source of recognition for a state that required help and support at the beginning of the 1990s, and which is seen as

an equal dialogue partner in the 21st century. Membership in the international community, the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as in FIDE, in a sense, requires giving up a sliver of independence. The longed for seat at the round table does give the right – alongside the big countries – to direct the formulation of joint decisions. But it does not mean forcing our will and viewpoints on others. Communication and dialog are important! I agree with Professor Leonard Besselink, General Rapporteur of the first topic of today's Congress that, when it comes to the protection of fundamental rights, Europe is comprised of legal orders that are mutually dependent and intertwined with each other. Estonia's contribution to a common European legal culture is certainly not comparable to the contribution made by large countries, but it is proportional, no doubt.

I am sure that the next three days offer you the best possible discussions and new ideas, all covered in an international sauce seasoned with Estonian spices. I do hope that each of you is able to find at least one aphorism from the Congress and its compendium, which will remain in your memories to mark early summer 2012 (two thousand and twelve) in the Hanseatic city of Tallinn.