

Welcoming Speech  
Raivo Palmaru  
Estonian Minister of Culture

It is both a great honour and a pleasure for me to be able to welcome you on the occasion of Culturescapes 2006! As the Estonian patron of the organizers I should like to offer my warmest thanks to all participants, partners and sponsors for the excellent idea of making Estonia the focus of this year's festival!

Estonia has been independent again for fifteen years. But how well does "old Europe" really know its new members? Those who work in the arts, with their creativity and creative genius are a country's best ambassadors. With their cultural work they build bridges between nations.

This festival offers a very special opportunity to present Estonia and the Estonians in Switzerland, and to develop further forms of cooperation between the artists of the two countries. The festival is making an enormous contribution to a deepened acquaintance and offers both sides the possibility of discovering and furthering new sides and aspects of the other's culture and traditions.

Estonia is especially well known as a land of music, and the Estonians also like to think of themselves a "singing folk". Aficionados of music will have ample opportunity to experience and enjoy Estonian music in all its diversity during Culturescapes. We are especially proud that our choral music will be presented by Estonia's most famous choir - the Philharmonic Chamber Choir.

Estonia is a small country, it is true, but the range of its cultural offerings is wide. I hope that the visitors to this festival will soon think of and appreciate Estonia not just a country of music, but also as a home to art, literature, film and theatre as well.

I wish all the participants interesting encounters and hope that I shall be able to welcome you all as guests to Estonia!