

U.S.-Educated Estonian President Re-Elected

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Estonian parliamentary election officials counting ballots on Monday. **Ints Kalnins**

TALLINN, Estonia — Former U.S. citizen Toomas Hendrik Ilves was easily re-elected president of Estonia in a parliamentary vote Monday, providing further political stability in the euro-zone nation.

☒ Ilves, 57, was born in Stockholm to a family of Estonian exiles while the country was part of the Soviet Union, and was brought up in the United States. He gave up his U.S. citizenship before becoming Estonia's ambassador to Washington in 1993.

☒ "I am ready to serve the Estonian state and all the people who live in Estonia, regardless of their world view and their mother tongue," he said in a thank-you speech before parliament, referring to the Baltic state's large Russian-speaking minority. ☒

Ilves has sought to be inclusive of ethnic Russians but has spoken out against the eastern neighbor. ☒ In a radio debate earlier this month, he said Russia could not be considered a country governed by the rule of law and criticized its lack of press freedom. ☒

Lawmakers in the 101-seat house elected Ilves to a second five-year term by 73 votes to 25 for his sole challenger, Indrek Tarand.

Although the position is largely ceremonial, the re-election adds to the country's push to be seen as a stable and reliable international partner.

The center-right government led by Prime Minister Andrus Ansip also won re-election in March. The country has the lowest debt levels in the euro zone and is recovering from a 2009 recession, when output dropped 14 percent.

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