

(Reporting by David Mardiste, Editing by Mark Trevelyan)

Former U.S. citizen Toomas Hendrik Ilves was easily re-elected president of Estonia in a vote in parliament on 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 in 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 not been afraid to speak his mind about Russia, while maintaining cordial relations with Moscow.

In a radio debate earlier this month, he said that Russia could not be considered as a country governed by the rule of law and criticized its lack of press freedom.

Parliamentarians 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.

The president can initiate and reject legislation, but any rejection must be upheld by the Supreme Court.

The president also calls elections on the prime minister's proposal and nominates a prime ministerial candidate after elections or following the dissolution of a government.

He can sack a prime minister if that minister loses a confidence vote in parliament.

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