



Country Issue: Italy



The Relaunch of Europe

Mapping Member States' Reform Interests

Europa

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Institut für Europäische Politik (Institute for European Politics, IEP) is one of the leading foreign and European policy research centres in the Federal Republic of Germany dedicated to the study of European integration.

Further information on the project can be found here:

www.relaunch-europe.eu

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THE RELAUNCH OF EUROPE

MAPPING MEMBER STATES' REFORM INTERESTS

The Relaunch of Europe. Mapping Member States' Reform Interests (RelaunchEU) is a project conducted by the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) on behalf of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) that surveys the implementation prospects for twelve concrete reform proposals. It covers the policy areas of Social Union, Economic and Monetary Union and Defence Union as well as asylum and migration policy and the EU's institutional set-up. Furthermore, it analyses the support for flexible integration and the positioning towards the five scenarios presented in the European Commission's »White Paper on the Future of Europe« of spring 2017. It covers the positions of national governments and of relevant progressive political parties, which received a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the previous European or national elections.¹

The study follows two main objectives: (1) It demonstrates the scope of action for prompt reforms of the EU in the selected policy areas while also taking into account which member states would, under certain conditions, be willing to implement the specific proposals. (2) It empirically determines which member states could belong to an avant-garde group willing to deepen integration.

Researchers from think tanks and research institutions in the member states of the EU-27 compiled information to determine the position of governments and progressive political parties towards the twelve reform proposals. This qualitative analysis reflects the country experts' views and is based on documents such as coalition agreements, government or party programmes, position papers, press releases, interviews, op-ed pieces, and official documents. It presents a snapshot of the discussions within the governments and parties. In order to keep the country issues short, internal debates and deviating opinions cannot be covered in detail. Positions are subject to change, especially following elections and the formation of new governments. The snapshot was taken at the end of September 2017. More recent developments could not be included. Notable exceptions are the country issues of Austria and Germany, which were updated following the latest coalition negotiations.

The study's results are published in English on the website www.relaunch-europe.eu. It presents maps for every actor and reform proposal, 27 country issues and an analytical paper. The paper compares the positions of all actors in all member states of the EU-27 on the twelve concrete reform proposals and presents five flagship-projects, which bear the chance for a relaunch of Europe.

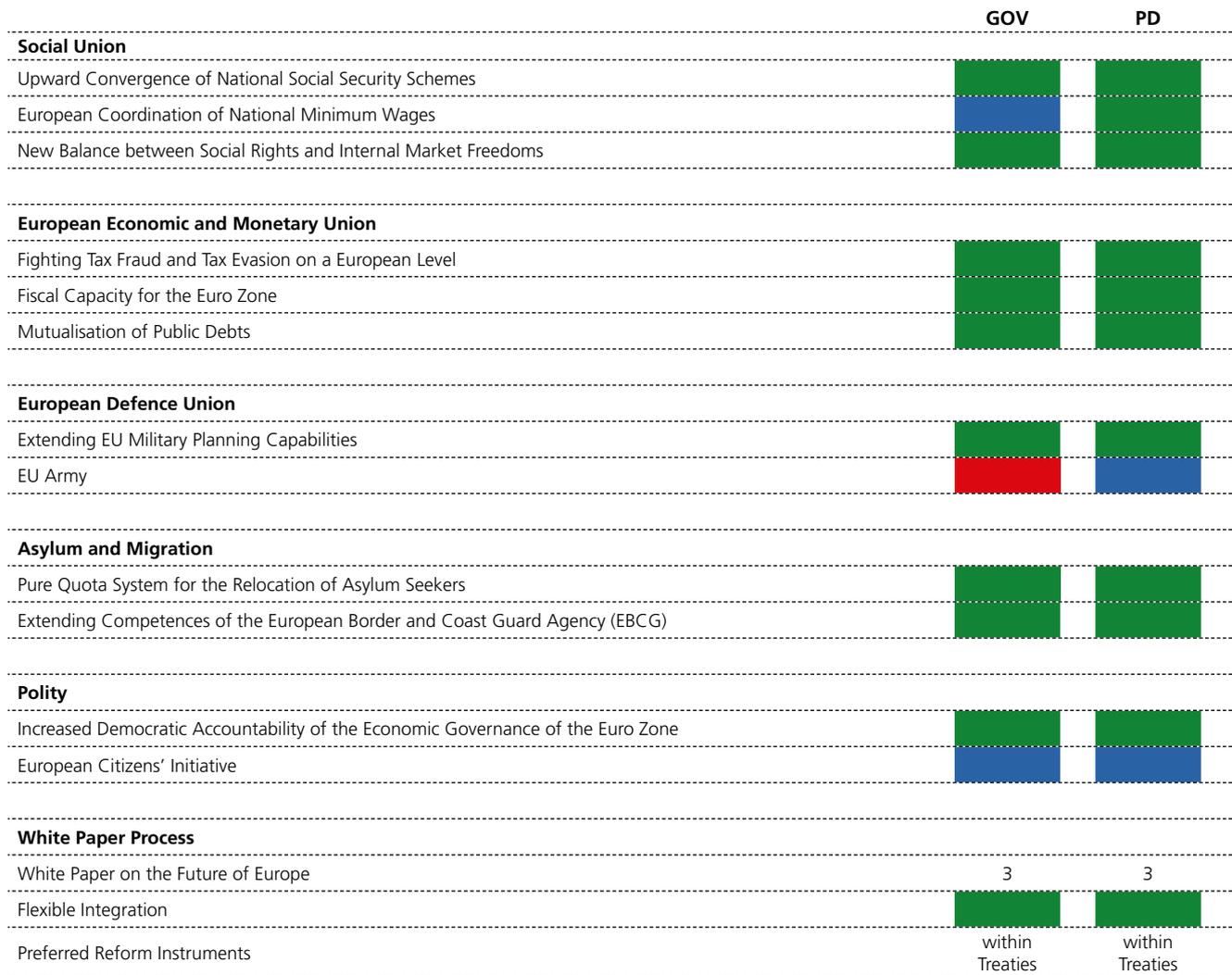
¹ If a party fulfills this criterion, but is not a relevant actor in the national public debate anymore, it was deleted from the sample based on the judgement of the projects' country expert.

ITALY

In the 2013 general elections, an electoral coalition led by the *Partito Democratico* (PD), four smaller progressive parties and six regional parties, received 29.54 % of the votes. Subsequently, the PD formed a grand coalition with centrist

and centre-right parties. The coalition's leadership and composition has since changed thrice: The Prime Minister (PD) was replaced twice and each successor reformed their cabinet.

Support of the Italian government and the PD for Deepening EU Integration



Legend

- support for
 - support under conditions
 - against
 - neutral
- GOV** National Government
- PD** Partito Democratico
- 1 – Scenario 1: »Carrying on«
 - 2 – Scenario 2: »Nothing but the single market«
 - 3 – Scenario 3: »Those who want more do more«
 - 4 – Scenario 4: »Doing less more efficiently«
 - 5 – Scenario 5: »Doing much more together«

SOCIAL UNION

The Italian government and the PD are in favour of **upward convergence of national social security schemes** even by adopting European minimum standards. The goal is to address social inequalities rather than concentrating only on budgetary rules, which are believed to be an obstacle for national economic growth. For the PD, an EU-wide harmonisation of standards is not yet realistic due to diverging economic performances and national institutions. Nevertheless, increased coordination is believed to lead to a harmonisation of diverse national systems, but a lowering of social standards is rejected. According to the government and the PD, the EU should develop a social security pillar to increase coordination or even enforce direct measures aimed at fighting extreme poverty such as an unemployment insurance scheme, a European pension scheme or a youth guarantee. These initiatives could be financed with resources currently spent on national benefits, which would be partly pooled in a common unemployment or pension fund. Both the government and the PD ask for minimum standards on social security schemes to be applied in all EU states. However, the PD considers it more realistic to first increase coordination among euro zone countries. Nevertheless, all other member states would be free to join. The government has no specific position on a **European coordination of national minimum wages**. The PD however supports introducing an Italian minimum wage, as there are currently only sectoral minimum wages coordinated by the unions. Thus, forms of coordination at EU level in order to avoid social dumping and unfair wage competition could be fostered afterwards. Although the PD considers full EU harmonisation unrealistic in the upcoming years, it is generally in favour of minimum wage schemes that would become mandatory in the future, ensuring minimum wages of at least 60 % of the national average in each member state. According to the government and the PD, the EU should introduce a **new balance between social rights and internal market freedoms**, but there is no need to add a social progress protocol to the treaties, to transfer common market rules from EU primary to secondary law, or to introduce limits to the application of the four freedoms. Those actions are not believed to be effective until the EU shifts its focus from budgetary policies towards preserving and enforcing social policies on the national level.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

Since the level of tax evasion and the subsequent loss for the national budget are quite high in Italy, the government and the PD agree on **fighting tax fraud and tax evasion on a European level**, e. g. by increasing transparency rules for multinational companies, banning letterbox companies, and promoting a so-called »web tax«. The latter would force digital multinationals to pay taxes where they deliver services instead of where their headquarters are located. According to the PD, introducing a common consolidated corporate tax

base (CCCTB) at EU level is necessary to avoid destructive tax competition. Agreements on a CCCTB should be reached within the euro zone, the EU as well as with bordering non-EU countries. The government and PD both support the creation of a **fiscal capacity for the euro zone** to adjust asymmetric shocks as well as to support social and economic convergence. The government would like the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) to be equipped with a fiscal capacity in the long run, promoting investments and an EU-wide unemployment scheme. According to the PD, the EMU is incomplete and thus vulnerable. Therefore, the banking union needs to be completed and more effective fiscal coordination introduced. The PD also supports the idea of a »rainy day fund«. However, the EU should first create a fiscal capacity to finance an investment fund, boost economic growth and fight unemployment. Both actors demand that a fiscal capacity should be part of the future EU budget to avoid further intergovernmental agreements. There is a broad support for the **mutualisation of public debts**, e. g. by implementing the so-called Eurobonds. Although both are cautious about the potential loss of national budgetary control this could imply, the PD and the government would most likely accept it. However, they are also aware that the mutualisation of debts is an aim to be achieved in the long-run as it is rather unlikely that member states with low public debts will accept transferring other members' debts onto their taxpayers. Therefore, the former PD Prime Minister advocated a step-by-step mutualisation of public debts, starting with member states registering a range of primary surplus not higher than 1 %, who could opt for mutualising a share of their public debt equal to that amount.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE UNION

As the EU faces substantial security threats, the Italian government and the PD deem more security and defence cooperation essential. In light of national defence budget cuts and the potential loss of British military capabilities, more cooperation among the member states could help to maintain the EU's military capability and represents a political priority of the government. For this reason, both actors support **extending EU military planning capabilities** and the establishment of independent EU headquarters. Thus, the Italian government proposed to strengthen the EU's military capabilities by using the existing provisions of the treaties, e. g. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Moreover, it calls for launching a European Defence Union based on a Schengen-like defence agreement. In its initial phase, a small group of countries could pursue the Defence Union, including the founding members of the EU, which is, however, open to all member states wishing to join later. However, more EU defence cooperation would have to remain committed to NATO and should not duplicate its structures. Furthermore, both agree it should not be extended to non-EU member states and would have to be financed by the member states. Nevertheless, the government's proposal does not include the creation of an **EU army**, which the government is opposed to, while the

PD is indecisive. Instead, a multinational European force could be established, endowed with a command and control structure, common decision-making, and budgetary mechanisms. The multinational European force could be deployed for military missions of EU, NATO and UN.

ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

Both actors agree on the need to reform the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) that aims at overcoming the Dublin system, as its regulation is already inapplicable in light of the extraordinary situation which occurred in Italy in 2016, when 181,436 arrivals were registered, 15–20 % more than in 2015. From the Italian point of view, the Council's emergency decision of 2015 has also been inadequate so far. As of June 2017, only 7,045 asylum seekers from Italy have been resettled. Nevertheless, solidarity should not be flexible and responsibilities must be shared fairly among member states. Thus, both actors support a **pure quota system for the relocation of asylum seekers** based on national GDP as well as on the number of asylum seekers already accepted in a country. The EU should financially support member states with a higher number of asylum seekers per capita. Sanctions for countries not willing to participate must be established. In line with the action plans adopted at the 2015 Summit of Valletta and the Paris meeting on migration in August 2017, Italy supports a high degree of coordination between countries of origin, transit and destination in order to share responsibility. Generally, the government and the PD back the idea of a »Migration Compact«, which would primarily aim at reducing economic migration. Accordingly, the EU should promote common bilateral agreements with countries of origin, finance measures aimed at local or regional economic development, and establish a number of working visa for migrants. The government and the PD agree with **extending competences of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)**. It should develop a plan for joint EU operations, particularly return and rescue missions, to be financed with the EU budget. Thus, they support further integration of the Schengen area's external borders, as negative economic trends, climate change, poverty and unemployment are long-lasting phenomena which have been jeopardising regional stability in the Middle East and North Africa as well as solidarity within the EU. According to the government, action is needed in order to foster common European security.

POLITY

Neither the government, nor the PD has published a detailed position on an **increased democratic accountability of the economic governance of the euro zone**. However, both actors support introducing a European Finance Minister who would lead the Eurogroup and have a strong link with the European Parliament. Generally, the EU should become more democratic as a whole. For instance, the PD proposes that the President of the European Commission is directly elected in order to make the Commission accountable to

the European citizens. Although the PD does not oppose the idea of providing citizens with room for legislative initiatives, there is no debate on the **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)**. Since the Five Star Movement is campaigning for instruments of direct democracy in Italy, it is feared that a public debate on the ECI could be used to demand more direct democracy on the national level.

WHITE PAPER PROCESS

According to the PD-led government, scenario three »those who want more do more« of the **»White Paper on the Future of Europe«** is already a reality. Even though the PD would ideally prefer scenario 5 »doing much more together« it does not regard this scenario as feasible given the current state of the EU. Therefore, the government supports scenario 3 and thus also the concept of **flexible integration**, as this appears to be the best possible compromise attainable at the moment and a standstill in the integration process is the least desirable option for Italy. However, this endorsement of scenario 3 is not without restrictions: The PD fears that once the mode of flexible integration is consolidated, the functioning of the EU's institutions and the EU's democratic accountability will be endangered. Therefore, differentiated integration should only be considered as a temporary option and not lead to an EU core versus its periphery or a Europe à la carte. The PD would prefer to advance within the treaties.

Legend

Actors Covered by the Study in each EU Member State

- *National Government*: including its members from one or more political parties, the Head of State or Government, relevant executive ministers and administration.
- *Progressive Parties*: They include all parties that are represented either in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) or that are members of the Party of European Socialists (PES) and have gained a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the last national or European elections. They also include La République en Marche (REM) in France.

Concrete Reform Options in Different Policy Areas

Social Union

1. *Upward Convergence of National Social Security Schemes* to provide Europe-wide protection against social risks and to ensure a decent standard of living for EU citizens.
2. *European Coordination of National Minimum Wages* to ensure a decent income within the EU to prevent in-work poverty, to promote social convergence and to avoid social dumping across the EU.
3. *New Balance of Social Rights and Internal Market Freedoms* to compensate the current precedence of internal market freedoms over national social rights.

European Economic and Monetary Union

4. *Fighting Tax Fraud and Tax Evasion on a European Level* for a fair allocation of tax burdens among natural and judicial persons.
5. *Fiscal Capacity for the Euro Zone* to provide stabilisation against economic shocks through public expenditure in the euro zone.
6. *Mutualisation of Public Debts* to tackle the problem of a sharp increase in public debts in some member states as a result of the euro zone crisis.

European Defence Union

7. *Extending EU Military Planning Capabilities* also for executive military missions and operations.
8. *EU Army* establishing a permanent multinational military force under European command.

Asylum and Migration

9. *Pure Quota System for the Relocation of Asylum Seekers* which would replace the Dublin system.
10. *More Competences for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)* expanding the current EBCG tasks in terms of »shared responsibility« between the EBCG and national authorities.

Polity

11. *Increase Democratic Accountability of the Economic Governance of the Euro Zone* to make its institutions more responsive to EU citizens.
12. *European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)*: revision of the ECI regulation to make the instrument more citizen-friendly and effective in order to strengthen the participative democracy in the EU.

White Paper Process

13. *The White Paper on the Future of Europe* by the European Commission presents five possible scenarios for the future course of European integration.
14. *Flexible Integration*: limiting the application of certain rules to certain EU member states.
15. *Preferred Reform Instrument*: Treaty reform, reforms inside or outside the Treaties.

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