

## Italian coalition spells trouble for Brussels

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Image: M5S Staff

Italy's new government was sworn in on 1 June, bringing an end to the political turmoil that immobilised the country since the general election in March. This government consists of a coalition between Italy's two populist parties: the Five-Star Movement and the League. Prior to this coalition, the country experienced months of uncertainty over its future.

The general election on 3 March saw the Five-Star Movement win 32 per cent of the vote and the League 18 per cent. These two parties later formed a coalition and proposed Giuseppe Conte for Prime Minister. However, President Mattarella rejected Conte's cabinet list on the grounds that Paolo Savona, Conte's choice for finance minister, is a Eurosceptic, leading to the temporary abandonment of the coalition. The government was finally established when Mattarella accepted Conte's revised cabinet.

The election of a populist government in the Eurozone's third largest economy represents another blow to Brussels. Italy's future in the Euro is uncertain. On the one hand, both parties are sceptical of the single currency, with the League's leader Matteo Salvini having argued that the Euro was "a mistake" for Italy. What is more, the fact that the Five-Star Movement has previously called for a referendum on EU membership has given rise to the belief that, as argued by Brexiteer Daniel Kawczynski, "this is the beginning of the end of the EU as we know it."

On the other hand, the new government claims to have moved away from this stance, now wanting to begin reforming the EU from within. Italy's economic minister, Giovanni Tria, assured Reuters that "there is no political force in Italy that wants to leave the euro," but notes that reforms are overdue.

The government is pursuing a number of policies that will reform the relationship between Italy and Europe. One of the main aims for both coalition parties is to erase the effects of the 2008 financial crisis. This will be done by guaranteeing a monthly income to families, an idea that has generated a lot of support, but one that will cost €17bn to implement. A response to Italy's debt crisis has also been presented, with both parties rejecting austerity and calling for a revision of the EU's Stability and Growth Pact, which has set a deficit limit of 3 per cent GDP.

A desire to revise EU policy is also manifesting itself in the government's aim to deport 500 000 undocumented migrants from Italy. It is demanding a change in EU policy to relocate asylum seekers in other European nations. It is also calling for greater cooperation with Russia to fight people smugglers in

the Mediterranean and end the conflict in the Middle East. The emergence of populist governments is changing the face of politics, with growing demands to reform the existing system and move against the establishment. Such events mean that, as European politics continue to change, the future of the EU becomes increasingly uncertain.



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