

REVIEW OF ITALY AND EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONSHIPS

Italy is one of the most important participants in the long and thorny building a Europe without borders and trade barriers and one of the oldest members of the Union, the founder of the establishing the European Economic Union. Italy is often regarded as a «ceremonial heart» of the EU, the place where key decisions were made almost every year. Besides, most of the important agreements were signed in Italy. With the deepening of European integration, the European Union has come to exert increasingly significant direct and indirect effects on the member states, reinforcing a well-established trend whose date back to the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957. The domestic impact of the EU is particularly important with reference to Italy, a country for which integration in Europe has represented a symbolic point of reference and a widely-used external lever for domestic institutional and policy changes. This process intensified during the run up to the Economic and Monetary Union, which required major domestic adjustments in Italy in order to meet the convergence criteria.

In 1995 at Messina, less than a year after the death of Alcide De Gasperi – one of the European community's founding fathers, along with Jean Monnet, Robert Schumann and Konrad Adenauer – a conference was held in Messina that lay the foundations for the Treaty of Rome. The six Foreign Ministers of the European Coal and Steel Community – Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg, decided to adopt economic integration as an instrument by which to create political union. The ministers agreed to the idea of a Common Market and approved the creation of a European Atomic Energy Community. In 2004 in Rome, was held the most significant event – EU Constitution was officially signed [1]. In addition, the Italian Parliament is the first Legislative power of EU member states, which approved the unified constitution in April 6, 2005. In cooperation with the EU Italy has never given up the idea of a politically united Europe, based on the principle of cooperation. The main reason of Italy's interest in the European Union and European integration is explained as the geographical location of the country and the specifics of the economy and national interests. Europe to Italy is instrument by using which, it can have an effect on those issues in which Italy is interested.

Under the influence of European integration, Italy has some changes. Mostly, experts point out to a beneficial effect on the economy of Italy. In addition there was a transformation of the party system «stagnation» polarized pluralism; the breakup of the old political foundations – changing the electoral legislation at all levels, changing almost all the entire political groups, the transformation in the relations between government and parliament; privatization and liberalization of the economy; reforms in key sectors such as social security, public finances, which allowed to join the currency union with the first group of countries.

The level of integration in the European Union of Italy is highly assessed. Italy, and especially its foreign trade, is directly dependent on the economic situation of leading countries of the European Union: Germany, France and United Kingdom. Besides, obvious advantage for tourists and Italians themselves is the introduction of a common visa in most European Union countries under the «Schengen» Agreement. Thus, Italy's leading trade partners are the European Union countries. They compose nearly 44% of imports and 48% of exports of Italy. The main contractors of Foreign Trade of Italy are the Federal Republic of Germany (16% of imports and 18% of exports), France (14 and 15%), USA (7 and 5%), the UK (4 and 7%) [2]. In addition, the success of Italy in European integration can be valued by the results of the Italian presidency of the EU in 2003. During the presidency in 2003, was held the work on the signing the EU Constitution, was achieved economic development, the expansion of the EU, diplomacy and security cooperation in the direction of Russia – Italy – EU. By the program's objectives in the EU Presidency, Italy coped pretty well.

Furthermore, Italy was elected as a president of the European Union from July in 2014 until December of the same year. Italian Presidency Priorities was the buzz title of many events, articles, and papers occurring those days (as before any presidency). The Italian first «priority» encompassed eight issues: the revival of the 2020 Strategy –with its governance issues to be tackled; the deepening of the monetary union –e.g. Italy doesn't hide its support of Monti's group on own resources; strengthening the competitiveness of the EU –and here Italy calls for a review of competition policy to favour EU industrial champions (with Alstom's case as possible precedent); the Youth Guarantee initiative; the achievement of the digital single market – the aim of a General Approach on the telecom package is no secret; an industrial «renaissance» -building on December 2013 Competitiveness Council con-

clusions; convergence towards a common EU position, in view of 2015 Paris negotiations for global binding climate 2030 objectives (UNFCCC).

The second priority, revolving around democracy and Italy, was divided into five points: the functioning of the European institutions; asylum right and immigration policy –crucial for Italians due to dramatic geographical exposure; external borders management –Italians would like to increase finances for Frontex; the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor's Office –on which the Parliament, the Council need to agree either unanimously or by enhanced cooperation; human rights.

As a third area, the global dimension includes the following chapters: immigration –agreements with third countries are seen by the Italians as a necessary solution; energy – Gozi often hinted the intention to «leverage» the Ukrainian crisis to (ambitiously) push for EU energy agreements with third countries; trade – the Presidency aims to advance all the several ongoing trade agreement negotiations without hiding that the most important, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Pact, won't be concluded but should be appreciated as decisive for growth and, as such, become unquestioned [3].

One of the priorities of Italy's EU presidency included the deepening of cooperation between EU Member States on security matters, asylum and immigration. Plans for the prevention of illegal immigration Berlusconi's center-right coalition to the presidency of Italy in the EU have been very ambitious. For example, Italy would like to solve the problem of illegal immigration by means of specific agreements.

A particularly important issue for the EU Berlusconi called the development of the European approach to asylum and immigration offenders. The purpose of the overall approach is not only needed to develop a common policy in these areas of joint action, but also to take common and effective strategy. Speaking now as chairman of the EU, Berlusconi encouraged to enter into negotiations with the Muslim countries of the southern Mediterranean, as the Italian government is concerned about the increase in illegal immigration.

Some EU member states have approved the initiative of Berlusconi. However, many EU institutions drew attention to the fact that many statements Berlusconi allies are racist. So, the message of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (Council of Europe, Organization), published in June 2001, noted the «League of the North» as «racist and xenophobic» and called on the Italian authorities to take «instant action against

those politicians who use militant racist speech or xenophobic. «In addition, not all of society in Italy and the EU is opposed to migrants, and therefore anti-immigration politician Berlusconi sparked protests by leftists. Italian initiative to combat illegal immigration continued after the expiry of the Italian presidency of the EU.

As it is already said, immigration policy was an area in which progress could be made under the Italian Presidency of the EU. In recent months, the Italian government had put great emphasis on the subject. A certain alignment on policy priorities and approaches seems to already exist between the Italian government and relevant EU institutions. The Italian Presidency's foreign policy focused on the Mediterranean region – portrayed as «the heart of Europe, not its border line» – may further strengthen the case for EU immigration policy reform. For Italy the most immediate goal was to enlist much-needed material and financial help from other EU Member States for its Mare Nostrum mission, which aims at managing the growing flows of migrants and refugees reaching Italian shores from instability-ridden Southern Mediterranean. This narrow goal, however, could be accompanied by a greater effort towards advancing a new EU migration agenda. Italy could promote this agenda with the support of EU institutions, leveraging on the need to review the so-called Stockholm Plan at the end of 2014 [4].

On an environmental level, the Italian Presidency had two big results: one very positive (the adoption of the Directive on the drastic limitation of plastic bags) the other less clear, on GMOs. The first was a project begun before the Presidency and completed through fantastic coordination with the European Parliament, and in particular Margrete Auken – Green MEP and rapporteur on the measure. Again, in the final lap the Italian Presidency has had to overcome the threat of the European Commission to withdraw the proposal

as an easy scalp to offer Eurosceptics and the usual industrial lobbies, and quickly organize a unanimous agreement by the Council and Parliament's support, to invoke the condition laid down in the Treaties that could prevent the Commission derailing the measure, without losing too much of the its substance.

On GMOs, negotiations between Parliament and Council reached an agreement that allows each country to prohibit the cultivation of GMOs, but the internal market will remain as the legal basis of the Directive, and not the environment as we hoped: it means that governments will not have the right to ban their cultivation on the evidence of environmental damage. Moreover, the procedure for the authorisation of new GMOs has been made a little easier. A decision like this is not without risks, and leads us down the path of the renationalisation of the management of GMOs.

As for file on the most important part of this semester – the decision on the energy and climate package for 2030 – the Italian Presidency played a very limited role and was not particularly visible. It was the European Council, and then-President Van Rompuy, who managed the dossier in person, and had to resist pressures from the European Council to reduce the role of the EU in decisions on major energy choices, as demanded by Cameron and supported by 'fossil' governments such as Poland. Italy stood apart from this battle, based on the grounds that the Presidency could not pick a side. The result has been a complete lack of public debate in Italy and no visibility of fundamental choices for our future – not to mention the main result, which was a very modest proposal; an agreement that can't go forward without further legislative measures nor an ambitious approach by the EU in the negotiations in COP21 in Paris, and no progress towards the exit from dependence on fossil for the European energy system [5].

References

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- 2 «Краткая история Италии», <http://tuttaitalia.ru/paese/storia/>, [10.11.2014].
- 3 Andrea Gentili «Italian Presidency: Priorities, Insights and Best Wishes», 16 June 2014 <http://www.europeanpublicaffairs.eu/>, 9 April 2015 | by Frank Markovic
- 4 Emiliano Alessandri, Nicole Koenig and Marco Siddi «Priorities and Challenges of the 2014 Italian EU Presidency». Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome, Italy (2014), P.34-38.
- 5 «The Italian presidency – what did Italy do or not do?» <http://europeangreens.eu/>, [19.12.2014].