

## Italy

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### Introduction

The year 2016 marked the end of Matteo Renzi's government, whose agenda of policy and constitutional reforms faced increasing opposition both in parliament and his own party. Italian politics were characterised by two national referendums, elections in major local administrations, and the recognition of same-sex unions by the parliament. Political debate was dominated by disputes over the electoral and constitutional reform, the crisis of the Italian banking system, immigration and measures to support citizens affected by earthquakes.

### Election report

#### *Referendum*

Two major referendums took place in Italy in 2016. The first popular consultation emerged from the initiative of ten regional governments proposing the abolition of a law that allowed the prolongation (until the exhaustion of the fields) of the concessions to extract hydrocarbon within 12 miles of the Italian coast. Government parties and Prime Minister Renzi had called on people to abstain, suggesting that the vote risked hurting the economy, whereas opposition parties and environmentalist organizations campaigned for the abolition of the law, arguing that the extension would slow Italy's transition to renewable energy. While more than 85 per cent of the votes cast were in favour of repealing the law, the referendum failed as the turnout was below the majority threshold required to validate the result.

The December referendum on the constitutional reform was certainly the most significant national poll of 2016 in Italy. Brought in by Renzi's government, it aimed at rebalancing the power of the regions by fundamentally restructuring the Senate's function and composition, and by bringing more policy areas under the control of central government. The amendments aimed at removing the symmetric bicameralism between the lower and upper houses on most policy areas (including the budget), and restricted the votes of confidence to the lower house alone. The reform also proposed a drastic dilution of the size of the Senate, from 315 directly elected members to 100 indirectly chosen ones.

The bill was crucial to the government programme. While originally supported by a broad majority, the reform lost the backing of Berlusconi's group in early 2015, thus failing to extend a consensus on the proposal beyond the limited borders of the government

Table 1. Results of the referendum on oil and natural gas drilling in Italy in 2016

Date of referendum	17 April 2016			
Electorate	50,681,765			
Total votes cast	15,806,488	Votes cast as share of electorate	31.2%	
Total valid votes	15,533,322	Valid votes as share of votes cast	98.3%	
Referendum question <sup>a</sup>	Valid answers	N	%	Outcome
Do you want that existing oil and gas production facilities within 12 miles of the coast to stop working at the end of their licences, even when the resources have not been fully exploited?	Yes	13,334,607	85.8%	Failed because turnout did not exceed 50%
	No	2,198,715	14.2%	

Note: <sup>a</sup>Do you wish to repeal Art. 6, paragraph 17, third period, of the legislative decree n. 152 (3 April 2006), 'Environmental Regulations', as replaced by paragraph 239 of Article 1 of the Law n.208 (28 December 2015), 'Measures for the preparation of the annual and multiannual budget of the State (2016 Stability Law)', in the following words: 'for the duration of the oil field, in compliance with safety standards and environmental protection'? / *Volete voi che sia abrogato l'art. 6, comma 17, terzo periodo, del decreto legislativo 3 aprile 2006, n. 152, 'Norme in materia ambientale', come sostituito dal comma 239 dell'art. 1 della legge 28 dicembre 2015, n. 208, 'Disposizioni per la formazione del bilancio annuale e pluriennale dello Stato (legge di stabilità 2016)'; limitatamente alle seguenti parole: 'per la durata di vita utile del giacimento, nel rispetto degli standard di sicurezza e di salvaguardia ambientale'?*

Source: Ministero dell'Interno (2017a).

majority. Next to opposition parties and experts holding that the reform violated formal procedural trajectories for constitutional change, some components of Renzi's own party felt bewildered by the process by which the reform was brought forward.

The public debate displayed strong Manichean traits, as supporters of the reform reproached the conservatism of the opposition, while the no camp accused the government of authoritarian leanings. Support for the bill was mainly framed in terms of legislative effectiveness and government stability. Opposition focused primarily on the lack of an effective balancing power to better offset government activity. In the attempt to secure the endorsement of the reform, Prime Minister Renzi announced that he would step down in case of a negative outcome. This choice further increased the plebiscitary dimension of the consultation, and it forced Renzi to tender his resignation after the clear victory of the no vote.

## Cabinet report

The Renzi I government in office on 1 January 2016 only suffered one major change during the year, as minister of Economic Development Federica Guidi (independent) was replaced by Carlo Calenda (PD) in May 2016, after she resigned her post over a conflict of interest allegation

On 7 December 2016, Matteo Renzi formally submitted his resignation as prime minister. Former Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni (PD) presented a new cabinet of 18 ministers,

Table 2. Results of the referendum on the constitutional reform in Italy in 2016

Date of referendum	4 December 2016			
Electorate	50,773,284			
Total votes cast	33,244,258	Votes cast as share of electorate	65.5%	
Total valid votes	32,852,112	Valid votes as share of votes cast	98.8%	
Referendum question <sup>a</sup>	Valid answers	N	%	Outcome
Do you approve the text of the Constitutional Law and the revision of Title V of Part II of the Constitution approved by the Parliament and published on the Official Gazette on 15 April 2016?	Yes	13,431,087	40.9%	Failed because support below 50%
	No	19,421,025	59.1%	

Note: <sup>a</sup>Do you approve the text of the Constitutional Law concerning ‘Provisions for overcoming equal bicameralism, reducing the number of Members of Parliament, limiting the operating costs of the institutions, the suppression of the CNEL and the revision of Title V of Part II of the Constitution’ approved by Parliament and published in the Official Gazette no. 88 of 15 April 2016?/ *Approvate il testo della legge costituzionale concernente “disposizioni per il superamento del bicameralismo paritario, la riduzione del numero dei parlamentari, il contenimento dei costi di funzionamento delle istituzioni, la soppressione del CNEL e la revisione del Titolo V della parte II della Costituzione”;* approvato dal Parlamento e pubblicato nella Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 88 del 15 aprile 2016?

Source: Ministero dell’Interno (2017b).

confirming 12 members of the previous cabinet. While Gentiloni’s confirmation of the economic team was mainly aimed at reassuring the markets, the government’s targets remained limited because of the constraints placed by the leading coalition member PD, and its leader Matteo Renzi, who publicly stated the intention to go for early elections.

## Parliament report

Compared to 2015, movement across parliamentary groups was more limited in 2016, since PD, Go Italy! (FI) and Five Star Movement (M5S) managed to stop the drain of dissenters from parliamentary groups that characterised previous years. Thus, most movement took place at the centre of the parliamentary spectrum, involving Denis Verdini’s *Alleanza Liberpopolare-Autonomie* (ALA), and former Prime Minister Mario Monti’s *Scelta Civica* (SC), which accounted for a deputy minister and an undersecretary in Renzi’s government. In July 2016, SC leader Enrico Zanetti proposed a federative pact with ALA, which was opposed by most SC deputies including Mario Monti. This led to a splinter between the group formed by the SC leadership and the ten MPs of ALA, and the 15 dissenting MPs which formed *Civici e Innovatori* (CI).

A second change concerned the centrists of Popular Area (*Area Popolare*, AP), a group comprising MPs from *Nuovo Centro-Destra* (NCD) and *Unione di Centro* (UdC). In the run-up to the constitutional referendum, the two components of the group took on opposite sides, as only NCD supported the reform, resulting in most UdC members leaving the group.

Table 3. Cabinet composition of Renzi I in Italy in 2016

Duration of cabinet Period covered by table Type of cabinet	Inception From	22 February 2014 1 January 2016	Dissolution Until	7 December 2016 7 December 2016			
	Minimum Winning Coalition (MWC) in the Senate; Oversized Coalition (OC) in the Chamber of Deputies						
A. Party/gender composition on 1 January 2016	Seats in cabinet <sup>a</sup>		Seats held by women		Seats in parliament		
	N	%	N	% of party	N	%	
Democratic Party/ <i>Partito Democratico</i> (PD)	11	68.7%	4	36.4%	300	47.6%	
New Centre-Right (NCD)- Union of Centre (UDC)/ <i>Nuovo</i> <i>Centro-Destra-Unione di Centro</i>	3	18.7%	1	33.3%	31	5.8%	
Civic Choice/ <i>Scelta Civica</i> (SC)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	23	3.6%	
Independents	2	12.5%	1	50.0%	–	–	
Totals	16	100.0%	6	37.5%	354	56.2%	
B. Composition of Renzi I cabinet on 1 January 2016							
See previous editions of the <i>Political Data Yearbook</i> for Italy (Ignazi 2016) or <a href="http://politicaldatayearbook.com">http://politicaldatayearbook.com</a>							
C. Changes in composition of Renzi I cabinet during 2016							
Ministerial title	Outgoing minister	Outgoing date	Incoming minister	Comments			
Minister of Economic Development	Federica Guidi (1968 female, independent)	5 April 2016	Carlo Calenda (1973 male, PD)	Resignation (Matteo Renzi took the position ad interim until 10 May 2016)			
D. Party/gender composition on 7 December 2016	Seats in cabinet <sup>a</sup>		Seats held by women		Seats in parliament		
	N	%	N	% of party	N	%	
Democratic Party (PD)	12	75.0%	4	33.3%	303	48.1%	
New Centre-Right (NCD)-Union of Centre (UDC)	3	18.7%	1	33.3%	26	4.1%	
Independents	1	6.3%	0	0.0%	–	–	
Totals	16	100.0%	5	31.2%	329	52.2%	

Note: <sup>a</sup>Includes only cabinet-level ministers. SC is not included because the groups splintered in 2016: while both splinter groups supported the Renzi I government, neither of them had cabinet-level ministers.

Source: Governo Italiano (2016).

## Political party report

The most notable development concerned the internal organisation of M5S following the death of Gianroberto Casaleggio, co-founder of the movement, in April 2016. This opened a debate on leadership between the so-called ‘director’ – running the everyday business of the movement – and Beppe Grillo – who had been until then taking most key decisions in agreement with Casaleggio. In October, the national leadership announced that the directorate had ceased its activities, and Grillo proclaimed himself ‘political head’ of M5S.

Table 4. Cabinet composition of Gentiloni I in Italy in 2016

Duration of cabinet	Inception	12 December 2016	Dissolution	Still in office at the end of 2016		
Period covered by table	From	12 December 2016	Until	31 December 2016		
Type of cabinet	Minimum	Winning Coalition (MWC)				
<b>A. Party/gender composition on 12 December 2016</b>						
	Seats in cabinet		Seats held by women		Seats in parliament	
	N	%	N	% of party	N	%
Democratic Party (PD)	13	68.4%	4	30.2%	303	48.1%
Popular Area/ <i>Area Popolare</i> (AP)-New Centre Right/ <i>Nuovo Centro Destra</i> (NCD) <sup>a</sup>	4	21.1%	1	25.0%	26	4.1%
Independents	2	10.5%	0	0.0%	–	–
Totals	19	100.0%	5	26.3%	329	52.2%
<b>B. Composition of Gentiloni I cabinet on 12 December 2016<sup>a</sup></b>						
Ministerial Title		Minister				
Prime Minister		Paolo Gentiloni Silveri (1954 male, PD)				
Minister of the Interior		Marco Minniti (1956 male, PD)				
Minister of Foreign Affairs		Angelino Alfano (1970 male, NCD)				
Minister of Economy and Finances		Pier Carlo Padoan (1950 male, independent)				
Minister of Defence		Roberta Pinotti (1961 female, PD)				
Minister of Justice		Andrea Orlando (1969 male, PD)				
Minister of Economic Development		Carlo Calenda (1973 male, PD)				
Minister of Labour and Social Policies		Giuliano Poletti (1951 male, independent)				
Minister of Infrastructures and Transports		Graziano Delrio (1960 male, PD)				
Minister of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies		Maurizio Martina (1978 male, PD)				
Minister of Education, Universities and Research		Valeria Fedeli (1949 female, PD)				
Minister of Health		Beatrice Lorenzin (1971 female, NCD)				
Minister of the Environment		Gian Luca Galletti (1961 male, AP)				
Minister of Culture and Tourism		Dario Franceschini (1958 male, PD)				
Minister of Regional Affairs and Autonomies		Enrico Costa (1969 male, NCD)				
Minister of Parliamentary Relations		Anna Finocchiaro (1955 female, PD)				
Minister of Public Administration and Simplification		Maria Anna Madia (1980 female, PD)				
Minister of Territorial Cohesion and the South		Claudio De Vincenti (1948 male, PD)				
Minister of Sport		Luca Lotti (1982 male, PD)				
<b>C. Changes in composition of Gentiloni I cabinet during 2016</b>						
None						
<b>D. Party/gender composition on 31 December 2016</b>						
Same as on 7 December						

Note: <sup>a</sup>Includes only cabinet-level ministers. AP-NCD refers to the group formed after the splinter in NCD-UDC, which occurred after the constitutional referendum (see Parliament report).

Source: Governo Italiano (2017).

Table 5. Party and gender composition of the lower house of parliament (*Camera dei Deputati*) in Italy in 2016

Party	1 January 2016				31 December 2016			
	All		Women		All		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Democratic Party (PD)	300	47.6%	115	38.3%	303	48.1%	109	36.0%
Five Star Movement/ <i>Movimento 5 Stelle</i> (M5S)	91	14.4%	32	35.0%	91	14.4%	32	35.0%
Go Italy!/Forza Italia (FI)	53	8.4%	20	37.7%	50	7.9%	19	38.0%
Italian Left-Left, Ecology, Freedom/ <i>Sinistra Italiana-Sinistra Ecologia Libertà</i> (SI-SEL)	31	4.9%	7	22.5%	31	4.9%	9	29.0%
New Centre-Right (NCD)-Union of Centre (UDC) <sup>a</sup>	31	4.9%	4	12.9%	–	–	–	–
Popular Area-New Centre Right (AP-NCD) <sup>a</sup>	–	–	–	–	26	4.1%	2	7.7%
Civic Choice (SC) <sup>b</sup>	23	3.7%	5	21.7%	–	–	–	–
Civic Choice towards Citizens for Italy/ <i>Scelta Civica verso cittadini per l'Italia</i> (MAIE) <sup>b</sup>	–	–	–	–	16	2.5%	2	12.5%
Civics and Innovators/ <i>Civici e Innovatori</i> (CI) <sup>b</sup>	–	–	–	–	17	2.5%	3	18.7%
Northern League/ <i>Lega Nord</i> (LN)	17	2.7%	2	11.7%	19	3.0%	2	10.5%
For Italy-Democratic Centre / <i>Per l'Italia-Centro Democratico</i> (PI-CD)	13	2.1%	2	15.3%	13	2.2%	2	14.3%
Brothers of Italy-National Alliance/ <i>Fratelli d'Italia-Alleanza Nazionale</i> (FdI-AN)	8	1.3%	1	12.5%	11	1.7%	2	18.2%
Others	63	10.0%	8	12.7%	53	8.4%	9	16.9%
Totals	630	100.0%	196	31.1%	630	100.0%	191	30.3%

Notes: <sup>a</sup>AP-NCD is the group that replaced the splintered NCD-UDC.

<sup>b</sup>MAIE refers to the merge between the parliamentary groups of SC and some members of the Mixed Group, in July 2016. The remaining members of SC then formed the group CI.

Source: Camera dei Deputati (2017).

## Institutional change report

The new Italian electoral law (*Italicum*) came into force on 1 July 2016 under the initiative of Renzi's government, providing for a two-round system, corrected by a majority premium, in which the electoral list that obtained more than 40 per cent of the vote, at either of the two rounds, was awarded the absolute majority of seats (this was amended by a ruling of the Constitutional Court in January 2017). The law aimed at bolstering the stability of governments by reducing post-vote trading between parties, but it was written under the assumption of a reform of the functions of the upper house by the time it came into force. The failure of the referendum led to a combination of irreconcilable electoral systems in the two chambers, making parliamentary majorities almost impossible. Thus, the newly elected Gentiloni government was tasked with modifying the electoral law before elections take place in 2018.

## Issues in national politics

Under the Renzi I cabinet, government action pursued a strategy of 'light populism' on European affairs, displaying an aggressive attitude towards the European Commission,

Table 6. Party and gender composition of the upper house of parliament (*Senato della Repubblica*) in Italy in 2016

Party	1 January 2016				31 December 2016			
	All		Women		All		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Democratic Party (PD)	112	35.0%	46	41.1%	113	35.3%	46	40.7%
Go Italy! (FI)	41	12.8%	4	9.7%	42	13.1%	4	9.5%
Five Stars Movement (M5S)	35	10.9%	15	42.8%	35	10.9%	15	42.8%
Popular Area (AP)	31	9.7%	4	12.9%	29	9.1%	4	13.8%
For Autonomies/ <i>Per le Autonomie</i> (SVP-UV-PATT-UPT-PSI-MAIE)	18	5.6%	2	11.1	19	5.9%	2	10.2%
Civic Choice-Liberal Popular Alliance Autonomies (SC-ALA) <sup>a</sup>	17	5.3%	2	11.8%	18	5.6%	2	11.1%
Great Autonomies and Freedom/ <i>Grandi</i> <i>Autonomie e Libertà</i> (GAL)	14	4.4%	3	21.4%	14	4.4%	3	21.4%
Northern League (LN)	12	3.8%	2	16.7%	12	3.8%	2	16.7%
Conservative and Reformists/ <i>Conservatori e</i> <i>Riformisti</i> (CR)	10	3.1%	1	10.0%	10	3.1%	1	10.0%
Others	26	8.1%	10	38.5%	28	8.7%	12	42.9%
Totals	320	100.0%	89	27.8%	320	100.0%	91	28.4%

Notes: <sup>a</sup>The group of ALA changed its name in SC-ALA after the merger of parts of the two groups in December 2016.

Source: Senato della Repubblica (2017).

Table 7. Changes in political parties in Italy in 2016

A. Party institutional changes in 2016
New Centre-Right (NCD)-Union of Centre (UDC) was dissolved on 6 December 2016 and in its place Popular Area-New Centre Right (AP-NCD) was established.
Civic Choice (SC) merged with Liberal-Popular Alliance-Autonomies/ <i>Alleanza Liberpolpolare-Autonomie</i> (ALA) on 14 July 2016. Due to disputes over the name and symbol of SC, the group takes the denomination of Civic Choice towards Citizens for Italy (MAIE).
Civics and Innovators (CI) was founded in October 2016 by Mario Monti (1943 male, SC) and other former SC members, and is a splinter from SC.
B. Party leadership changes in 2016
Civics and Innovators (CI) Giovanni Monchiero is nominated first group leader of the emerging group of CI in the lower house on 12 October 2016, after the splinter of CI from SC.

Source: Camera dei Deputati (2017).

calling for more flexibility on Italy's debt and deficit targets, and criticizing the EU for failing to share the burden of migration flows. Moreover, Renzi's efforts to avoid state intervention to help the struggling bank *Monte dei Paschi* were unsuccessful: as the bank approved a set of desperate measures, including the cutting of thousands of jobs, the newly appointed Gentiloni cabinet approved the bail-out in December to avoid a domino effect on the rest of the banking system.

After months of bitter debate, in February the Italian parliament approved a government-sponsored bill creating a civil union status for same-sex couples. While filling a legislative vacuum, as Italy was the last western European country to recognise civil unions between same-sex couples, the negotiations to secure a parliamentary majority forced the government to trade away several provisions important to LGBT activists, including the right to adopt the child of a same-sex partner.

Despite much political turmoil over 2016, the popularity of the main parties remained largely the same throughout the year. While the governing PD polled between 32 and 30 per cent, the most vocal opposition party M5S kept its support around 26–28 per cent. While M5S obtained huge wins in local elections in 2016, securing the mayoral votes in Rome and Turin, it was then dealt a significant blow due to subsequent mayoral crises and the arrest of a top aide to the mayor of Rome in the framework of a corruption scandal. Thus, M5S managed to surpass the ruling party PD in opinion polls only for short time periods, and by few percentage points. The other main opposition parties, Northern League (LN) and FI averaged between 12 and 14 per cent support throughout 2016, while the respective leaders Salvini and Berlusconi competed for the leadership in the centre-right.

### Sources and further information

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