

'Deep divisions' between populist movements in Germany and Italy, survey says

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News

A new survey has highlighted "deep divisions" between populist movements in Germany and Italy, which will weaken their joint political impact in the post-election European Parliament.



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The study was conducted by a team of researchers from École Polytechnique in Paris, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, the University of Mannheim and the ZEW-Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research in Mannheim.

It surveyed 328 members of the German Bundestag, Italian Camera dei Deputati and Senato della Repubblica as well as members of the French Assemblée Nationale and the Sénat.

The researchers asked MPs for their views on closer economic union at EU level as well as granting the EU more competencies in the fields of defence and immigration.

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It says that with the exception of members of the German Alternative for Germany (AfD), higher national investment to boost economic growth is supported by many parties across Europe, including the governing parties in Italy.

The situation is quite similar, it says, as far as the support for new EMU institutions is concerned.

While parties across Europe are generally in favour of implementing these instruments, the German AfD is strongly opposed to it.

The study authors conclude, "Thus, the party-specific results point towards a deep divide between populist movements in Germany (AfD) and Italy (Lega, 5 Stelle)."

"The party-specific results point towards a deep divide between populist movements in Germany [AfD] and Italy [Lega, 5 Stelle]" **Study authors**

The results are timely as they come ahead of the European elections in May where populist parties are predicted to do particularly well.

The survey is also said to provide a "clear indication of the blocking power" of the populist movements following the next European Parliament election.

Professor Friedrich Heinemann, head of the ZEW Research Department "Corporate Taxation and Public Finance", said this will have less of an impact than is predicted.

He said, "The divide between populist parties in Northern and Southern Europe will severely weaken their joint political impact in the European Parliament after the election."

The results also claim to shed light on possible next steps in the debate on European integration.

The authors say that the results of the survey, presented in Brussels, demonstrate that French, Italian and German members of parliament are open to granting the EU more competencies in the fields of defence and immigration policy.

There is also broad agreement on giving legislative initiative to the European Parliament and on increasing national investment expenditure.

"The divide between populist parties in Northern and Southern Europe will severely

weaken their joint political impact in the European Parliament after the election”

Professor Friedrich Heinemann

There is, however, considerable disagreement over certain reform proposals for the Eurozone.

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French and Italian MPs support the implementation of new European Monetary Union (EMU) institutions such as a euro area budget and Eurobonds, while the Germans oppose them.

Opinions on monetary policy differ between Paris, Rome and Berlin.

Italian and French MPs support the asset purchase programme of the European Central Bank (ECB), whilst German MPs think it should be discontinued.

There is strong Franco-Italian support for the completion of the Banking Union through the European Deposit Insurance Scheme, while German parliamentarians are undecided on this matter.

According to the survey, French and Italian MPs are generally more open towards shifting competencies to Brussels than their German counterparts.

The results suggest that there is widespread support for greater integration in Europe in the fields of immigration and defence policies.

On average, French and Italian MPs support the implementation of new EMU institutions such as a euro area budget and Eurobonds, while the Germans oppose them.

Opinions on monetary policy differ between Paris, Rome and Berlin. Italian and French MPs support the asset purchase programme of the ECB, whilst German MPs think it should be discontinued.

There is no full consensus on the completion of the Banking Union through the European Deposit Insurance Scheme.

Report co-author Pierre Boyer said, “The national parliamentarians of three founding countries agree on the need to shift greater responsibility to the European level regarding immigration and defence issues.”

His fellow author, Massimo Bordignon, argued that France, Germany and Italy “should focus on the issues that unite them rather than the ones that divide them.”

“There is clearly enough consensus among parliaments to initiate a process to increase investment spending and to give the European Parliament more legislative powers,” he added.

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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