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German reactions to political changes in Italy after 2016

Introduction

The political system in Italy is closely observed by German press, such as *Der Spiegel*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Zeit*, *Merkur*, *Cicero*, *Tagesspiegel*, radio stations (including *Deutschlandfunk*) and television. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation has its office in Rome, and the German-Italian Centre for European Dialogue publishes *Vigoni Papers* on Italian-German relations. Political science research on Italy is carried out at the University of Giessen. German media point to the growing Euroscepticism in Italy and analyse its significance from the perspective of the continuity of the European Union. The economic situation of Italy is considered in relation to the fulfillment of the economic criteria of the European Union and the attachment of Italy to cooperation with the EU states and the USA, as well as economic ties between the competitive Chinese economy and Russia. Moreover, Germany analyses the transformations of the Italian party system in terms of party programmes and the postulates of major party leaders. Also, the domestic situation in Italy is observed mainly in terms of political preferences and attempts to modernize the economy and political system. The article aims to show the most important political processes in Italy after 2016, which were discussed in German media. It has been hypothesized that the programme rapprochement between political decision-makers in Italy and Germany is perceived as a determinant of the continuity of the functioning of the European Union, while Italian criticism of Germany's actions in the European Union is treated as a threat to integration processes. The method of analyzing decision-making processes, the institutional method and the method of content analysis were used. Also, the author took into account the realistic paradigm of the functioning of the European Union, the key point of which is proving that the cooperation of EU member states is necessary to face economic and political competition from China or Russia, and to overcome global challenges and threats.

The importance of German – Italian relations

Italian-German political relations did not correspond to the format of the French-German tandem, and the Genscher-Colombo Plan was not as relevant as the cooperation between Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Angela Merkel was accused of having taken less account of Italy in the decision-making process regarding the migration crisis, although the state was deeply affected by the consequences of overloading the middle migration route. Despite critical assessments and historical burdens, the

tradition of German-Italian summits was continued. One of the most memorable summits was held in Trieste in November 2008 with the participation of foreign ministers Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Franco Frattini, who, as part of the summit programme, visited the Risiera di San Sabba concentration camp. In February 2009 F. Frattini and Wolfgang Schäuble discussed the activation of the “Future Group”, i.e. meetings of interior ministers to initiate cooperation between police forces and to improve Frontex activities. Italy, the third economy in the European Union and a member of the G7, remains an important partner for Germany. In German comments on the Italian economy attention was drawn to the inequalities between the northern and southern parts of Italy and the country’s economic problems, which, as a result of the weakening GNP and rising unemployment, led Italy to bankruptcy. The Italian population became affected by the exclusion problem of NEET (not in employment, education or training) generation. Being on the verge of bankruptcy, the Italians discussed exiting the European Union as a result of growing criticism of the EU’s policy of austerity. The mutual image of the societies of both countries was influenced by the deepening economic, currency and migration crises, and now by the energy crisis. Germans also perceived Italy through the image of the indebted South represented by the PIGS countries (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain). Simultaneously, the image of political polarization in Italy, based on different positions on the EU’s economic policy became stronger. Italy’s image in Germany was also influenced by Italy’s increasing political instability. In the 21st century, Italy saw frequent changes of government, made in the bipolar system, i.e. competition between centre-left and centre-right parties (Fijał). The prime ministers of Italy were Giuliano Amato (2000–2001), Silvio Berlusconi (2001–2006), Romano Prodi (2006–2008), again Silvio Berlusconi (2008–2011), Mario Monti (2011–2013), Enrico Letta (2013–2014), Matteo Renzi (2014–2016), Paolo Gentiloni (2016–2018), Giuseppe Conte (2019–2021) and Mario Draghi (2021–2022). During her 16 years in power, Angela Merkel built relations with 9 Italian prime ministers.

The Germans were favourable of M. Monti, E. Letta and M. Renzi, who emphasized their pro-European attitudes. One may even claim that German media showed nostalgia for the Italian prime ministers who spoke more favourably about the decision-making processes in the European Union. Economist M. Monti, who served in the European Commission from 1995 to 2004, was presented in Germany as a critical commentator on the rise of populism. The politician was in favour of Italy remaining in the euro area and believed that Germany’s economic leadership in the European Union was to contribute to building economic stability in the member states. He accused A. Merkel of too much support for economists basing their decisions on John Maynard Keynes’s ideas. He was in favour of the liberalization of the economy and, observing in France an increasing support for Marie Le Pen, M. Monti held the view that: “The end of the euro area or the exit of France or Germany would not reduce Germany’s strength on the continent” (Christides, 2017).

E. Letta emphasized that he was from Pisa, but his childhood spent in Strasbourg contributed to his personality development. He watched the first election to the European Parliament in 1979. Observing the reactions to the economic crisis in Europe in 2008, he was of the opinion that it was M. Draghi who “saved Europe” (Letta, Mailard, 2018, p. 40 and 30–39). According to E. Letta, creating a monetary union without

achieving an economic union was a mistake and he pointed out that between 2007 and 2014 France, Italy and Spain suffered from the consequences of unemployment more than Germany. Despite this, he was an opponent of nationalism and criticized Nigel Farage and M. Le Pen. He believed that in the face of competition with China, European countries needed technological progress and the fight against digital exclusion. He was interested in both senior policy and the situation of young people. In his opinion, social tensions were caused by the collapse of the middle class and the growing distrust of the European Union. Being aware of growing Euroscepticism, he himself supported the leadership of A. Merkel and E. Macron in the European Union. He was of the opinion that emphasizing the importance of borders in times of increasing economic competition was inappropriate. He was for the protection of the environment and cultural heritage. An important point in E. Letta's programme was the migration policy, in which he called for Italy's cooperation with Germany, France and Greece. He believed that in the face of the migration crisis, human rights standards should be guarded and improved (Letta, Maillard, 2018, p. 40–152). Matteo Renzi, who came from Florence, represented the Democratic Party, similarly to E. Letta, and was associated with the left-centre milieu that supported Romano Prodi. After consolidating his position in the Democratic Party, M. Renzi replaced E. Letta as prime minister in 2014. After Brexit, he participated in the summit meetings with A. Merkel and F. Hollande in order to express his support for the idea of European integration and to create the image of Italy as a country that formed, together with France and Germany, a trio responsible for the continuity of the EU. The pursuit of prestige in the international arena was to cover the critical state of the Italian economy, which did not grow at the end of 2016 and had to face a banking crisis. In the discussions on the communitarisation of the EU's debts, M. Renzi tried to win the support of F. Hollande, a social democrat, to convince A. Merkel to take into account social expectations in the indebted southern states when setting the direction of the EU's economic policy. Merkel, in turn, emphasized the need to protect the EU's external borders and reform the security and defence policy (Gutschler, 2016; Oswald, 2016).

The cooperation with M. Renzi and support for his reforms were justified in *Der Tagesspiegel*: “Unlike Greece, Italy is of great importance for the stability of the euro. 1/5 of the European Gross National Product is generated there. No bailout package would be enough to provide Italy with financial assistance to mitigate the consequences of the anticipated collapse of big banks” (Appenzeller, 2016).

Attempts to introduce institutional changes required the reformers to be given a vote of confidence. In the referendum on constitutional changes held on 5 December 2016, Italians did not agree to the Renzi-Boschi reform, which in turn led to the resignation of Prime Minister M. Renzi. 60% of voters were against the changes. More voters took part in the third Italian referendum on the constitution reform than in the 2001 and 2006 referendums, as the turnout was 68.5%. The initiators believed that by reducing the composition of the Senate, they would improve the quality of Italian democracy and convince citizens that the functioning of state institutions would seem less bureaucratic to citizens. The proposal to abandon direct elections of senators and appoint representatives of regional authorities raised concerns about changes in relations between the regions and the parliament. The discussions on the changes to the

composition of the senate showed the objection of the leaders of other parties to the prime minister's policy. The opponents included Beppe Grillo from the 5 Star Movement, Matteo Salvini from the Northern League and Silvio Berlusconi, who withdrew from the "Nazarene Pact", i.e. the 2014 agreement between the Democratic Party and Forza Italia on changes to the constitution and changes to the electoral law (Britzmeier, Matzner; Cetrulo, 2016). German media explained that the defeat of M. Renzi was caused by the lack of economic success and the increase in popularity of Beppe Grillo from the 5-Star Movement (Meiler, 2016).

Parliamentary election 2018

The success of the 5-Star Movement and Matteo Salvini's League were interpreted by Germany as a failure of the pro-European governments of M. Monti, E. Letti and M. Renzi and the success of Euroscepticism. Italians did not feel that their presidency of the European Union held in 2014 brought positive changes to their country, and the tension between the North and the South was deepening (Grasse, Labitzke, 2018a). Being against immigrants, M. Salvini's League won support in Northern Italy. Giovanni di Lorenzo from *Die Zeit* emphasized that in the election campaign the media which were dependent on S. Berlusconi pursued an anti-immigrant policy, similar to the League's slogans. According to G. di Lorenzo, M. Salvini succeeded because of his personality: "he is human [...] Luigi Di Maio, the leader of the 5-Star Movement and Prime Minister Conte seem plain in comparison, they are like "puppets"(Saviano, Di Lorenzo, 2019, p. 255). The Italian journalist claimed that the popularity of M. Salvini was built on creating prejudices and hostility "towards European institutions, refugees, banks, and Jews" (Saviano, Di Lorenzo, 2019, p. 258). The 5 Star Movement drew attention to social policy in its programme and gained votes in the South. Beppe Grillo gained support by acting against Italy's "political caste" (Vatesse, 2019, p. 4–6). The leader of the Socialist Democratic Party Matteo Renzi was defeated and his party, similarly to S. Berlusconi's Forza Italia, was overtaken by the 5-Star Movement. Prime Minister P. Gentiloni resigned on 25 March, but the new government was not formed by Giuseppe Conte until 1 June (Grasse, Labitzke, 2018a, p. 97–127; Saviano, Di Lorenzo, 2019, p. 252–253).

Table 1

Parliamentary election in Italy (4 March 2018) – results

Party	Result in %
1	2
Movimento 5 Stelle (5 Star Movement)	32.68
Partito Democratico (Democratic Party)	18.76
Lega (League)	17.35
Forza Italia (Forward Italy)	14.00
Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy)	4.35
Liberti e Uguali (Free and Equal)	3.39
+Europa	2.56
Noi Con I Italia (Us with Italy)	1.30

1	2
Potere al. Popolo (Power for People)	1.13
Casa Pound Italia (CasaPound Italy)	0.95
Il Popolo della Famiglia (The People of Family)	0.67
Italia Europa Insieme (Italy Europe Together)	0.58

Source: *Italien: Ergebnis der Parlamentswahlen in Italien im März 2018*, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/865077/umfrage/ergebnis-der-parlamentswahlen-in-italien-2018/#professional>, 28.09.2022.

European Parliament election 2019

The participation of Italy in the process of European integration has been repeatedly mentioned in the German media, especially the influence of the founding fathers – Alcide de Gasperi and Altiero Spinelli. Germany emphasized that many Italians had contributed to the European integration. In 2017 Germany observed who would replace Martin Schulz as the president of the European Parliament. Italian Antonio Tajani was known as the “comrade of Silvio Berlusconi, co-founder of Forza Italia, former Industry Commissioner”. He was expected to care more about the image of the European Parliament than exercising power, because everyone was tired of the style of M. Schulz, who was leaving the office (Winkler, 2017, p. 306). The Italian, with the support of the European People’s Party, defeated the other candidates. The Italian Social Democrat Gianni Pittella, and the Belgian liberal Guy Verhofstadt were taken into account, but A. Tajani succeeded owing to the liberals’ decision to vote for the conservative. Although the smaller factions expected to fail, they nominated their own leaders. The Greens supported Jean Lambert from Great Britain, the European United Left/Nordic Green Left supported Eleonora Forenza from Italy. Piernicola Pedicini from Italy was the candidate of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Faction. Europe of Nations and Freedom supported Laurentiu Rebeaga from Romania (Meier).

Table 2

European Parliament election (26.05.2019) – results

Party	Result in %
Lega Salvini	34.26
Partito Democratico (con Siamo Europei)	22.74
Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S)	17.06
Forza Italia	8.78
Fratelli d’Italia	6.44
Coalition +Europa (+ Europa – Italia in Comune – Partito Democratico Europeo)	3.11
Coalition Federazione dei Verdi (Verdi + Possibile + Green Italia et al.)	2.32
Coalition La Sinistra (Sinistra italiana + Rifondazione comunista + Altra Europa con Tsipras + Partito del Sud + Transform Itali + Converganza Socialista) – [Coal La Sinistra (SI+RC)]	1.75
Partito popolare sudtirolese (SVP)	0.53
Other parties	3.01

Source: *Ergebnisse nach nationaler Partei: 2019–2024 Italien – Offizielle Ergebnisse*, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/de/nationale-ergebnisse/italien/2019-2024>, 28.09.2022.

Out of 73 seats, Italian MEPs took 28 seats in the Identity and Democracy Faction, 19 in the Progressive Alliance of Democrats and Socialists, 7 in the European People's Party, and 5 in the European Conservatives and Reformists. 14 MEPs are seated without belonging to any political group.

Presidential election 2022

Due to frequent changes of government, the president's tasks go beyond the representative role. According to article 87 of the Constitution of Italy: "The President of the Republic is the head of state and represents national unity. The president may address parliament. The president calls parliamentary elections and selects the date of its first sitting". Article 88 states that: "The President of the Republic may, after hearing the presidents of the houses, dissolve one or both houses" (*Konstytucja Włoch*). On 17–18 September 2020 President Sergio Mattarella hosted in Italy President Franz-Walter Steinmeier, who expressed solidarity and sympathy towards the victims of the Covid 19 pandemic (Krüger, 2020; Medick, 2020). On 11 October 2021, during a meeting in Berlin, S. Mattarella and F.-W. Steinmeier appreciated the German-Italian cooperation of the cities of Hamm, Bari, Ludwigsburg, Bergamo, Giengen an der Brenz in Baden-Württemberg, San Michele di Ganzaria, Höchberg, Bastia Umbria, Steinhagen, Fivizzano (dpa/lsw). The actions of the presidents of Italy and Germany were aimed at improving the trust between nations and the image of German-Italian cooperation, which, due to the economic crisis and pandemic, was not highly valued by public (Grasse, 2021, p. 12). In 2022, the candidates in the presidential election were M. Draghi, Andrea Riccardi from the Catholic community of Sant'Egidio and Pier Ferdinando Casini. Silvio Berlusconi announced that he was resigning (Seisselberg, 2022). In the eighth round of voting, S. Mattarella received 759 of 1009 votes that belonged to members of the parliament, senate and regional parliaments. Due to the Covid situation, infected persons could vote in special tents, which was regulated by the Decree issued before the election. According to *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the presidential election proved the weakness of the Italian party system and constituted a "barrier for populists". The head of the European Council, Charles Michel, congratulated the winner (Meiler, 2022d).

Parliamentary election 2022

Early parliamentary election was scheduled for 25 September 2022. After M. Draghi's defeat, a centre-left alliance was formed, composed of the Social Democrats (Enrico Letta), the Azione (Carlo Calenda) and Più Europa (More Europe) parties, led by Emma Bonino. Matteo Renzi's 5 Star Movement did not join the coalition (Hornig, 2022; Rüb, 2022). The centre-right alliance was based on Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, G. Meloni's Brothers of Italy and M. Salvini's League. The candidacy of G. Meloni was criticized in Germany. *Cicero* called G. Meloni an "Italian Marie Le Pen", though highlighted successes in her political career. In 1992, she joined the

Movimento Sociale Italiano and was supported by Gianfranco Fini. In 2006 she was elected to parliament for the first time. In 2008, she became the minister of youth policy and sport in S. Berlusconi's government. In 2012, she left the People of Freedom and formed the Brothers of Italy party to become its chair two years later (Affaticati, 2019). G. Meloni speaks foreign languages and is an efficient leader of the party. Thomas Schmid described G. Meloni as "blonde, right-wing, uncompromising" and concluded that her image of the world was "Manichaeistic" (Schmid, 2022). In *Der Focus* she was presented as a "post-fascist", "political star" and a politician who is "more extremist than Matteo Salvini" ("*Die Postfaschistin*", 2020). In *Merkur* Bettina Menzel called her a "neo-fascist" and reminded that G. Meloni spoke favourably about Benito Mussolini in her youth. G. Meloni presented her political views in her autobiography. Her speeches given during demonstrations and rallies are also known, and they quickly reach the audience through social media. One of the most famous is the speech "Io sono Giorgia", which she gave in Rome in 2019. G. Meloni is in favour of a presidential system in Italy with direct presidential elections, she is also a supporter of a Europe of homelands. With regard to Russia-Ukraine war, she opts for providing military aid to Ukraine (Menzel, 2022). G. Meloni claimed that she was averse to Germany (Schubert, 2022) and she demands "Europe of nations" versus "Europe of technocrats" (Sondel-Cedarmas, 2022, p. 67).

Scheduled for 25 September 2022 in Italy, the election was observed in Germany from the perspective of the functioning of the European Union economy. There were voices warning against falling support for Mario Draghi and rising support for Giorgia Meloni. The zenith of the crisis took place in the summer of 2022. Italy was engulfed by the crisis as a result of the epidemic crisis, severe droughts, and uncertainty caused by the energy crisis in Europe. M. Draghi was supported by Olaf Scholz and Emanuel Macron. He was a valued economist outside Italy. He was called "the guarantor of stability in Europe" (Schwarz, Neudecker).

Germany feared the result of the election in Italy and emphasized that in autumn 2022 parliamentary elections would be also held in Sweden on 11 September, in Latvia on 1 October and in Bulgaria on 2 October. They closely watched the extent to which election decisions would contribute to the growth of the importance of right-wing and Eurosceptic groups (*Wahlen in Italien, Schweden...*, 2022). The Italian (*La Stampa*) and the German (*Tagesanzeiger*) press pointed to the perpetuation of the image of M. Salvini, G. Meloni and S. Berlusconi as politicians seeking the support of Russia. For fear of Russian attempts to financially influence the election results in Italy, demands were made to control the inflows of funds to the accounts of Italian political parties. The economic ties between Russia and Italy were recalled, as well as the severe consequences for the Italian economy of the EU sanctions against Russia. The Italian politicians were judged for their stance towards Russia-Ukraine war. S. Berlusconi had been known for years for his positive attitude towards W. Putin, and Putin praised S. Berlusconi for his "strategic visions" presented in international policy" (Friedman, 2015, p. 204–205). However, despite the fact that for years the politicians had been in favour of deepening Russian-Italian economic cooperation, S. Berlusconi criticized Russia's attack on Ukraine. M. Draghi supported the sanctions against Russia and opted for military support for Ukraine. G. Meloni also sided with Ukraine

and the fulfillment of Italy's obligations under NATO. On the other hand, M. Salvini expressed support for W. Putin and warned against the financial costs of solidarity towards Ukraine (Meiler, 2022b).

The 2022 election was a clash between party leaders, whose low-rated authority negatively affected the functioning of democracy and resulted in low ratings of the political system. The Italian moderate left suffered losses in the elections, while the parties that referred to the feeling of disappointment with policy and the growing sense of exclusion were successful. The success of the 5-Star Movement stemmed from the hope for a new hand in politics that would overcome economic and social problems. Social Democrat E. Letta explained that the emotionality of Italian leaders was the cause of the frequent changes in political preferences. He argued that his style of governing was not based on personalization and, being the leader of the Democratic Party, he did not emphasize his role, as S. Berlusconi, M. Salvini or G. Meloni did. In his opinion, "Italy suddenly fell in love with Silvio Berlusconi, then with Matteo Renzi, later with Matteo Salvini and finally with the 5 Star Movement (Ladurner, 2022). E. Letta warned against the "urbanization" of Italy and criticized G. Meloni for promoting slogans similar to the programmes of some European parties, such as Law and Justice, VOX, and the National Front. According to E. Letta, M. Draghi was a "happy coincidence" for Italy. The elections reflected the clash of political cultures, for example in Lombardy, where Matteo Renzi from Italia Viva and S. Berlusconi from Forza Italia, whose temperament and style of fighting for leadership are completely different, competed. S. Berlusconi did not deviate from the earlier media-based methods to present politics as entertainment and TV show full of scandals. Presenting herself as a defender of Christian values, G. Meloni was treated with reservations in Germany. It was pointed out that G. Meloni believed that representatives of sexual minorities were favoured (wahl in Italien).

The 2022 election brought controversy and fears in Germany. Liberal politician Otto Graf Lambsdorff warned against the growing importance of G. Meloni on the Italian political scene and pointed out that her programme coincided with Jarosław Kaczyński and Wiktor Orban (Ahnefeld, 2022). Manfred Weber's support for S. Berlusconi was criticized by the SPD, the Greens, the FDP and the Left Party because S. Berlusconi was involved in corruption and numerous scandals (dpa1).

During the election campaign, Italians expressed concerns about instability, rising prices and a lack of prospects. Public institutions were losing their credibility, and citizens declared that they felt distrust of politicians. The prevailing public mood deepened the image of Italy, diagnosed by the German political scientist Claus Leggewie, as a "paradise for populists" dominated by politainment, and many politicians lost their importance due to being involved in scandals. While S. Berlusconi was classified as a politician who did not pay attention to ideology and built the image of a successful business person, left-wing politicians like Matteo Renzi were unable to rebuild the image of social democracy. Support was gained by centre-right politicians who were critical of Brussels and "Roma landrona" (Leggewie, 2017, p. 31–39).

In the forecasts on the election consequences, 9 options for establishing a coalition were considered. Their significance was analysed through the prism of the aspirations to leave the European Union (Italy exit) and the scale of support expressed towards

W. Putin. Support for G. Meloni was primarily analysed through the prism of the increase in nostalgia for fascism and the departure from liberal democracy (Reinhard, 2022).

Table 3

Potential coalitions

Potential coalition	Probability of forming a coalition in %
Fratelli d'Italia + Movimento 5 Stelle + Lega	56.0
Partito Democratico + Movimento 5 Stelle + Forza Italia + Azione/Italia Viva	54.9
Fratelli d'Italia + Movimento 5 Stelle + Forza Italia	51.0
Partito Democratico + Movimento 5 Stelle + Azione/Italia Viva+ Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra	50.2
Fratelli d'Italia + Lega + Forza Italia	49.8
Partito Democratico + Movimento 5 Stelle + Forza Italia	47.4
Fratelli d'Italia + Movimento 5 Stelle + Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra	46.3
Partito Democratico + Movimento 5 Stelle + Azione/Italia Viva	46.3

Source: *Koalitionsmöglichkeiten*, <https://politpro.eu/de/italien>, 28.09.2022.

The Italians voted on 25 September in polling stations open from 7.00 to 23.00. 51 million citizens were entitled to vote and the turnout was 64%. G. Meloni, called “the most dangerous woman in Europe” on the cover of *Stern*, and her party Brothers of Italy won 25.99% of the votes, ahead of the Democratic Party (19.07%), the 5-Star Movement (15.43%), the League (8.77%), Italy Alive (7.79%), Forza Italy (8.11%).

Table 4

Parliamentary election in Italy (25 September 2022) – results

Party	Results in %
Fratelli d'Italia	25.99
Partito Democratico	19.07
Movimento 5 Stelle	15.43
Lega per Salvini Premier	8.77
Forza Italia	8.11
Azione/Italia Viva	7.79
Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra	3.63
Più Europa (+Europa)	2.83
Per l'Italia con Paragone (Italexit)	1.90
Impegno Civico (Civic Commitment)	0.6.

Source: *Italien: Ergebnis der Parlamentswahlen in Italien am 25. September 2022*, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1335837/umfrage/ergebnis-der-parlamentswahlen-in-italien-2022>, 25.10.2022.

The German media called the result “a victory for the right-wing forces” and the success of the “post-fascist woman”. Katarina Barley from the Social Democratic Party of Germany expressed concerns that Viktor Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński were political role models for G. Meloni. Both Ursula von der Leyen and Alexander Graf

Lambsdorff claimed that they would look at the situation in Italy through the prism of compliance with the rule of law in that country. O. Nouripour from the Greens was worried that after the election there would be a rapprochement between Italy and Russia, as far-right leaders such as M. Salvini had won. The success of G. Meloni was positively received by Alice Weidel from Alternative for Germany. The election result became a success for the European far right, preceded by a joint victory in the Swedish parliament of the right-wing parties. German media noted that the victory of G. Meloni was received positively by Marie Le Pen and Mateusz Morawiecki.¹

Summary

German media commented that the Italian political scene, despite the state's strong economic position in the international arena, was unstable, and the Italian society expected changes and reforms that would contribute to overcoming successive crises. Although Italian Christian Democrats contributed to the process of European integration after World War II, now the current Italian extreme right wanted stronger nation-states. From the point of view of German mainstream media, right-wing Italian leaders, such as G. Meloni and M. Salvini, seem similar to M. Le Pen, W. Orban, and Jarosław Kaczyński in terms of their programmes. The representatives of German parties in power: the Social Democrats, Liberals and the Greens, fear of taking power by Brothers of Italy because of the party's populist and post-fascist tendencies, and point to the weakening of the importance of the Italian left. German media also draw attention to the destabilization of the Italian party scene, which results from disappointment with establishment parties and the search for new movements that will be reformist and effective

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¹ F. Naumann, P. Mayer, A. Schmid, F. Schwarz, *Rechtsruck in Italien: Postfaschistin Meloni vorn, Grünen-Chef sieht "enge Verwebungen mit dem Kreml"*, 26.09.2022, <https://www.merkur.de/politik/rom-italien-wahl-live-ergebnis-heute-hochrechnung-prognose-meloni-fratelli-berlusconi-salvini-draghi-zr-91810182.html>, 28.09.2022; dpa, *Rechtsrutsch in Italien: Gespaltene Reaktionen bei EU-Politikern*, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/italien-wahl-meloni-eu-abgeordnete-be-sorgt-100.html>, 26.09.2022.

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Summary

The article presents the view of German politicians and journalists on the political processes taking place in Italy, mainly concerning electoral rivalry after 2016. Opinions are analyzed on the causes of instability in the Italian political system, which led to early election in 2022, instead of holding it in 2023. After the government crisis, Italy opts for reforms that will reduce the effects of the energy crisis and tensions caused by the migration crisis and the war in Ukraine. Political rivalry in Italy takes place between the political parties that form an extreme right-wing or left-wing coalition. The main opponent of Enrico Letta, Giorgia Meloni from the Brothers of Italy party, calls for the strengthening of the position of the Italian nation and the position of Italy in the European Union.

Key words: election in Italy, German-Italy relations

Niemieckie reakcje na zmiany polityczne we Włoszech po 2016 roku

Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono spojrzenie niemieckich polityków i dziennikarzy na dokonujące się we Włoszech procesy polityczne, głównie dotyczące rywalizacji wyborczej po 2016 roku. Analizowane są opinie o przyczynach niestabilności włoskiego systemu politycznego, które doprowadziły do przyspieszonych wyborów w 2022 roku, zamiast przeprowadzenia ich w roku 2023. Włochy po kryzysie rządowym, opowiadają się za reformami, które zmniejszą skutki kryzysu energetycznego i napięć spowodowanych kryzysem migracyjnym oraz wojną na Ukrainie. Rywalizacja polityczna we Włoszech przebiega między partiami politycznymi, które tworzą koalicję skrajnie prawicową bądź lewicową. Główna przeciwniczka Enrico Letty, Giorgia Meloni z partii Bracia Włochy postuluje wzmocnienie pozycji narodu włoskiego i pozycji Włoch w Unii Europejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: wybory we Włoszech, relacje włosko-niemieckie

