
Bureaucracy, Europe, infections: three crucial challenges for Europe

Over the past few days the Conte government has overcome two major hurdles. His Relaunch Decree was finally published in the Official Journal, after an extenuating wait and an equally laborious preparation of the lengthy Act, and he managed to overcome the insidious parliamentary no-confidence vote called for by the opposition against the Minister of Justice, Alfonso Bonafede. *Three crucial challenges now lie ahead, inevitably interconnected, like almost everything is at this stage.* The first is the scathing attack on stifling **bureaucracy**, aimed at simplifying the administrative framework and restart stalled construction and investment. These are longstanding challenges in Italy, and so far nobody has successfully turned the system on its head. So on which grounds should a government that inherited deep-rooted political fragility, faced with a difficulty that is unprecedented in the history of the Italian Republic, be successful? *On closer inspection, the very exceptional nature of the present moment could offer the chance of making a leap forward, critical to Italy's economic and social recovery.* Minor adjustments are not enough, a radical change of gear is necessary and urgent. Albeit subject to clear - and, to a certain extent, inevitable - limitations, the resources deployed by the government stand up to the situation, but the Prime Minister is well aware that the game changer for the country (and perhaps also for the future of the cabinet) involves what is regarded as "the mother of all reforms." The second challenge is **European**. The French-German initiative disrupted the friction between the countries of the North and the South that so far prevented a much-needed qualitative leap in the EU response to the impact of the pandemic. *A promising window of opportunity has opened up, but there is strong opposition, and what will count in concrete terms will be the end result.* However, next week will see a decisive step, the presentation of the proposed "plan" by the European Commission, scheduled for 27 May. The third challenge involves **the spread of the virus**. It must be said that citizens have a greater responsibility than institutions, which must nevertheless do their part. *Next week we shall see whether the outbreak has been contained despite reopenings.* We all hope so, of course, but if not, targeted measures should be taken, which risk having a negative impact on the already sluggish recovery, and will once again raise the thorny issue of the relations between State and the Regions. On the political level, tensions in parliamentary majority are primarily related to the role of *Italia Viva* Party, seemingly positioned on dividing lines, and to internal balances of the Five Star Movement, divided on a number of key issues concerning the present situation. But even the opposition hardly moves beyond protest. Over and above the skirmishes between political parties, the centre-right is faced with the fact that the pandemic exposed to public opinion the inherent contradictions of the populist approach, both in Italy and at international level. It is no coincidence that the most significant development in the relations with Europe has been the distancing of Forza Italia. Moreover,

it would be irresponsible to aim for a government crisis at this moment in time.

In fact, to discourage rash manoeuvres, the message coming from the President of the Italian Republic is that if this government falls there will be no more cabinet reshuffles, only parliamentary elections. However, an election with as many as six Regions and a thousand municipalities voting, and the whole country called to the polls for the confirmatory referendum on cuts of parliamentarians, is planned for September next. After the postponement due to the pandemic, an election date is now being discussed. The government proposes 13-14 September, but broad consensus is needed on this issue and therefore it may take place at the end of the month to meet the opposition's demands. Scheduled elections will inevitably condition the conduct of the political forces, especially since in four of the Regions where elections will be held, the "governors" in office are running for a second term.