

Italy's Draghi to League: Learn to love the euro

di Hannah Roberts

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi laid down the law to his new government on Wednesday, sending a blunt message to the traditionally Euroskeptic League party that the euro and greater EU integration are non-negotiable.

“Supporting this government means sharing the view that the decision on the euro is irreversible, sharing the vision of an increasingly integrated European Union, moving towards a common budget capable of supporting countries in times of recession,” Draghi said in a speech outlining his administration’s program in the Senate before a confidence vote.

Draghi, the former president of the European Central Bank, [stepped](#) in to form a government of national unity after the previous coalition collapsed amid disagreements over post-pandemic economic recovery plans.

He is expected to enter power with the largest majority since World War II, with support from parties ranging from the leftist Free and Equal Party to the far-right League. But some of the parties’ positions are difficult to reconcile.

The League [made an abrupt U-turn](#) on Europe last week to enter the government, under pressure from moderate figures in its ranks such as Giancarlo Giorgetti, Draghi’s new minister for economic development. League officials justified the switch in part by saying it was important they had a say in how billions in EU recovery money are spent.

But League leader Matteo Salvini put the party’s new position in doubt on Tuesday by suggesting the single currency was revocable, telling Italian TV “only death is irreversible.”

Draghi, however, made clear there could be no room for euro-doubters in his government. He spelled out a vision that he said would mean giving up “some national sovereignty for shared sovereignty.”

Draghi also urged Italy’s polarized politicians to unite behind an environmentally conscious government that will carry out sweeping reforms in areas ranging from public administration to tax.

“Today unity isn’t an option, it’s a duty,” he said.

He signaled that tax would remain progressive, jarring with the League’s calls for a flat tax.

But the new government’s program showed the League has decided to set aside some of its more divisive themes in an effort to show it can govern responsibly.

“The speech makes it clear that the League has chosen to play the game of national unity. It confirms the League as a party of governance rather than of struggle,” said Francesco Clementi, a professor in the political science department at Perugia University.

Following Draghi’s speech, Salvini confirmed that he was prepared to toe the line, at least for now. He told broadcaster Sky TG24 that the euro is not a topic of interest to the public today.

“Right now there is the virus to defeat, and jobs to save,” he said. “We can discuss the topics that divide us once the pandemic is over.”

Salvini said he welcomed other aspects of Draghi’s speech such as lower taxes, restarting building projects and increased migrant repatriations, which are unlikely to go down well with some of the government’s supporters on the left.