

Italian politics in deadlock as Beppe Grillo rules out deal

Former comedian says he will not back Democratic party and brands leader a 'dead man talking'

Lizzy Davies in Rome and Graeme Wearden
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Beppe Grillo, who has been criticised by some supporters for ruling out a deal with Italy's Democratic party.
Photograph: Giorgio Cosulich/Getty Images

Italy's political deadlock deepened on Wednesday as [Beppe Grillo](#), the ex-comedian whose Five Star Movement broke through in spectacular style at the polls, ruled out backing a government led by the centre left and branded its leader a "dead man talking" who should quit.

Grillo unleashed a characteristic tirade of insults on Pier Luigi Bersani, leader of the Democratic party (PD), who on Tuesday extended an olive branch to M5S in a bid to create a reformist government. The ex-comic ruled out giving a crucial confidence vote in parliament to a centre-left government and reiterated that M5S's new legion of deputies and senators would vote on laws on a case-by-case basis.

"The M5S will give no confidence vote to the PD (or to anyone else)," [Grillo wrote on his blog](#). "It will vote in the chamber for laws which chime with its programme, whoever proposes them."

He went on to describe Bersani as a "political stalker" who for days had "been bothering the M5S with indecent proposals rather than resigning, as someone else would do in his position."

The stinging rebuttal – made under a parody film poster of the 1950 Italian film "47 Morto Che Parla" (47 Dead Man Talking) on to which Bersani's face was superimposed – elicited a terse response from the PD leader.

"Whatever Grillo has to say to me – insults included – I want to hear it in parliament," said Bersani.

In an indication of an emerging divide between Grillo and his grassroots, it provoked anger from many of M5S's supporters who beneath his blog criticised him for

squandering a precious opportunity.

"I have been a member of the movement since the very beginning," said one commenter who used the name Franco Mulato, in a post entitled "I do not agree!" "If they [the PD] are giving me the chance to make Italy a civilised country, with a conflict of interest law [and] an anti-corruption law, how can I disregard it?"

A petition on [Change.org](#) by another M5S voter, Viola Tesi from Florence, had within hours amassed nearly 30,000 signatures. "Dear Beppe, don't waste my vote," it read, urging Grillo to give the centre left a confidence vote and allow for a government that could start "making Italy better".

The government proposed by Bersani on Tuesday involved a five-point plan for sweeping reform of Italy's politics and institutions – ideas which are central to the M5S programme. As the bloc with an outright majority in the lower house of parliament and more seats – just – in the upper house, the centre left has said it bears the responsibility to try to find a way out of the deadlock.

The other obvious option available to it – an unwieldy grand coalition with the right, which Silvio Berlusconi floated on Tuesday – looked increasingly to be a non-starter. Nichi Vendola, leader of the Left Ecology Freedom (SEL) party in alliance with the PD, said there would be "no grand coalition" after meeting Bersani on Wednesday.

However, Berlusconi, who had already floated the idea of a grand coalition, again urged the political parties consider the need for "responsible governance". In an online video message released on his [Facebook page](#), the billionaire media tycoon did not go into detail about what sort of government he considered possible. "In the coming days we must reflect on political scenarios and proposals for the future of our country," he said.

The man who will be charged with conducting the negotiations leading to the appointment of a prime minister, the head of state, Giorgio Napolitano, was forced, meanwhile, to cancel a dinner in Berlin with a German politician who described both Berlusconi and Grillo as "clowns". The 87-year-old president, whose own term runs out in mid-May – a further complicating factor in the political crisis – called off the appointment with Peer Steinbrück after the leading Social Democrat said he was "appalled" by the two men's performances in the election.

A widely respected former communist, Napolitano is not viewed as having anything in common with either the three-times prime minister Berlusconi or Grillo, who founded the M5S in 2009 but insists he is not its official leader. He has suggested that the Nobel laureate Dario Fo take Napolitano's place as head of state, a suggestion the playwright was quoted on Wednesday as dismissing as "an absurd but lovely" idea.

The ongoing crisis in the eurozone's third-largest economy continued to make itself felt in the markets although there were signs that the initial destabilising effect was beginning to ease. On Wednesday night Italian government debt strengthened in value after falling sharply on Tuesday. An auction of 10-year bonds, albeit at raised yields, played its part in reassuring the markets spooked by the prospect of deep instability and possible contagion. Yields on 10-year bonds were on Wednesday night trading at 4.79%, down from 4.89% on Tuesday but still higher than they have been for months.

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