
Socialism And Social Democracy In Italy

Italy has had a very interesting relationship with social democracy. After World War II it seemed that social democracy was really going to persist in all of Europe and solve all the problems that European nations had. However, Italy was a State that had figured out a way to make quick cash using the resources that it had around it. The flame for socialism and social democracy burned bright in Italy for the last half of the 20th century, but it also burned fast, dying out in the 90's. There are still remnants of social democracy in Italy though through citizen benefits, but economically the stamina of Italy gave out quickly leaving Italy to fall behind its EU counterparts.

Economically Italy has been pretty stagnant since World War II. After WWII Italy experienced something called an "economic miracle". This was when Italy started to produce all the goods that we know to be "italian", such as shoes, leather goods, and luxury cars. Italy also had created super highways allowing for the country to become an industrial nation. Today Italy's economy is strong succeeding in engineering fields, but the lack of producing raw materials leave the State needing to import materials to keep up with their exports. Italy is one of the few States that has not been able to recover to the economic levels of 10 years ago.

The Italian government tends to blame the problems on having a single currency (the euro), but in reality the economic problems run deeper than just the euro. One issue is the lack of modern industrialization. As mentioned above, Italy produces many high-end products, but a lot of these goods are usually family-owned. These types of companies are the big "bread-winners" in Italy, and are left to compete with actual industries elsewhere. Another issue with the Italian economy is that Italy is economically split between the north and the south. Southern Italy is lagging behind the north economically. This is because the south has always been an agriculturally based economy and this is the biggest reason for their economic disparities in the country. In the EU average for agricultural workers is 5% and Italy has 3.6% of the population working on land. The Italian government is also in an alarmingly high amount of debt. It claims that the spending plans will help aid the economic situation and create growth. However Italy has the second highest GDP to debt ratio spending 3.7% of the GDP on interest rates.

In Italy citizens receive benefits in the sectors of healthcare, education, and family care. In regards to healthcare Italy has institution in place called the Servizio Sanitario Nazionale, or SSN. This system is a universal system created to provide universal healthcare for all italian citizens. Education is also guaranteed to italians from ages 6-18. One thing that is important to note is that though students are guaranteed free education, students are not given free transportation. However, free education allows students to attend primary and secondary school and receive a diploma to continue education if they wish. Unfortunately, Italy has one of the

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highest rates for student dropouts because students are “coerced” into continuing through the same occupational paths as their parents. Family policies benefits are also enjoyed by Italian citizens. In Italy maternity leave consists of a total of five months, two before birth and three after. Mothers that are on leave are also given 80% of their wages from their previous jobs and an extra six months of leave. Other family benefits are related to family size and income levels, and include higher payments for members that have disabilities. Persons who are disabled also earn an extra 270 euro per month if they are unemployed.

Social democracy in Italy is not really something that is associated with the Italian government anymore. After 1994 the Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano ceased to exist and because of this a truly socially democratic government has not really been around in Italy the last decade. Though Italy has some aspects of social democracy still floating around in the country’s policies and citizen entitlements, other aspects of social democracy such as economics is not really the strong suit for Italy. As stated before there is a great lack in economic growth in Italy. Over the last twenty years Italy’s productivity has barely moved going up only 0.2% per year. The economy has stayed stagnant.

For the future I believe that Italy will continue on the path that it is on, away from the ideals of social democracy. In all this is because Italy has really been one of the European countries that stayed fairly “old school” when it comes to politics and the economy. Italians clearly are not looking for change, and tend to keep their country as “unbothered” in the ways the State is run (even if there are issues that people want solved it is more of a “laid back” type of demand). The government blames the euro for its economic strife instead of looking within their own borders. To solve the biggest issue that Italy has the government needs to figure out how to become a modernized industrial power, not just from the north, but with the south as well, and allow the country to grow together.

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