

# VON DER LEYEN THREATENS ITALY PRIOR TO ELECTION

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With Giorgia Meloni expected to win Sunday's election

in Italy, Ursula von der Leyen has hinted at possible reprisals: “If things go in a difficult direction, we have the tools.” Italians fume.

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[Polls](#) indicate a likely victory for the Right in the upcoming Italian election, prompting the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to send a message to Italian voters. Asked about her opinion on how the EU would deal with “figures close to Putin” potentially winning the election, von der Leyen resorted to [veiled threats](#): “We’ll see, if things go in a difficult direction—and I’ve spoken about Hungary and Poland—we have the tools.”

<https://twitter.com/RadioGenova/status/1573226656160161792>

In adopting speech patterns more appropriate for an Italian mafioso than the president of the European Commission, von der Leyen referenced the Commission’s ability and willingness to cut funding to member states if they don’t align with the EU’s rule of law mechanisms. As we recently [reported](#), the European Commission proposed to suspend €7.5 billion of Hungary’s funds for not complying with these mechanisms, specifically, for not doing enough to fight corruption.

Von der Leyen’s statements were met with indignation in Italy. Matteo Salvini, the head of the right-wing Lega, asked on Twitter: “What is this, a threat? This is shameful arrogance. Respect the free, democratic, and sovereign vote of the Italian people. Friends of all, servants to none.”

<https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1573206749016133633>

Von der Leyen's statements also provoked left-wing politicians who banded with their right-wing colleagues to denounce efforts to intimidate Italy. The liberal Matteo Renzi of Italia Viva sent a [clear message](#) to the European Commission's president "not to enter into Italian affairs in the slightest."

Enrico Letta of the center-left Partito Democratico [tried to assure](#) voters that "there is no blackmail from the EU," and was sure von der Leyen would soon "clarify her sentence," as she is "not a dangerous communist," but the damage was done. Salvini [remarked](#) on Mattino Cinque News that

*if anyone in Brussels thinks of cutting the funds that belong to Italy, because the League wins the elections, then we have to rethink this Europe. This is institutional bullying.*

He added that "on Sunday the Italians vote, Brussels or the bank do not vote," and insisted that von der Leyen [apologize](#) or resign.

Current Prime Minister Mario Draghi has been silent on the issue.