

EU in CRISIS: Salvini issues ultimatum to Brussels - 'We'll FIRE you in six months!'

ITALY's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini warned the European Commission his eurosceptic government will "keep going" despite threats to its budget proposals as he issued an ultimatum to Eurocrats "insulting" the country.

Italy's eurosceptic leader Matteo Salvini has been involved in an ongoing verbal spat with European Commission boss Jean-Claude Juncker over the past two weeks.

The pair has repeatedly locked horns over the Italian Government's refusal to back down from a controversial budget proposal to increase its deficit target for next year.

But with the European Elections scheduled for 2019, Mr Salvini reminded the Commission of the risks of threatening a core member state like Italy: "The Europe of bankers, founded on mass immigration and economic insecurity, keeps on threatening and insulting Italians and their Government?"

"Relax, in six months 500 million voters will fire them. We keep going."

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Echoing his coalition partner, 5 Star Movement (M5S) leader Luigi di Maio forecast a shake-up in the European political establishment during next year's elections.

Mr di Maio, who serves as Italian deputy Prime Minister alongside Mr Salvini, warned EU citizens will mimic Italian citizens in demanding change from Brussels.

Speaking to La Repubblica, he said: "There will be a political earthquake at the European level and all rules will change.

"In all EU countries - we can see it from the polls - something similar to what happened during the Italian election will happen. We'll see with the European elections and it will help us."



EU news: Salvini warned Italians "will fire" the European Union at the next elections (Image: FRANCE 24•LA 7)

Commenting on the less-than-stellar reaction to Italy's budget proposals from the EU, Mr di Maio continued: "If the EU wants to talks with us, we'll set up camp in Brussels and talk for as long as they want to. But if there is any prejudice we have no hope.

"If I have to pick between people who hold grudges against Italy and Italian citizens, I'll always pick Italians."

Mr Juncker has insisted that the EC will not interfere, saying: "It is up to Italian policy-makers to find rules and measures that will allow Italy to remain within the agreed budgetary targets."

Economic Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici however has dismissed this approach and suggested Brussels could hit Rome with its entire power.

Mr Moscovici said: "The Italian Government presented a government budget with a 2.4% deficit not only for this year but over the next three years to come which is a significant deviation to what was committed before.

"It may lead to public expenditure that makes you popular for a while, but who pays in the end?

"The European Commission will exert all of its powers not to impose austerity but in the defence of the Italian and European interests."

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