



USITF Newsletter #3, Week of 14th-20th February 2016

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Welcome to the third edition of the weekly USITF newsletter, “Italian Politics This Week,” a snapshot on past week’s major events, complete with news and analyses from national and international sources.

Giulio Regeni’s murder: Egypt denied the involvement of its security apparatus in the murder of Giulio Regeni, the Italian PhD student found dead in Cairo on February 3. In an official note, the Ministry of Interior opposed the notion that Regeni was apprehended by Egyptian security forces before he was found in a ditch, his body revealing signs of [torture](#). Later in the week, Regeni’s family denied media reports suggesting the Italian student was working for the national secret [service](#). Italy’s Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni said the government “won’t settle for easy reconstructions or convenient [truth](#).”

Senate postpones vote on controversial civil union bill: The bill was expected to be approved this week, but its vote was postponed after the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement removed his support to an amendment of the ruling Democratic Party ([PD](#)). A poll in Italy showed 70% of Italians support the bill, but only 24% believe gay couples should be allowed adoption [rights](#). Italy is the only major Western country that has not recognized same-sex marriages yet. A full explanation of the bill can be found [here](#), while further analyses are provided by the [NYT](#) and [The Local](#).

Renzi demands eastern countries to show solidarity in the refugee crisis: Paolo Gentiloni urged EU member states to face the continent’s migrant crisis and to avoid a failure of the Schengen treaty. EU ministers have asked Greece to comply with a set of recommendations to stem the flow of migrants, or other member states will initiate controls on their borders for up to two years. “Unilateral actions that will lead to the collapse of the Schengen treaty must be [avoided](#),” Gentiloni said. An Italian industry lobby official stated on [Thursday](#) that a suspension of the Schengen treaty might impose up to 3% of additional costs on companies. At the European Union summit this week, Matteo Renzi warned eastern European leaders to have their EU funds cut unless they show solidarity in the refugee crisis. The Italian Prime Minister was quoted saying “the phase of planning 2020 funds is starting. Either you show solidarity in taking and giving or we bet contributor countries will stop showing solidarity [too](#).” Polish Minister for European Affairs Konrad Szymansky rebuked Renzi’s words, accusing Italy to blackmail eastern European [countries](#).

Italy sets up “cultural peacekeepers” team: The 60-strong task force is said to be ready to protect world’s heritage and to be deployed to evaluate damages to monuments and art artifacts in the wake of conflict or natural disaster. The main objective of the art detectives’ team is to hinder art pieces are sold to finance terrorist activities. According to [AFP](#), Italy’s art police have an international

reputation for tracking down and recovering stolen works. The idea of the task force was voted in by the UN after the destruction of historical sites in Syria by the Islamic State. Read more on the [NYT](#).

OECD revises Italy's 2016 GDP forecast: after similar data were released by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) last week, the OECD has cut Italy's growth forecast for 2016 to 1%, 0.4 of a percentage point lower than its prediction in November. Italian GDP is however expected to grow 1.4% in [2017](#). According to [Reuters](#), Italy's economic difficulties might continue even if Matteo Renzi reaches a deal with the European Union over budget's flexibility. In the meantime, Italy has been clear in saying it would veto any plan aimed at limiting bank's holdings of government [debt](#). [The Local](#) suggests five reasons why one should worry about Italy's economic plight. On the [Irish](#) and [Financial](#) Times you can read more on Renzi's struggle to spark a stronger economic growth after years of recession .

That's all for this week, see you next Monday!