



## “Sign up for peace, end the suffering”

In Italy, signatures are currently being collected for a national referendum for peace.

*Peter Hanseler*

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### Foreword

Once again we have the pleasure to publish a great article from the blog "[Schweizer Standpunkt](#)". Mr. Georg Koch, member of the editorial board, dedicates himself to a topic that does not receive any attention in the mass media in the West.

## Article

*Rather than causing ever greater suffering with further arms shipments to Ukraine, the money in Italy should go toward urgent improvements in the domestic health care system.*

As in other countries in Europe, polls show the Italian population clearly in favor to end arms deliveries to Ukraine and engage in serious diplomatic efforts to achieve peace and security for all peoples and nations. As opposed to Germany, for example, where eligible voters have only the tool of a petition to make demands on the government (the petition by *Alice Schwarzer* and *Sarah Wagenknecht* against further arms deliveries and for diplomacy is already endorsed by more than 800,000 citizens after only three months), eligible voters in Italy can call for a legally valid national referendum by means of a plebiscite.

Both committees "Ripudia la guerra" [Reject the war] led by the Roman natural scientist Prof. Enzo Pennetta and the movement "Generazioni future" [Future generations] led by the Turin lawyer and international law expert *Ugo Mattei* joined forces this year in March in Rome for a joint referendum campaign.



*Referendum Campaign: Sign for Peace – End the Suffering*

Together with numerous well-known political, religious and social figures, they succeeded in a very short time in working out a referendum proposal, putting together a referendum committee and winning over responsible people from all regions and many Italian provinces.

The goal of the referendum committee is "to give the Italian people, who are entitled to sovereignty under the Constitution, the opportunity to impose their will."

Referendum documents for the collection of signatures were sent to over 8000 municipalities. Since mid-May, citizens entitled to vote have had the opportunity to call for a referendum with their signatures, either by collecting signatures in public spaces, at their municipality or electronically.

Professor Ugo Mattei recently shared on his Facebook page:

*"For almost a month, signatures have been collected for three referendums without any media support. Two of them aim to prevent arms deliveries to Ukraine and other wars and conflicts. The third referendum opposes the abolition of the National Health Service. These are important goals shared by the entire pacifist movement and those who do not want to participate in the West's warmongering. The referendum initiative, calling for more investment in the health of the Italian population and less in weapons and war support, is supported by a guarantor committee. It is made up of lawyers (Mattei, Somma, Poggi, De Sena, Cappellini, Borghi, Calamo Specchia), judges (Leo, Sceusa), philosophers (Agamben, Cacciari), historians and political scientists (Preterossi, Bradanini, Cardini, Dinucci, Viale), personalities from the Catholic world (Zanotelli, Cesena, Minoni), journalists and personalities from the entertainment industry (Ovadia, Freccero, Leoni, Vauro Senesi). This is a broad front intended to express the great concern in the country against the increase in military spending and the simultaneous deterioration of public health that has manifested itself dramatically during the pandemic."*

The referendum provided for in Art. 75 of the Italian Constitution is an instrument of direct popular consultation by which citizens entitled to vote can make their voices heard by deciding upon the total or partial cancellation of a law or of a legal act having the force of law, such as a legislative decree or a legislative resolution. For this process to be admissible, it is necessary that 500,000 voters submit a request to this effect within three months, or else five regional councils.

Once the number of signatures reaches at least 500,000, the Constitutional Court assesses the admissibility of the petitions submitted by citizens. In particular, it checks whether the petition addresses an issue explicitly excluded by the constitution from a national referendum, such as taxation, amnesty or pardon laws, or the ratification of international treaties.

If the admissibility test of the Constitutional Court is successful, the referendum in its true sense is triggered, and state authorities are required to organize a referendum – preferably two – one-day referendums, during which the entire voting population is called upon to express its opinion on the proposed issue.

The referendum is considered approved if the majority of eligible voters – that is, 50+1 percent of all persons registered on the Italian electoral registry – participate in the vote and if the majority of those voting agree. Policymakers are required to act in accordance with this result. Since the introduction of the right to hold referendums, several referendums have already been held successfully – for example, in 2011 against the privatization of the water supply. Currently, eligible voters are presented with two interrelated questions in the form of referendum questions:

*"Do you want to repeal Article 1 (National Health Planning and Establishment of Uniform Levels of Care), Paragraph 13 of Legislative Decree 502/1992 (Reorganization of Discipline in the Health Sector pursuant to Article 1 of Law No. 421 of October 23, 1992 [Official Gazette No. 305 of December 30, 1992 – Ordinary Supplement No. 137]), limited to the words and private entities approved by the National Health Service?"*

The initiators complain that public health care has become increasingly worse in disadvantaged areas – especially in southern Italy: "Access to health care, which should be free and efficient for all citizens regardless of their income, has become difficult for those who cannot afford the cost of private or semi-private (contracted) care."

As a result, waiting lists at public health care facilities are getting longer and longer, sometimes with a significant impact on the respective health problems. According to the Italian Constitution, the committee believes that "as citizens, we have the right to demand that the state and politicians work first and foremost to guarantee our constitutional rights. We have a right to expect that funds will be allocated for medicine and intensive care close to home, even if these areas bring little to the private sector."

While this negative development is going on, taxpayers have to realize that Italy – despite its high national debt – is supplying Ukraine with weapons and aid worth billions of euros. Therefore, the referendum raises the following second question to the citizens:

*"Do you want to repeal Article 1 of Law No. 185 of December 2, 2022 (Urgent Provisions on Extension of Authorization for Transfer of Military Means, Materials and Equipment in Favor of Governmental Authorities of Ukraine), transformed into Law No. 8 of January 27, 2023. 'Is the authorization for the transfer of military means, materials and equipment in favor of the governmental authorities of Ukraine, referred to in Article 2bis of Legislative Decree No. 14 of February 25, 2022, transformed with amendments by Law No. 28 of April 5, 2022, extended until December 31, 2023, subject to the address of the Chambers, under the terms and conditions set forth therein?'"*

Professor Mattei elaborates on the need to stop arms shipments to Ukraine in an interview with the online portal *Abruzzo-Web* as follows:

*"We must avoid sending weapons. Weapons are there to kill people. And asking the Ukrainian resistance to continue waging war with our weapons is blatant nonsense. There are Western geopolitical strategies that have their own logic, namely that of complete subjugation to military and industrial apparatuses. In this scenario, Ukrainians are as much victims of Putin as of the West's aggression.*

*However, our referendum is not a referendum for partisanship. Our referendum is a referendum for disarmament. [...] In 2023, it is not acceptable to solve problems with the use of weapons. The point is this: we must try to make it clear that the idea of creating peace by moving weapons to a theater of war is a delusional illusion, the truth is the exact opposite. You create peace with disarmament, not with arms deliveries. [...]*

*We will spend 14 billion euros over the next two years to serve U.S. and NATO interests, with the aim of increasing the budget for military spending, while we cut 4 billion euros in health care, and this despite the fact that health care is already in trouble. Taken as a whole, this is*

*suicidal for Europe, which is totally alienated from the Atlantic axis, the big multinationals, etc."*

## **Interview with Mrs. Nikola Sanna, Regional Representative of the Referendum for Sardinia**

**Swiss Standpoint: Is it correct that the referendum opposing the war is a so-called "abrogative referendum" in which 500,000 signatures must be collected within three months in order to vote on the arms deliveries?**

*Nicola Sanna:* That is correct. The purpose of this referendum is as simple as it is crucial: to signal the Italian government, parliament and the "international community" that Italy does not want to be a belligerent country, does not want to fuel endless carnage, and that it should do what has not even been mentioned so far, namely to make a serious attempt to bring the adversaries to the negotiating table.

*Do the affected citizens react positively to this possibility of self-determination?*

We have a good response from those who are aware of this campaign to collect signatures for the referendum. However, the biggest problem is that mainstream media are boycotting this referendum.

A newspaper article has reported about a survey on Italy's arms deliveries to Ukraine. 52 per cent does not want arms deliveries and 68 per cent is against NATO intervention,<sup>1</sup> which means that at least 60 percent of Italians do not want to deliver arms to Ukraine.

*What is the experience so far with the collection of signatures?*

People can now oppose arms shipments, sanctions and the violation of Article 11 of the Italian Constitution regarding the war. They have three possibilities to submit their signature: (1) online (for the first time in Italy); (2) at the stands set up by volunteers; (3) in their municipality of residence.

The signature collection forms have been sent to all the municipalities in Italy, so that our solicitations have reached about 8000 municipalities. The number of stands depends on the number of people who make themselves available to set them up and supervise them. All the forces that we have been able to locate are sporadically involved in this action. And we are counting on many more people to

help instead of criticizing or just talking or writing on social media. The number of booths also depends on the availability of signature certifiers (lawyers, city councilors, etc.).

I would also like to remind you that digital technologies used for a good cause should not be "shunned like the plague", and therefore on-line collection can also play a crucial role.

It enables many people unable to leave their homes to contribute to this referendum. The small financial contribution for the online signature is related to the use of the private platform and the service offered by the management company. In this regard, the cost is about the price of a coffee.

### **Is the referendum supported by the media?**

Almost all the media, dominated by the financial world and multinational corporations, are carrying out war propaganda. The government and the parliament are following them.

The majority of the Italian people is still opposing war and arms supplies, despite TV, newspaper and mainstream media propaganda pushing in the opposite direction. The government and parliament fail to acknowledge this majority opinion among the Italian people. We want to give a voice to that majority opinion.

*What is the attitude of politicians towards the referendum?*

The referendum is not promoted by any political party, but by two committees, "Ripudia la Guerra" and "Generazioni future", and then some political parties like *Democrazia Sovrana e Popolare* (DSP) joined this initiative.

When a referendum is held on such a broad issue, there is no need to go into detail; Catholics, right-wingers and left-wingers can participate – a broad mix of everyone. Certainly people like *Conte, Di Battista, Travaglio, Orsini* and *Santoro*, who have always opposed weapons deliveries, should support the referendum.

The referendum is a political event that can use a loophole in a past law to raise a political issue. It is said that 60 percent of Italian citizens do not want war, but 99 percent of journalists obviously do. We will see what the country really thinks, the issue is purely political. However, the majority of politicians are pro-NATO and therefore accept any Anglo-American decision, even if the citizens have to bear the consequences.

*What would you like to share with readers from Switzerland?*

There are two countries at war, Russia and Ukraine. Italy is part of a political alliance, the *European Union* – you can like it or not, we are part of it. We are also part of a military alliance, *NATO* – you can like it or not.

Russia and Ukraine are at war. But they are not part of NATO or the European Union, why should we send weapons? Some will argue that there is an aggressor and a victim. Well... then why don't we send weapons to the Palestinians or to Yemen? This is all a political question.

*When exactly is the collection deadline?*

Until the mid-July, exactly until July 17.

*Ms. Sanna, we wish you much success.*

\* The Referendum Committee includes well-known personalities such as geographer and geopolitician *Manlio Di-nucci*, political scientist Prof. *Alberto Bradanini*, lawyer Prof. *Marina Calamo Specchia*, historian Prof. *Franco Cardini*, journalist, writer and human rights activist *Marinella Correggia*, professor of international human rights *Pasquale De Sena*, lawyer Prof. *Sergio Foà*, the well-known journalist *Carlo Freccero*, the poet and philosopher Prof. *Marco Guzzi*, the well-known author *Germana Leoni*, the well-known political scientist and artist *Moni Ovadia*, the lawyer Prof. *Anna Maria Poggi*, the professor of philosophy and politics *Geminello Preterossi*, the well-known journalist and peace reporter *Vauro Senesi* and the missionary and peace activist Padre *Alex Zanotelli*.

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