

Italy goes to war with France over boat migrants – is a pattern developing here?

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Italy slams France – “aggressive, incomprehensible, unjustifiable”

France slams Italy – “incomprehensible and unacceptable” – warning of “severe consequences”

Welcome to the world of the EU’s ‘solidarity’ and ‘happy families’

As the UK prepares to hand over another £50m to the French for failing to stop migrant boats departing their shores, France is now embroiled in another spat over migrants – this time at the opposite end of its country.

The relations between the EU’s second and third largest economies can now best be described as having turned from ‘chilly’ to ‘ice cold’. On Thursday the French government even called on the EU to ‘isolate’ Italy.

Needless to say, Italy’s new right-wing Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, is not happy. At a press conference yesterday **she came out fighting**. CIBUK.Org brings readers all the name-

calling, as well as **providing the facts about the EU's migrant problem** in the Central Mediterranean.

We also consider **why three of France's neighbours have all been having such difficulties with Macron's France.**

The Franco-Italian migrant wars – who said what about whom?

Yesterday the French government allowed the Ocean Viking, which is run by French/Norwegian NGO SOS Méditerranée, to dock in Toulon with 230 asylum seekers on board after Rome refused the ship entry to a port to disembark its migrants picked up off the coast of Libya.



Ocean Viking, credit SOS Méditerranée

1. The French fit of pique

On Thursday French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin had

slammed Italy's stance as **"incomprehensible"**, saying the Ocean Viking **"is located without any doubt in Italy's search and rescue zone"**.

He warned of **"severe consequences"** for Italy's bilateral relations with France and the EU as a whole, adding that France had acted according to its **"humanitarian duty"**, but the migrants were Italy's responsibility under EU rules. He made it clear the French move was an **"exceptional"** measure that would not be repeated.

A third of the migrant passengers will be accepted by France. The bulk of the remainder will be sent to Germany. The French Home Secretary went on to slam the Italian authorities for **"making the migrants wait at sea for 15 days"**, announcing that France has now suspended plans to take in 3,500 refugees currently in Italy. He then called on all participants in the EU's migrant-relocation mechanism to adopt similar measures. Darmanin called on **"Germany in particular"** to suspend the relocation of asylum seekers from Italy. Germany has remained ominously silent.

The French Secretary of State for EU Affairs, Laurence Bonne, told French media that trust with Rome had broken down following the row:-

"The current Italian government has not respected the mechanism which it had committed to. There was a unilateral decision that put lives in danger and that, moreover, does not comply with international law."

2. Yesterday the Italians came back fighting

Here is the new Italian PM Giorgia Meloni, speaking yesterday :-

"When there is talk of retaliation in EU dynamics, something is not working."

"I was struck by the aggressive, incomprehensible, unjustifiable reaction of the French government. The request to isolate Italy betrays a curious EU dynamic. I hope this does not happen. It would not be smart."

"The issue today is how the EU should deal with this matter. It could choose to isolate Italy. I think it would be better to isolate the traffickers. You can decide to isolate Italy but it is not the solution."



Ms Meloni then pointed out how little France has done.

*"I think it's worth putting two numbers together. The Ocean Viking NGO ship that docks in France today is the first NGO ship to have ever docked in France and it has 230 migrants. This generated a very tough reaction with respect to Italy, which has allowed almost 90,000 emigrants to enter. **"What makes me angry?"** That Italy has to be the only [country providing] a disembarkation port. This is not written in any agreement".*

3. Naturally the EU Commission sided with France

“The European Commission calls for the immediate disembarkation, at the nearest place of safety, of all persons rescued and who are on board the Ocean Viking.”

– EU Commission statement, Wed 09 Nov 2022

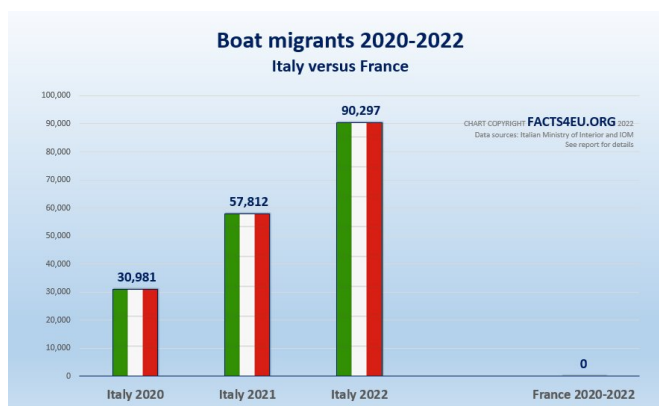
On Wednesday the “nearest place of safety” was of course Italy.

Is Meloni right to be angry at France? We present the facts and they don't favour France

Summary

Italy has easily outperformed France on taking in boat migrants, for many years

The chart below illustrates the situation regarding the number of migrants disembarked by Italy from 01 Jan – 11 Nov 2022 (yesterday), compared with the data referring to the same period in the years 2020 and 2021.



- 2020 : 30,981
- 2021 : 57,812
- 2022 : 90,297
- France : 0

[Source : Italian Interior Ministry and IOM, 11 Nov 2022.]

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How many migrants has France taken from Italy?

According to the Italian Interior Ministry France has taken only 38 of Italy's 90,000 boat migrants this year. In fact **only 164 people have been relocated from Italy to other EU countries this year**, according to the UN's 'International Organisation for Migration' (IOM). And most of the 164 have gone to Germany.

It is also worth mentioning that according to the IOM, it is the Italian Coast Guard and other Italian state-led rescue boats that have picked up the vast majority of migrants at sea, not the NGO vessels. Only 15% of total boat migrants have been landed by foreign-owned NGO boats.

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