

Sexism, ice cream, and Renzi's "no comment strategy"

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This article is by Polis Intern and LSE student Jessica Di Paolo.

Inevitably, it's been labelled 'gelatogate'. On Twitter, women and men posted pictures of themselves eating ice creams and featuring signs reading: "I know how to do it, too." It looks like an ironic ice cream advertising campaign, but this is gender politics, Italian style.

Credit: Chi magazine

"She knows how to work an ice cream"

As you can see from the picture above, it is no social media marketing campaign. The woman in the picture is Marianna Madia, 34, a minister in the Renzi government.

One of Italy's most popular gossip magazines, Chi, pictured the minister while she was eating an ice cream. The magazine was accused of sexism after publishing the pictures with the provocative headline: "She knows how to work an ice cream" by adding "The minister allows herself a break of pleasure with her husband in the car."



Not surprisingly, a massive storm on social media spread messages of solidarity together with funny pictures and critics against the Chi's editor Alfonso Signorini. But the editor is shameless. According to Il Corriere della Sera newspaper, Signorini explained that "The concept of double standards in Italy is not clear. Italians made fun of [Silvio Berlusconi's current partner Francesca Pascale](#) when she was licking an ice lolly, but now they feel ashamed."

Social media storm and reactions

Although the pictures could be perceived as offensive and sexist, this is not the point. Italians are familiar with those kind of sexually suggestive photos and videos. In the last Berlusconi government, women in the cabinet were usually portrayed as "supporter of the prime minister", "sexy soubrette", and "beautiful but not intelligent."

Sadly, even with achievements such as increasing the number of women in leadership positions, the media coverage focused on their bodies instead of highlighting the importance of developing greater gender equality in government. After this, the Berlusconi government was nicknamed the 'Bunga Bunga party', and with it the credibility of Italian women in politics gradually disappeared.



The 'gelatogate' case demonstrates the Italian government's poor reaction to this instance of outrageous and sexist media coverage. Looking at social networks and reading the main newspapers reports, only women from the Democratic Party (PD) reacted by posting pictures and comments on Twitter and Instagram. Laura Boldrini, President of the Chamber of Deputies, expressed her "solidarity to Marianna Madia. It is an ongoing debate, the Italian path towards gender equality is still long and tough."

*This article is by Polis intern and LSE MSc student **Jessica Di Paolo**.*

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laura boldrini ✓
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Solidarietà a [@mariannamadia](#) In tante lo denunciavamo da tempo. Molta strada c'è ancora da fare per il rispetto di genere

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