

Italian Media: Milan Suspends Sister City Status With St. Pete

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Authorities in the Italian city of Milan have decided to suspend their sister city agreement with St. Petersburg, and Venice and Turin are likely to follow suit, news reports said.

Citing Italian media, online news portal Fontanka.ru said that Milan's city council took the decision on Nov. 23 in response to St. Petersburg lawmakers banning homosexual propaganda among minors.

But St. Petersburg's External Relations Committee quickly moved to deny the reports, issuing a [statement](#) describing talk of a rupture between the two cities as "unreliable" and saying that they would request an official explanation from Milan.

Milan's LGBT community first brought to the attention of the city's governing council the perceived violation of sexual minorities' rights in St. Petersburg in March, Fontanka.ru reported.

In response, local lawmaker Marco Cappato proposed tearing up Milan's sister city agreement with St. Petersburg, and members of the city council overwhelmingly voted in favor of the move, the St. Petersburg-based portal said.

In an interview with RIA-Novosti, the author of St. Petersburg's controversial anti-gay legislation, United Russia lawmaker Vitaly Milonov, blamed the move on "socialists" and called European colleagues "a gay lobby."

Critics of the legislation, which was passed in February and reflects the enduringly conservative nature of Russian society, say its wording is vague and open to abuse. Milan is one of the few Italian cities where same-sex marriages are allowed.

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