

March 2021

PRESS PACK



Private Facebook group with nearly 4000 members
For UK citizens in Italy under the Withdrawal Agreement
Providing information and support on citizens' rights
Run by volunteers, affiliate member of British in Europe

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EXAMPLES AND QUOTES FROM MEMBERS



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At every turn, UK citizens, already legally resident in Italy, are being blocked from carrying on their normal lives. Absurdly, bureaucratic procedures are requiring them to have a document they can't get, or can't get yet... (A permesso di soggiorno is only for newly arrived third country nationals, and the non-mandatory carta di soggiorno is unlikely to be available for some months.)

Work contracts

"I suddenly found myself without a job because the system for registering contracts does not recognise my Withdrawal Agreement rights, and I am being treated like a newly arrived third-country immigrant. I have a family to support, but cannot work due to a systemic issue."

Registering as self-employed

"I had a call today from my accountant to say I couldn't register myself for self-employed status, specifically the commercial register would only accept a digital residency after declining my WA document. I've been told I have 5 days to sort it out. No idea how I am supposed to move forward..."

Pensions/benefits

"I am having issues related to INPS not paying my pension due to their system requiring a permesso di soggiorno number. They specified permesso but I presumed they were just ill-informed. I applied for the carta di soggiorno on 13 Jan but haven't got it yet."

"I recently logged on to my INPS portal to apply for the bonus nido, but was asked to state whether I am an extracomunitario citizen to which I imagine now I have to tick yes. It then asks for my permesso di soggiorno number. I am a British citizen, resident in Italy since 2016, awaiting my biometric card."

Tessera Sanitaria/voluntary contributions

One member was told that she could not register for healthcare and pay voluntary contribution because she did not have a carta di soggiorno, even though she has been resident since 2019. Others have been unable to apply for or renew a tessera sanitaria.

Purchasing a property

"I was asked for a permesso di soggiorno to complete a loan document for the house I am building. Fortunately, when I provided a receipt for my carta di soggiorno it was approved". Others may not be so lucky as they are still waiting to get appointments at their questura. Others still have experienced difficulties with notaries insisting they must have a permesso/carta di soggiorno to complete a purchase.

Purchasing a vehicle

"My girlfriend is from the UK, but since December 2020 she's a resident in Italy. She has an Italian ID, an Italian driving licence, a codice fiscale, and the WA attestazione too. She's now trying to buy a car, but the dealership said to her that she needs the permesso di soggiorno. She hasn't applied for the carta di soggiorno yet."

"I have been trying to buy a car online. Near the end of the process, they requested the biometric card which I queried but they were absolutely adamant that it was needed. I had to involve the embassy and IOM. It took about three weeks to resolve which was done by signing an ACI self declaration stating I would be applying for a carta di soggiorno."

Carta d'identità

"At my appointment at Milan comune to get a carta di identità, I was told I needed the permesso di soggiorno. My boyfriend, as my translator, explained I was here before Brexit, my residency application had been accepted, and I was entitled to the card. She told him that it was after Brexit now and I need the permesso di soggiorno. I later called the Consulate in Milan and they said the comune were probably referring to the carta di soggiorno biometric card. I have also contacted IOM who have emailed Milan comune but have not had a reply."

"27/1 I went to the Milan questura for the biometrica carta for British citizens and I now have a receipt for the card when it is ready. On 15 Feb I went to the Milan main town hall and they said they cannot give me a carta d'identità until I have this new biometrica carta or a soggiorno... so I am now stuck. (I had a residency letter and the WA attestazione but no one was interested). My biggest problem is my drivers licence, as I need my ID card to book my theory test. I had hoped I could have this done quickly. I may not be able to drive here for a while, we have young children and drive most days."

Property rentals/equipment leasing and other contracts

"I went to the Apple store in Milan to ask about getting a leasing contract for my business equipment and they said I need a permesso di soggiorno. I explained that there is a withdrawal agreement but they had no clue about it."

"My husband died 3 weeks ago, the phone was in his name. I wanted to change it to my name with a takeover contract, "subentro di contratto", but was asked by TIM for a photocopy of my "permesso di soggiorno". I was obliged to find another solution as I was no mood for pursuing it with them."

One member reported being unable to renew her rental contract because her landlord's notary was saying a permesso di soggiorno is required.

Driving

"I was stopped by the police at a random check in Rome. After showing them my converted Italian driving licence, they asked for my "permesso di soggiorno". I corrected them and said it's "carta di soggiorno" they said Giusto! I continued saying that I'd applied for one and showed them a pdf copy of the receipt on my mobile. They said you know from now on you need to be carrying the card with you together with the ID and the licence!"

Another person was asked for a permesso di soggiorno two days before his driving test. Fortunately, in the end, his WA attestazione was accepted but not everyone has it. Some have even had difficulty getting it.

Citizenship applications

"My husband was about to apply for Italian citizenship by marriage and the lawyer advising us on the whole process was told today by the relevant Prefettura that as a UK citizen he is required to wait until he has the Carta di Soggiorno (we applied about a month ago). This is despite the Questura clearly saying (as per the vademecum) that such a card is not mandatory. I have tried contacting the British embassy but they responded with a generic answer indicating where I can find more information on Brexit and the Italian rules on the biometric card. Is there anything else we can do about it? We are ready to go with all the documents from abroad, which are at risk of expiring if we have to wait too long for the carta di soggiorno."

For some it is all too much: *"I'm disabled. I can't face going to another public building, another post office queue, where I can't understand anyone (it's more the masks/screen than the language, I have sensory processing issues). Residency took almost 6 months. In that time I lost my well-paid job. Now I have just one job part-time because I am too stressed to function most of the time."*

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Briefing Note



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On 31 January 2020 the United Kingdom left the European Union and British citizens living in Italy became part of a new, **special category** of resident: non-EU citizens covered by the Withdrawal Agreement. After years of uncertainty and stress, hope was that people could finally get on with their lives.

But the end of the transition period on 31st December 2020 saw the start of a new nightmare. In the last few weeks Brits in Italy have found themselves facing new challenges and hardships thanks to a combination of technological problems and bureaucratic misinformation.

Rights & Obligations:

Italy has chosen to implement the WA using a **declaratory** system. This means that people covered by WA rights **DO NOT** need to apply for a new residence status but have the **option** to receive a new residence document in electronic form.

A common misconception now is that all Brits (like other non-EU nationals) must have a *permesso di soggiorno*. However those of us covered by the WA **CANNOT** have one.

In Italy the **optional electronic residence document** is the *carta di soggiorno* and just before Christmas the government announced it would be made available on request through local Questure from 1st January.

Carta di Soggiorno – the practicalities

After some initial teething problems, appointments are now being granted although in many cases people are having to wait several weeks or (in a few cases) months for a slot.

The cards aren't available yet and people are being told that it may be several months before they receive them.

Problems since the end of the transition period

During the transition period British citizens continued to be treated as if they were EU citizens. This ended on 31st December and in the last few weeks 2 major issues have come to light:

1. Computer systems used by public administrations and businesses are unable to process, register or deal with Brits who are covered by the WA because there is no category to recognise our special status. The systems require the input of *permesso di soggiorno* number, which people don't and can't have. For example:
 - income loss because work contracts can't be registered or P.IVA set up
 - no health cover because the *Tessera Sanitaria* can't be issued/renewed or voluntary contributions paid

- loss of pensions or benefits from INPS
 - difficulties in setting up telephone contracts with TIM and Fastweb
2. There is widespread ignorance about the rights of those with WA protection amongst public officials, professionals and businesses with again many insisting that we need to have a *permesso di soggiorno*. Examples include:
- unable to purchase a house, renew or enter into a rental contract
 - unable to purchase a car or lease business equipment
 - unable to complete a citizenship application.
 - unable to get a Carta di identità
 - unable to register a COLF contract
 - threat of fines for not carrying a *carta* or *permesso di soggiorno*.

What needs to be done?

1. *Technological problems*

Public administration systems need to be updated urgently. In the meantime, a manual workaround needs to be found and communicated asap.

2. *Communication:*

Under art. 37 of the WA the Italian government is obliged to raise awareness and communicate clearly the rights and obligations of people covered by the agreement. A clear statement needs to be published on all relevant websites as soon as possible.

After 4 stressful years waiting for an agreement to be reached over Brexit, Brits in Italy had hoped that the worst was now behind them. These problems are having seriously detrimental effect on people's lives and in many cases causing real hardship – solutions need to be implemented immediately.

For further information:

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