

## Health Care

### 1) Health Care for Citizens of Non-EU member states.

Citizens of Non-EU member states who reside in Italy are entitled to health care benefits based on the reason of their stay and on the type of permesso di soggiorno they already possess.

Health care benefits may be also requested by the foreign national who is abroad and intends to enter Italy with the only purpose of accessing medical assistance.

Let's discuss this very situation.

The foreign national residing abroad who intends to receive health care benefits in Italy, and his/her hypothetical escort, can obtain a specific entry visa and the appropriate permesso di soggiorno allowing them to stay in Italy for the entire term necessary.

The entry visa can be requested at the Visa office of the Italian consulate or embassy abroad.

To qualify for this visa, applicants must meet three requirements:

- they must present a statement declaring the qualified hospital chosen, either public or private, which identifies the type of care needed, the date of initiation and the duration of the term for the treatment;
- they must prove to have a money deposit as a bond, considering the estimated cost of the requested medical care. The deposit, in Euro or U.S. dollars, must be in the amount of 30% of the gross estimated cost of the requested medical assistance and must be paid to the chosen hospital;
- they must provide evidence that they have enough financial resources to fully pay the hospitalization bills and all other costs incurred to cover full accommodation and board expenses outside of the hospital facility, for the entire recovery term, along with the expenses necessary to the applicant and his/her escort, to return to their country of origin.

Once in Italy, foreign nationals must apply for a permesso di soggiorno for health care, directly at the Questura and not through the Post Office. The permesso will be renewable at any time, until duly certified therapeutical assistance is still needed.

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Let's now discuss a situation which concerns a great deal of our viewers. **The requirements to obtain health care benefits, for citizens of Non-EU member states residing in Italy.**

We will begin with the situation concerning all **foreign nationals who have the duty and the right to register to the National Health Care Service, the same right enjoyed by all Italian citizens.** This means they must not pay any fee or tax to obtain a Sanitary Card, which can be requested at the ASL of the town where they reside.

This right is shared by all foreign nationals who are in possession of one of the following types of permesso di soggiorno, even if the permesso is expired and for which has been made an application for an extension within sixty days from the expiration date.

Permesso di soggiorno for work, subordinate or self-employed, permesso di soggiorno for those waiting for employment.

Permesso for family, political asylum, humanitarian asylum, permesso to request asylum, permesso for those waiting to adopt, for custody, for obtaining citizenship.

In these cases health care benefits are granted to all dependent family members who are legally residing in Italy.

However, certain categories of workers are not included, for instance: managers, journalists, those in possession of a permesso di soggiorno for business, since all these types of workers can request a voluntary registration to the National Health Care Service at the conditions we are about to examine.

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**Foreign nationals who have a type of permesso di soggiorno different from then ones we mentioned earlier,** must have health insurance against illnesses, accidents, or pregnancy, which must be stipulated through the required insurance policy with an Italian or foreign insurance institute and which must be valid on the national territory, through registration to the National Health Care Service - called, in this case, voluntary registration - equally valid for all family members dependent on the applicant.

Proof of available health insurance is a necessary condition to obtain the permesso di soggiorno.

Let's go on to discussing the types of permesso di soggiorno which allow a voluntary registration which, on the contrary of the mandatory registration, is subduced to the payment of an annual contribution which extends from January 1st up to December 31st and cannot be divided in fractional payments.

First, this registration is granted to **students and to “au-pair” people**.

A foreign national with a permesso di soggiorno for study can obtain the registration at the ASL by paying a fee of 149,77 euro, whereas the person in “au-pair” status must pay a fee 219,49 euro.

The registration will last from the date the application is filed until the end of the ongoing year or until the permesso di soggiorno expires, if the expiration date is before December 31st.

Voluntary registration to the National Health Service can also be requested by **foreign nationals in possession of a permesso di soggiorno valid for more than three months, issued from reasons different from the ones we mentioned earlier**, specifically in cases of elective residence, religious or worship beliefs, employees of diplomatic missions and consular offices, escorts of people staying in Italy to access medical assistance.

In these cases foreign nationals must pay an annual contribution proportional to their income, and the amount to be paid cannot be less than 387,34 euro.

All these cases also see the issuance of a "Medicare Card".

It is the interested party's choice to optionally buy a private health insurance policy.

Let's move on to discussing the possibilities **foreign nationals residing illegally in Italy** have, to access Public Health Care.

The law establishes that these people are entitled to the urgent, essential and not continuous medical and hospital care, related to illnesses or accidents. Specifically, the following are all guaranteed:

- pregnancy and motherhood;
- the safeguard of a minor's health;
- vaccinations, prophylaxis, and curing infective diseases.

These health assistance performances are granted with no burden on the

requesting parties if they lack sufficient financial resources, although they are required to pay the quotas for participating to the expense, as Italian citizens are.

It is important to know that in order to obtain this assistance, a foreign national illegally residing in Italy must obtain by the ASL a special card called "STP" (foreigners who are temporarily present).

To avoid that people illegally residing in Italy access medical care, the law forbids medical, paramedic and administrative practitioners to inform police authorities, with the exception of cases where the occurred injuries may lead to a crime scene.

## **2) Health care benefits for Citizens of EU member states.**

Citizens of EU member states residing in Italy for over three months may access the National Health Service at the same conditions as Italian citizens.

However, they must be in possession of a carta di soggiorno or, as provided for by the law which will become effective in a few days, they must be registered at the anagrafe office of the town where they reside. Therefore, based on the new procedures, citizens of EU member states will undergo serious medical assistance problems if they are not in possession of a carta di soggiorno or if they are not registered at the anagrafe.

In fact, the Italian law cannot provide the same treatment reserved to citizens of Non-EU member states illegally residing in Italy. Therefore citizens of EU member states cannot obtain from the ASL, the STP card which guarantees assistance to illegal residents.

Today, this situation is particularly alerting to Bulgarian and Romanian citizens who cannot obtain a carta di soggiorno nor register at the anagrafe because they do not work or have sufficient financial resources, nor can they access health care benefits from their country of origin.

For these people, as established by a recent circular message from the Ministry of the Interior, it will be possible to access all urgent and essential medical cares for the entire course of the year 2007, only if they were already in possession of the STP card before December 31st 2006.

*Traduzione di Simona Matteis.*