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- Acquisition of nationality; citizenship.
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Introduction:

This pamphlet is aimed at offering a practical guide to refugees, holders of subsidiary protection and bearers of humanitarian protection and to accompany them in their first contacts with the territorial institutions.

The guide is structured in two parts.

The first part consists of knowing the basic laws and the Italian Constitution which will cultivate good citizenship and lay the foundations for a knowledge of the social fabric, the duties of the refugee, of the beneficiary of subsidiary protection and of the humanitarian protection holder. The second part responds to frequently asked questions regarding access to territorial services. Beneficiaries of humanitarian protection have the right to medical treatment, education, obtaining travel documents, the conversion of the humanitarian permit to a working permit where the circumstances permit as defined in the following paragraphs. However for them, it is not allowed the possibility for family reunion recognised only for holders of international Protection.

Remember that the rules guiding your conditions are contained in the following laws:

REGULATORY PRINCIPLES:

Geneva Convention of 1951 on the Status of the Refugee

Italian Constitution:

- **Art. 1 sub section 1**

- Italy is a Democratic Republic founded on work.

All citizens have equal social dignity and equal rights before the law without distinction of sex, race, language, religious and political opinion, personal or social condition.

It is the duty of the Republic to remove all obstacles of social or economic nature that limit the equality of citizens that prevent the full development of the human person. It guarantees the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the country.

- **Art. 10 section 1-2**

The Italian legal System conforms with the internationally recognised regulations on human rights and dignity.

- **Art. 32 sub 1**

The Republic protects health as the fundamental right of the individual and the interest of the collectivity. It guarantees free medical treatment to all indigents.

- **Art 35 sub 1-2**

The Italian Republic protects work in all its forms and methods. It takes care of the training and professional empowerment of workers.

- **Art 34 sub 1-2-3**

Schools are open to everyone.

Primary education given to all citizens for at least eight years is free and obligatory.

The capable and worthy even if without means, have the right to arrive at high levels of education.

Remember that it is important to know the administrations with which you come into daily contact. For this reason we offer here a few addresses:

- **Prefecture:** (territorial Office of the Government): This is a territorial representation of the Ministry of the Interior with functions of a peripheral Government Office which is found in every Provincial Capital. Inside this office is a help desk for immigration structured for interventions, consultation, and collaboration in the protection of the rights of immigrants; the prefecture plays the role of other peripheral offices of the State, enforcing the fair collaboration of such offices with other local bodies. It also plays the role of information, inter-cultural mediation, interventions, counselling in collaboration with other local bodies (Province and Council).
- **Questura:** (Police Station) this is a territorial state police office, it has competence at the Provincial level and is dependent of the Interior Ministry. Its primary mission is to ensure law and order and public security in the province. Inside the police station there is an immigration desk with the presence of one or more Intercultural and language Mediators.
- **Province:** this is a local body with competence on a part of the territory of a region covering the territory of many Councils. Its functions are determined by the constitution. Information help desks for immigrants are present in some Provincial offices.
- **Council:** The institution that represents the community and the citizens. Therefore, it cares for the individual wellbeing of all citizens, promotes growth and development, deals also with education, culture, sports, tourism, public works, public housing, environment, taxes, medical treatment, and public social services.
- **Centro Provinciale per l'Impiego:** (Provincial Center for Employment): This office is in charge of the occupational policies, vocational training, data insertion for diffusion in the demand and supply of manpower inside an employment network. (National labour database) (EURES- for the European office). Inside the Employment Centers there are help desks counters for immigrant job seekers.
- **ASL – AUSL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale):** the Local Health Board: this is a public body responsible for health matters and management of health institutions in a given territory of competence. The various ASLs and their reference structures (hospitals, health centers) and services managed by them generally constitute the National Health System which ensures the protection of health and medical assistance to all citizens and foreigners regularly resident without any difference of treatment.

All foreigners without regular documents have access to the health services and are insured by the National Health Board for all urgent cures or where applicable, any specialised cures even for prolonged illnesses.

Part II

Accessible Services:

RECEPTION/ACCEPTATION

Inside the Government Reception Centers for Asylum Seekers, you are offered the first reception in the quality of International Protection Seeker where you may remain only for a period strictly necessary for the study of your request before the competent territorial commission.

Once out of the Centre, as a holder of an International Protection Order, you may be entered in a territorial project which is part of a nationwide system for the protection of Asylum Seekers and refugees (SPRAR), financed with State funds or, in the absence of accommodation there, accede to private and public structures erected and managed territorially by civil Voluntary Associations but without Nationwide representation.

THE SPRAR, What is it?

The SPRAR is an Integrated Reception System promoted by the Ministry of the Interior and by local institutions that offer housing support to asylum seekers and refugees on the bases of availability as an initial step in the process of integration in the national territory.

HOW TO ENTER A SPRAR CENTER.

To gain access to the SPRAR center, you must ask a Reception Center operator or any migration help desk officer of the local institutions or of the Prefecture where you have elected to reside. Direct access is not permitted to the SPRAR. You cannot just move there personally to seek for admission.

WHAT DOES THE SPRAR CENTER OFFER A PROTECTION ORDER HOLDER AND WHAT IS THE DURATION OF STAY INSIDE A SPRAR FACILITY?

On entering the Center you will be required to sign a contract stipulating certain norms that must be respected during your stay in the SPRAR center. Along with food and lodging, there are outdoor activities for integration and recreation. Other activities include literacy courses, employment services, socialisation and multiculturalism. For minors, there exists the obligatory enrolment for primary education. The duration of stay is a maximum of 6 (six) months. This may only be prolonged in exceptional cases.

HOW TO RECEIVE AID OUTSIDE OF THE SPRAR SYSTEM.

This entails presentation at the immigration counter (Prefecture, Council, religious body) where the services offered include lodging. These kinds of centers are managed by some voluntary Associations or by charity organisations often of religious nature.

- **HEALTH.**

Health in Italy is protected and guaranteed by a structure comprising health boards and hospitals.

When does the acquisition for sanitary assistance begin?

The right to medical assistance is acquired at the moment of the registration and request for permit of stay even if you are not yet registered in the health board (ASL). This right remains even in the process of the renewal of the permit of stay.

According to law, if you are holder of the International Protection Status, you have equal rights as any Italian citizen to medical care and social assistance.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL HEALTH BOARD?

It is a service that covers the health needs of Italian citizens and holders of International Protection Orders.

WHERE TO REGISTER IN THE HEALTH BOARD:

In the offices of the local health board - ASL;

Documents necessary for registration:

- The permit of Stay;
- Registration in the civil status registry;
- the fiscal code.

Once registered, a temporary Health card will be delivered to you which will guarantee your medical visits, check up, tests and hospitalisation as may be.

TO WHICH HEALTH SERVICES ARE YOU ENTITLED?

- The free choice of your Family or paediatrics Doctor (They offer free medical visits, home visits, prescriptions, specialist requests, certification for access to nursery and maternal schools, obligatory primary, media and secondary schools) You may change your doctor at any time with another doctor from the list presented by the local health board.
- Specialist medical assistance. This can be done through the family doctor or paediatrics' request and on presentation of your health card. Also, for every specialised visit, only the medical ticket is paid.
- For Midwifery and gynaecological visits, there is a special unit called "Family counselling" (Consultorio Familiare) to which access is direct and does not require doctors' request.
- For free hospitalisation in public hospitals and some private subsidised structures.
- Registration at the SSN National Health Board is obligatory.

TO WHOM IS MEDICARE EXTENDED?

- Medical Assistance is extended to your family members under your care regularly resident in Italy and is recognised immediately for new born babies of parents registered with the National Health Board.

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SOCIAL ASSISTANCE: WHAT IS IT?

- Social Assistance is composed of a number of services aimed at the protection of the person as a human being.
- According to the dispositions of the law, regularly resident refugees are entitled to the same treatment reserved for any Italian citizen in matters of labour accidents, professional illnesses, maternity, old age, death, unemployment, and any other risk covered by the social security system.

WHO OFFERS THE SERVICES?

These services are offered by the Councils, Inter-council consortiums, the Province, the Local Health Boards where the refugee or the holder of the Subsidiary or humanitarian Protection Order is resident.

FOR INFORMATION, GO TO THE NEAREST SOCIAL SERVICES OFFICE.

If you are holder of a permit of stay of not less than one year, (even for minors registered in the document) you have equal rights to medical and social assistance as any Italian citizen even for financial benefits in case of tuberculosis, for the deaf and dumb, civil blindness and/or indigence.

ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES

THE FISCAL CODE, WHAT IS IT?

The fiscal code (Codice Fiscale) is an identification instrument for every citizen. It consists of a series of letters and numbers that permit the public administration to recognise the generalities of an individual without any errors.

WHAT IS ITS USE?

It is necessary to have it for interaction with the administrative bodies (example: Health Board registration, employment, banks, etc)

WHO DELIVERS IT?

The **INCOME REVENUE** office which is the sole and only institution authorised to issue this document. Never accept offers from any other source much less from the internet.

- For new born babies, this document is issued directly by the Council. (within 60 days from birth)

HOW TO OBTAIN IT?:

- To obtain the Fiscal Code, one must go in person to the local Income Revenue Office of the Council where he is residing with an official document (Residence Permit)
- For new born babies, it is enough for the parent to produce a birth certificate or a self declaration.

WHAT IS A SELF DECLARATION?

This is a declaration undersigned by declarant that can substitute certificates normally obtained from offices of the public administration according to procedures laid down by law. (Testo Unico on the administrative documentation. D.P.R. 28/12/2000 – n. 445)

Self Declaration is applied in case of (date and place of birth, residence, citizenship, family status: single, married, widow, attestation of existence and alive, birth of child, inscription into an order etc).

WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES FOR FALSE DECLARATION?

Whoever makes false declarations is punished with imprisonment up to 3 years. The false declarations also entail the loss of the benefits that come from it.

RESIDENCE:

The **residence** is the habitual place where you live. To officialise your address, you must go to the civil status registry of your Council or the competent circumscription and ask to be registered.

WHY REGISTER AT THE CIVIL STATUS REGISTRY?

Registration at the Civil Status registry is important for the execution of many administrative documents such as the Driving License, and the registration at the Health Board.

HOW IS ONE REGISTERED THERE?

- For registration at the civil registry, its enough to be an adult;
- Have the residence Permit,
- Go to the Civil Registry Office of the Council of residence, fill and sign the necessary forms.
- The Civil Registry Officer who delivers the certificate will ascertain that the given address is your effective residence by control performed by the City Police Corps. **For this, the Municipal Police** will verify the exactness of the address (No fear, its just formality). If the address is exact, the concession of residence will take effect from the date of application at the Civil Status Registry of the Council.

WHAT TO DO TO CHANGE RESIDENCE FROM ONE COUNCIL TO ANOTHER.

If you wish to or if you must move from one Council area to another, you must present an application at the new Council Registry where you intend to move to 20 days to the effective date of transfer.

IN CASE OF A SIMPLE TRANSFER OF ADDRESS FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER WITHIN THE SAME COUNCIL AREA.

In this case, there are special forms at the Council Office to be filled on presentation of valid documents (Identity Card or Passport) valid permit of stay, (of all the persons intending to change address) or driving license and/or Vehicle ownership documents (where applicable.)

WHAT IS THE ‘IDENTITY CARD’?

The identity card is a fundamental document that ascertains personal identification.

WHERE TO OBTAIN THE IDENTIRY CARD:

At the Civil Status Registry Offices.

HOW TO OBTAIN IT:

The following are necessary:

- Three (3) equal and recent passport size pictures;
- Valid permit of stay or renewal receipt.

TRAVELLING DOCUMENTS:

If you are holder of the refugee status, a Humanitarian or Subsidiary protection status, you are free to travel in the national territory.

To be able to travel out of Italy, the competent Police Station delivers a travel document valid for five years and renewable.

IN ALL OTHER CASES;

- Apply for a passport at the official Diplomatic representations of your country of origin.
- When it is reasonably impossible for the foreigner to reach an embassy or diplomatic mission, the Police Station can issue a foreigners travel document.

WORK:

- As a refugee or a holder of a Humanitarian or Subsidiary protection status, you can use the private and public services determined by law in the labour market for job seekers;
- If you are a refugee, a holder an International protection status, you are entitled to the same treatment as any Italian citizen in matters of subordinate work, autonomous work, subscription to Professional Orders, and to vocational and in-job training
- In case of minor between 16 and 17 years, you may be exempt from the obligatory primary education and follow a professional training course aimed at obtaining a professional certificate that serves both educational and employment purposes.
- Also, if a minor at 16, you can sign an apprentice contract.

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICE CONTRACT?

An apprentice contract consists of inserting a minor of 16 years in a Company which will be obliged to train the youngster for at least 240 hours a year in a profession for which he/she will be assumed and to obtain the corresponding qualification.

For the modalities of assumption\training, it is necessary to go to the Provincial Employment Center personally.

WHAT IS THE PROVINCIAL EMPLOYMENT CENTER?

It is an office that takes care of the demand and supply of job offers, promotes professional training and job qualification courses, offers counselling and assistance for curriculum vitae preparation.

THE CURRICULUM VITAE WHAT IS IT?

It is the descriptive list of your competences, job capabilities, and professional experience gained along the years.

The curriculum serves to expose your competences to the employer before whom you present yourself for employment.

WHY REGISTER WITH THE PROVINCIAL REGISTRY OF WORKERS?

- Registration with the provincial registry of workers carried out by the Provincial Employment Office is designed to facilitate the search for work in Italy. The registration contains information about your personal data and your working history. To have access to the service you provide an identification document (residence permit) and the tax code, and declare your occupational capabilities and your willingness to perform a job.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF REGISTERING WITH THE PROVINCIAL REGISTRY OF WORKERS?

Registration at the provincial registry allows you to use the Provincial employment opportunities, its auxiliary services and participate in job vacancy announcements and use of internet. Registration here is mandatory for anyone with a disability and offers the opportunity to participate in training courses, seminars, guidance and group counseling devoted to the explanation of active employment policies.

Remember that:

- • Recognized as a refugee you are also allowed access to public employment.
- The residence permit for subsidiary protection and humanitarian protection allows you access to work and study and is convertible into permit for work purposes.

ACTIVITIES OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT, WHAT IS IT?

- Self-employment is one that allows and encourages the free initiative of the person who decides to work on his own, for example with the creation of a company, to manage a store, ownership of itinerant license, etc. At the Employment centre you can contact the advisory services for business creation

HOW TO CARRY OUT SELF-EMPLOYMENT:

- One must be in possession of a valid residence permit. According to Italian law all those who decide to undertake the exercise of a business, art, profession or occupation, must ask the opening of a VAT (IVA or Value Added Tax). The VAT is opened in any local offices of the Revenue Agency, presenting an appropriate statement of declaration of start of activities. The Revenue Agency provides advice and the necessary forms.

How to work abroad:

If you are holder of a residence permit for international protection, you can work abroad. You must possess a travel document:

For travel abroad:

The Personal document (travel document) delivered by the Police, allows you to travel without a visa to many European countries and for a period of time not exceeding three months.

To stay abroad more than three months:

If you intend to settle abroad for longer periods, for reasons such as work, you must ask for an appropriate visa at the diplomatic representation of the country where you want to stay, and then start at the new hosting Country, the procedure for the transfer of residence and responsibility. In any case, for necessary information, contact the diplomatic mission of the country in which you want to go

BUILDING A FAMILY:

WHAT TO DO TO GET MARRIED:

- Please contact the municipality for advise;
- Proof must be shown that you do not have other matrimonial constraints: spouse, and therefore are "free" to obtain the necessary authorization.

In Italy, **bigamy** (marriage contract with more than one partner) is a crime.

WHO ISSUES THE AUTHORISATION?

- If you are a recognized refugee the authorization provided is issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the basis of notary act of recognition in replacement of birth declaration for marriage use, drawn up at the court of residence of the refugee.
- If you are holder of subsidiary protection and \ or holder of humanitarian protection:
You must demonstrate "single marital status" of the future spouses - through a statement cleared in the country of origin. This certificate may be issued directly by the diplomatic mission in Italy (consulate or embassy) of the country of origin. The clearance document should be legalized at the prefecture of the town hosting the Diplomatic Mission or at the prefecture of your city of residence.

In the absence of the authorization from the country of origin there must be a judgment of an Italian court.

Family Reunification:

The Italian law protects the family unity for holders of refugee and subsidiary protection status; Your family members with no individual rights to the status of international protection have the same rights recognized to you as holder of the status.

If you have the Status of subsidiary protection, your family members present in the national territory who individually are not entitled to that status are granted permission to stay for family reasons (see Art. 22 vs. 2 Legislative Decree. 251/2007)

WHAT TO DO FOR REUNION WITH YOUR FAMILY ABROAD:

Contact the help desk counter for immigration of the place where you live (found at the Territorial Government Offices). Together with the generalities of the people with whom you want to reunite, you will be asked to present a series of documents needed to start the process.

FOR WHO MAY YOU SEEK THE AUTHORIZATION FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION?

The authorization for family reunification can be requested for:

- a) a spouse;
- b) Minor children, including those of the spouse or born outside of marriage, unmarried, provided that the other parent, if alive, gives written consent;
- b) Adult children that can not meet their own essential needs of life because of health problems;
- c) Dependent parents who do not have an adequate family support in the country of origin or

provenance;

d) Attention: the demand for reunification can not be denied solely because of the absence of documents that prove the family relationship.

e) If you are an unaccompanied minor and holder of international protection, your request for family reunification will be activated along with all initiatives for the detection of family members in the most absolute confidentiality in order to protect your safety as well as that of your parents

• EDUCATION

Levels of education and vocational training courses

If you are a minor and holder of refugee status or subsidiary protection status you are entitled to studies of every type and level as provided for by the Italian legislature-see Art. 26 C. 1 D. Lgs. 251/2007

- As a minor holder of refugee status or subsidiary protection status or humanitarian protection you have the right to compulsory education (from 6 to 16 years of age).

- If you are a young adult holder of refugee status or the status of subsidiary protection you have access to the educational system adjournment and professional perfection education in accordance with the modalities established for foreigners living legally.

WHERE CAN YOU ASK TO ATTEND TRAINING COURSES?

- At the provincial education office there is an office or a person in charge of schooling information. You can obtain information on evening classes, the various provincial centers for adult education as well as for refugee students.

- Within the provincial centers for adult education:

If you are a teen aged between 16 and 18 years you can be excluded from compulsory education by attending training courses aimed at achieving a vocational qualification as an alternative to school-work.

. If you are a minor aged over 16 years-or adult-you can attend:

- Courses for the acquisition of the qualification of secondary school first grade certificate;
- Language courses for foreigners; short and specific courses (e.g. English, computer science). Adults and minors can also enroll for these courses, as long as they are older than 16 years. The courses are conducted in the afternoon or evening hours.

You must go to these offices for enrollment in the courses and for attendance modalities .

UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE

Access to University is allowed to foreigners living legally on equal terms with Italian citizens. The Lisbon Convention implemented by the Law No. 148, July 21, 2002, provides that each country should adopt all possible and reasonable procedures to fairly and effectively assess if the refugees meet the requirements for access to higher education, to more advanced studies or for exercising regular professional activities, even in cases where the educational level declared can not be supported by relevant documents

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY ACQUIRED CERTIFICATES ABROAD:

- The assessment of qualifications for registration is the responsibility of individual universities. For more information contact the secretariat of the university.

Application for and validation of foreign certificates:

- recognition of the degree achieved in your country of origin is not automatic.
- If you are a recognized refugee and want to get the equivalence in Italy of qualifications obtained abroad up to a corresponding high-school diploma in Italy, you have to contact:

- **International Social Service of Rome (ISSR - www.serviziosocialeinternazionale.org), via the Scialoja, 18 00196 - Rome, tel. 06 \ 4884640, fax 06 \ 4817605.**

Recognition of professional titles

With regard to professional qualifications obtained in a country outside the European Union (for the exercise of the relevant profession in Italy) it is possible to ask for recognition, through the submission of an application to the corresponding Ministry (Health, Justice, Industry , Etc.). For those professions whose exercise is subject to accreditation to a national order, you should make contact directly with the local board (lawyers, architects, engineers, etc.). For the registration of trade representatives in the private sector, the same reference offices for accreditation ensure compliance and verify the completion of compulsory schooling and training (for example, Enrolment at REC – Traders Registry).

Acquisition of Italian nationality

If you are a refugee living legally for at least five years in the territory wish to and have the required documentation, you can apply for the acquisition of Italian nationality.

The application can also be submitted for wife and children.

The application must be lodged at the Prefecture of the place of residence, which will conduct the necessary inquiries, and the decision will be taken by the Ministry of Interior (the administrative procedure takes at least two years)

Useful information

EUROPEAN UNION DRIVING LICENSES, HOW TO OBTAIN IT:

To take the license you should submit an application to the vehicle registration office and then take an oral examination and a driving test.

On application, it is necessary that you bring with you a valid residence permit or the receipt of the request for renewal or the first release of the document. This document will be presented in the original, even during the driving test.

If you have a driving license obtained in your country of origin:

- If you hold a driving license issued by a foreign country (outside the European Union) you can drive on Italian territory. The foreign license (outside the EU) must be accompanied by international driving permit (issued by the foreign state that issued the license) or by an official translation in English.
- Remember: after a year of acquisition of residence in Italy if you are holding foreign driving licenses you are no longer entitled to drive vehicles on Italian territory.

It is however possible to "convert" the foreign driving license to an Italian driving license.

The conversion consists of getting a new Italian license corresponding to the foreign one.

You can also obtain the recognition of foreign license, or the issue of a coupon to be applied on the license.

WHAT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PROCEDURE OF CONVERSION AND RECOGNITION FOR A FOREIGN LICENSE?

In the conversion process your original license is replaced by Italian license.

With the recognition, you remain in possession of the original driving license on which is applied a sticker that identifies it in the national drivers registry.

WHERE TO ASK FOR THE CONVERSION, RECOGNITION OR INFORMATION ON THE LICENSE?

- Decentralized Offices (SIIT) Department of Transport (Provincial Transport Offices).
For more information you can consult the website of the Ministry of Transport and infrastructure:
<http://www.infrastrutturetrasporti.it>

Housing

If you have rights of refugee status or subsidiary protection, you are allowed to participate in tenders for the allocation of public residential housing, like an Italian citizen.

WHAT IS PUBLIC HOUSING?

This comprises all houses, owned by specialized public institutions that Local Councils grant to needy families at rents lower than normal market offers.

To compete in the allocation of public housing if you are a refugee or holder of subsidiary protection status you must submit, like all Italian citizens, a special application, in accordance with the rules set out in the tenders for the public allocation.

One of the conditions, to participate in the allocation, is to be entered in the lists of job seekers, be regularly employed or exercise self-employment.

For all relevant information contact the office responsible for public residential buildings (Urban planning) of your town of residence.

Voluntary Return.

How can you contact the ‘voluntary return’ programs to return to your country of origin?

If you are holder of the status of international protection, and believe you want to return in safety and dignity to your country of origin, you can contact the International Migration Organization. The IMO, through its network of over 300 offices worldwide, shall, by a technical assessment of security conditions in your country of origin, organize your own return to your country of origin or of your family member who has made the request.

The request can also be made at the first reception centre for asylum seekers, as well as at the reception centers (SPRAR), or at the migration help desks at the Prefecture \ Questura