

Guidebook for Migrant Workers

Navigating Health and Social Services for Migrant Workers in Italy

Introduction

This guidebook is designed for migrant workers living in Italy — regardless of their legal status — and for those who are committed to defending migrants' rights within non-profit associations, trade unions, and local social and health services. The guidebook is the result of collaboration among the universities participating in the PRIN PNRR *InMigrHealth* project (*Investigating Migrants' Occupational Health*), namely the Universities of Padua, Messina, and Turin.

Article 32 of the Italian Constitution

The Republic protects health as a fundamental right of the individual and as an interest of the community, and guarantees free medical care to the poor. No one may be compelled to undergo any medical treatment except as provided by law. The law may in no case violate the limits imposed by respect for the human person.

Meaning:

The right to health is guaranteed to all people present on Italian territory. The State has the duty to protect public health and ensure access to care for everyone.

What forms of health care are available in Italy?

When you access local health services — for example an emergency room, a clinic for foreigners, or a family-care center — it is important to know that in Italy **medical and health personnel are not allowed to report** foreign nationals without a valid residence permit to the authorities.

Legislative Decree 286/1998 – Consolidated Immigration Act, Article 35 (5)

“Access to health facilities by foreign nationals not in compliance with the rules on residence may not entail any reporting to the authorities, except in cases where reporting is mandatory, under the same conditions as for Italian citizens.”

Non-EU migrants present in Italy **have the right and the duty** to register with the **National Health Service** (SSN).

Registration grants the same rights and obligations as those provided for Italian citizens, and health care is also guaranteed to family members who are dependent on the registered migrant and hold a residence permit (see the table of residence-permit types).

EU citizens present in Italy may, if they do not have private insurance coverage, **voluntarily register** with the SSN by paying an annual fee, or they may request the **ENI Card** (*European Non-Registered*).

Registration with the National Health Service may be:

- **Voluntary**, for foreigners who are not required to register, upon payment of an annual contribution (see the 2024 Budget Decree No. 213/2023 for updated rates).
- **Mandatory (by right)**, for certain categories of foreign nationals, without any payment (see the table of residence permits on p. 4).

Those registered with the SSN and holding a Health Card are normally required to contribute to health-care expenses.

However, asylum seekers are **exempt** from such contributions and are treated in the same way as persons listed with employment centers.

Ministry of Health Circular No. 5 of 24 March 2000 provides implementing guidance for Legislative Decree 286/1998 (the “Consolidated Immigration Act”) regarding health care for foreigners.

Health care is also guaranteed to family members who are dependent on SSN registrants and hold a residence permit.

Registration is valid for the same duration as the residence permit and must be renewed at the local health authority (*Azienda Sanitaria Locale – ASL*) when the residence permit is renewed. If renewal takes a long time, you can present the receipt of the renewal application and obtain a temporary Health Card (e.g. valid for six months).

Is a residence permit required to access the National Health Service (SSN)?

In Italy, your legal status or residence permit may be definitive, pending, or absent. In all cases — including when you do not have a residence permit or your permit has expired — **access to health care is guaranteed**, although the procedures may differ.

Article 35 (3) of Legislative Decree 286/1998

“Foreign citizens present in the national territory who are not in compliance with the rules on entry and residence are ensured, in public and accredited facilities, the provision of urgent or essential outpatient and hospital care, including continuing care, with particular attention to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of infectious diseases.”

Presidential Decree No. 394 of 31 August 1999, Article 42 sets out the rules for mandatory registration with the SSN, the procedures for registration and renewal, and any exclusions.

State–Regions Agreement of 2013
(*Official Gazette No. 32, 7 February 2013 – Ordinary Supplement No. 9*)
Following an agreement between the State and the regional authorities, the same level of health assistance and access to care is guaranteed nationwide for both Italian and foreign citizens, with special attention to vulnerable groups.

Depending on your residence permit, you may be entitled to or eligible for:

Type of residence permit	STP EU)	(non- ENI (EU)	Health Card (with tax code)
Employment (subordinate or self-employed)	x		x
Family reasons	x		x
Asylum	x		x
Special protection (Law No. 50/2023 – “Cutro Decree”)	x		x
Subsidiary protection	x		x
Applicant for international protection / citizenship	x		x
Awaiting first residence permit (for work or family reasons)	x		x
No documents	x	x	x
Awaiting to apply for asylum	x		
Tourist visa (3 months)			voluntary registration
Student visa			voluntary registration

Residence and registration

To register with the SSN, you must have **residence**, **registration with the local registry office**, or a **declaration of actual domicile** (living for more than three months in a reception center is considered habitual residence).

You must provide a **self-declaration of residence** or, if you do not have official residence, a **statement of your actual domicile**, referring to the address on your residence permit. It is often possible to register by declaring habitual domicile even without formal residence registration.

How can I request a Health Card?

You can obtain a **Health Card (Tessera Sanitaria)** by registering with the National Health Service (SSN).

To register, you must go to the **Local Health Authority (Azienda Sanitaria Locale – ASL)** in the area where you are resident or where you actually live, as indicated on your residence permit.

Required documents

To register, you must present:

- A valid identity document or passport
- Your tax code (*codice fiscale*)

- The receipt showing that you have submitted the application for your first residence permit
- The residence permit, or the renewal receipt issued by the Post Office or the Police Headquarters (*Questura*)
- A self-declaration of residence, or a declaration of actual domicile or hospitality

It is also possible to obtain the Health Card by presenting a **temporary tax code** assigned by the *Agenzia delle Entrate* (Italian Revenue Agency) for the purpose of regularizing undeclared employment.

The Health Card is usually valid for the same duration as the residence permit. When the permit expires, you can request a renewal and a new Health Card by presenting proof of your renewed residence permit.

Both **electronic** and **paper Health Cards** are valid.

What is the STP Code (Straniero Temporaneamente Presente)? How can it be obtained?

The **STP Code (Straniero Temporaneamente Presente – “Temporarily Present Foreigner”)** is an individual regional code valid for six months and renewable. You can request it from your **Local Health Authority (ASL)**, from **clinics for foreigners, hospital companies, IRCCS** (Scientific Hospitalization and Care Institutes), or **university hospitals**. The STP Code is used for the prescription and registration of all health services provided.

Depending on local partnerships and collaborations, it may also be possible to obtain the STP Code through associations that provide health and migration support. The STP Code guarantees **anonymity**, as it is linked only to an identification number and not to personal data.

To obtain the STP Code, you must fill out and sign a **declaration of indigence** (stating that you cannot afford private health insurance). You do **not** need to show any residence or immigration document when you go to a health facility.

With the STP Code, you are entitled to:

- Basic medical care
- Emergency and non-emergency hospital care, including day-hospital services
- Urgent or essential outpatient and inpatient treatment, including continued care for illness or injury
- Prescriptions for medicines

The STP Code is **free of charge, renewable**, and **valid for all medical prescriptions**.

What is the ENI Code (European Non-Registered)? How can it be obtained?

You can request the **ENI Code (Europeo Non Iscritto – “European Non-Registered”)** if:

- You are an **EU citizen** and do **not** have the **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC/TEAM)**;
- Your residence permit does **not** require registration with the National Health Service (SSN);
- You are in a condition of **poverty or social vulnerability** (a self-declaration of indigence is required);
- You are **not a resident** in Italy and do not possess a **certificate of regular residence**;
- You are **not registered** with the Health Service of your country of origin;
- Your residence permit does not entail mandatory SSN registration.

The ENI Code guarantees access to **urgent and essential care** as well as to **preventive health programs**, in the same way as the STP Code.

The ENI Code is valid for **six months** and can be **renewed**. If you later register with the SSN, the ENI Code becomes invalid.

What am I entitled to, and what services can I access with the STP and ENI Codes?

If you have an **STP** or **ENI** Code, you are guaranteed access to:

- **Urgent or essential outpatient and hospital care**, including continued treatment for illness or injury;
- **Preventive medicine** to safeguard both individual and public health.

In particular, the following services are guaranteed:

- Social protection for **pregnancy and maternity**;
- **Vaccinations** as provided by law, including those in collective prevention campaigns authorized by regional authorities, and **international prophylaxis measures** (e.g. vaccines required for entry or travel);
- **Prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of infectious diseases** (such as tuberculosis, HIV), and **disinfection measures** to eliminate sources of infection (e.g. scabies);
- Access to **addiction services (SERD)**;
- Protection of **children's health**;
- Provision of **aids and prosthetic devices** (such as hearing aids, crutches, wheelchairs, etc.).

You can also contact **first-aid clinics** operated by associations that promote migrants' health throughout Italy.

If you hold an **STP Code**, you are also entitled to submit an **application for civil disability recognition**.

If I have difficulty registering with the National Health Service (SSN), what other services can I contact?

Across Italy, in addition to the **foreigners' offices** located within local health authorities (*Aziende Sanitarie Locali – ASL*), you can contact the **clinics** operated by **associations, NGOs, and patronati** (workers' support institutions). These organizations provide assistance with **access to social and health services** as well as **emergency care**.

They can help you:

- Understand which documents are needed for registration;
- Complete registration procedures;
- Access urgent or preventive care while waiting for your permit or health card;
- Receive guidance on your rights to medical treatment, even if you do not have a valid residence permit.

How can I access a general practitioner or family doctor?

After registering with the **National Health Service (SSN)** at your **Local Health Authority (ASL)** — either where you reside or where you actually live — you can go to the “**choice and revocation of doctor**” office (*scelta e revoca del medico*), which is usually located in the same building.

At this office, you will be given a **list of available general practitioners (GPs)** in your area. You can freely choose your family doctor from this list.

You may change your family doctor at any time — in many regions, this can even be done **online**.

Services provided by your family doctor

Appointments and visits are **free of charge**.
You can contact your GP for:

- Medical certificates (for employed workers);
- Requests for specialist visits;
- Prescriptions for medicines and medical tests;
- General health consultations.

What is the “Guardia Medica” (Out-of-Hours Medical Service)? When can I contact it?

The **Guardia Medica**, also known as the **Out-of-Hours Medical Service** (*Continuità Assistenziale*), is a **free public health service** that you can contact by phone in case of **urgent medical needs** when your family doctor is not available — for example, during **nights, weekends, or public holidays**.

In some tourist areas, the service is also available during the **summer season** (*tourist medical service*).

If you are registered with the National Health Service (SSN) but do not yet have a family doctor in your area, by calling the **Guardia Medica** you can:

- Receive **medical advice by phone**;
- Be visited at home if necessary;
- Receive directions on which health facility to contact.

The doctor on duty can:

- **Prescribe medicines;**
- **Issue medical certificates** (for sick leave);
- **Recommend hospitalization**, if necessary.

How does maternity and pregnancy care work?

Health care for **pregnant women** is **guaranteed and free of charge** in Italy. You can go to:

- **Family counseling centers (Consultori Familiari);**
- **Hospitals;**
- Or, in case of emergency, directly to the **Emergency Department (Pronto Soccorso)** — even if you are not registered with the National Health Service (SSN).

Pregnant women are entitled to full medical assistance, including:

- Regular check-ups during pregnancy;
- Prenatal and postnatal care;
- Delivery and hospitalization;
- Health care for newborns.

Box:

Health care for foreign women during pregnancy is guaranteed **on an equal basis** with Italian citizens, according to:

- Law No. 405 of 29 July 1975;
- Law No. 194 of 22 May 1978;
- Decree of the Minister of Health of 6 March 1995 (*Official Gazette No. 87 of 13 April 1995*).

Can I request a cultural mediator when I go to the hospital or to the doctor?

Yes. You can ask the medical staff to provide the **assistance of a cultural mediator** — either in person or by telephone. This service is available in **hospitals**, and in many regions also in **family counseling centers (consultori)** and **local SSN clinics**.

The presence of cultural mediators in health-care settings is guaranteed by **Law No. 7/2006, Article 7**, and by the **Decree of the Ministry of Health of 17 December 2007**.

Cultural mediators facilitate communication between patients and health professionals, help explain medical procedures, and ensure that patients fully understand their rights and treatments.

Health and Safety in the Workplace

This section explains what to do and who to contact in cases of **workplace injuries** and/or **occupational diseases**, meaning illnesses connected to the tasks you perform or to your work environment.

In Italy, health and safety in the workplace are regulated by **Legislative Decree No. 81/2008**, as updated and amended by **Legislative Decree No. 106/2009**. This legislation defines the duties of employers and workers.

Employer's obligations

The employer must:

- Assess all **health and safety risks** in the workplace;
- Prepare a **Risk Assessment Document (DVR)**;
- Appoint staff members responsible for **fire prevention** and **first aid**;
- Provide workers with **personal protective equipment (PPE)** such as helmets, gloves, safety shoes, goggles, and ear protection;
- Ensure that workers undergo **medical check-ups** according to the health surveillance program;
- Notify the **occupational physician** when an employment relationship ends.

Worker's obligations

Workers must:

- Follow the employer's safety instructions;
- Use machinery, tools, and equipment properly;
- Wear the required protective equipment (e.g., gloves, helmets, safety footwear, goggles, ear protectors, etc.).

Who is the occupational doctor, and what can I ask them?

The **occupational doctor**, also known as the **competent physician**, is a medical specialist in **occupational medicine**. As a worker, you can contact this doctor for matters related to your health in the workplace.

In cases required by current legislation, the occupational doctor:

- Plans and performs **health surveillance** for workers;
- Evaluates each worker's **fitness to perform specific duties**;
- Monitors the worker's health over time, especially if they are exposed to occupational risks;
- Keeps a **confidential health record** for each employee.

Health surveillance aims to determine whether the worker is **fit, partially fit, or unfit** for a specific job, and to prevent occupational diseases or injuries.

How can I request and obtain a medical certificate for absence from work?

You can request a **medical certificate for illness** from your **family doctor** (*medico di base*).

If you do not have a family doctor, you can contact:

- The **Out-of-Hours Medical Service (Guardia Medica)**;
- The **Emergency Department (Pronto Soccorso)**;
- Or a **specialist outpatient doctor** who is authorized to issue **electronic medical certificates** (*certificati telematici*).

The medical certificate is required to justify absences from work due to illness and to obtain wage replacement benefits where applicable.

WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS

I was injured at work. Whom should I contact?

If you are injured during your work activity and experience **minor physical or mental problems**, you must contact the **Workers' Safety Representative (RLS)**, who will inform the **Company's Prevention and Protection Service Manager (RSPP)** appointed by the employer.

After that, you should contact your **family doctor**, or go to the **Emergency Department (Pronto Soccorso)** or the **Out-of-Hours Medical Service (Guardia Medica)**.

If you suffer a **serious injury** during your work activity that causes significant physical or mental problems, you must **immediately go to the Emergency Department** and inform your **Workers' Safety Representative (RLS)**. Afterward, you can contact your **family doctor** or the **occupational doctor**.

I was injured at work. Can I request compensation?

Yes. You can obtain compensation by submitting a **work accident certificate** to **INAIL** (*Istituto Nazionale per l'Assicurazione contro gli Infortuni sul Lavoro* – the National Institute for Insurance against Workplace Accidents and Occupational Diseases).

The certificate can be sent by the **doctor** or by the **Emergency Department**. Once the work injury has been reported, **INAIL will contact you** to schedule a medical examination. The **period of absence from work** will be **compensated**.

For support during this process, you can contact a **patronato** (workers' assistance office) and request advice from a **forensic medical service**. The **forensic doctor** at the patronato will handle your case and, if needed, request an **extension** of the injury compensation period.

Note:

- In the **agricultural sector**, compensation is provided by **INAIL**.
 - In all **other sectors**, the compensation is generally paid directly by the **employer**.
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I fell while traveling to or from work. What can I do?

If you have an employment contract, an accident “**in itinere**” (on the way to or from work) is recognized by law (**Legislative Decree No. 38/2000**), provided that it occurs **on the route between your home and your workplace**, including **reasonable detours for family-related reasons**.

You can request **free assistance** from a **patronato** or **trade union** for more details on the procedures and your rights — even if you do not have a formal employment contract.

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES

I think I have a physical or mental health problem related to my work. What can I do, and whom should I contact?

If you believe that your health problems are caused by your work duties or working conditions, you can begin the **procedure for the recognition of an occupational disease** as follows:

1. **Diagnosis:** The first step is to obtain a **medical diagnosis** from a doctor who identifies the disease and its possible connection to your work activity. The doctor will issue a **medical certificate** specifying the pathology and its suspected occupational origin and will send it to your **employer**.
2. **Notification to the employer:** You must inform your employer by delivering the medical certificate **within 15 days** from the onset of symptoms.
3. **Employer's obligation:** The employer must report the occupational disease to **INAIL** within **5 days** from receiving your notification, using the official INAIL form.
4. **Direct application by the worker:** If the employer fails to report it, you may **submit the application directly to INAIL**, either online or in paper form, attaching your medical certificate and any supporting documents. You can get assistance from a **patronato** to complete and submit the application.
5. **INAIL medical evaluation:** INAIL will review your documentation and may call you for a **medical examination** and other tests to confirm the diagnosis and its causal link to your work.
6. **Outcome of the claim:** INAIL will then issue a decision. If the disease is recognized as occupational, you will be entitled to **benefits and compensation** (medical treatment, financial allowance, etc.).
If INAIL rejects your claim, you can **appeal** with the help of the **forensic medical service** at the patronato.

Deadlines:

- INAIL should respond within **30 days** of receiving the medical certificate, but processing times may vary.
- For diseases **listed in the official occupational disease table**, the response time is **120 days**.
- For **non-listed diseases**, for which you must prove the causal link with your job, the response time is **180 days**.

You can consult the full list of recognized occupational diseases on INAIL's official website:

⇒ [INAIL Circular No. 7 – 15 February 2024](#)

If your disease is **not included in the table**, or if you need help throughout the recognition process, contact a **patronato** or **trade union**. Depending on your contribution record, you may be entitled to **temporary or permanent disability benefits**, or an **ordinary allowance**.

Important: You must respect the reporting deadlines; otherwise, you may lose the right to compensation for the period prior to the report.

Once the occupational disease is recognized, the occupational doctor may request that you be **assigned to lighter or more suitable duties** based on your medical condition. Following the medical examination, the occupational doctor will issue one of the following fitness assessments:

- Fit for the job;
- Partially fit, temporarily or permanently, with limitations;
- Temporarily unfit;
- Permanently unfit.

If you disagree with the doctor's assessment, you can **appeal** with the support of your **general practitioner**, a **patronato**, or a **trade union**.

Note:

If you speak to a doctor about your health problems or report a workplace accident, **this can never result in dismissal or demotion**.

Do I have the right to protective equipment? Whom should I ask?

The **employer** is legally required to provide all workers with **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**, such as gloves, masks, helmets, safety shoes, and other safety items, after consulting with:

- the **Prevention and Protection Service Manager (RSPP)**, and
- the **occupational doctor (competent physician)** appointed by the company.

PPE must be distributed in the workplace and **regularly inspected** to ensure that it remains effective and compliant with safety standards.

Legislative Decree No. 81/2008, Articles 76 and 77 – Consolidated Law on Workplace Safety
This law establishes that the **employer is responsible** for providing, maintaining, and ensuring the proper use of PPE in accordance with current regulations.

If the employer does not supply the required protective equipment, you can contact the **Bilateral Body (Ente Bilaterale)** — a joint organization formed by trade unions and employers' associations. Among its services, it can assist you in **obtaining the necessary protective devices**.

Whom can I contact to start the disability recognition process?

First, you must contact your **doctor** (either your general practitioner or family doctor), who will evaluate your situation and prepare the necessary **medical certificate** to be submitted to the **Evaluation Commission** (*Commissione di Valutazione*).

As with all procedures that may be complex or difficult to navigate, you can request **support** from:

- **Trade unions**, and
- **Patronati** (workers' assistance offices).

Through their **forensic medical services**, these organizations can assist and accompany you throughout the entire process of **disability recognition**, ensuring that your rights are protected and that all documents are properly submitted.

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Translations

Here you can find translations in:

- Arabic – العربية إلى الترجمة إيجاد يمكنك هنا
- Bengali – এখানে বাংলা অনুবাদটি পাওয়া যাবে
- Bambara – *Yorɔ nin na, i b'a tigi bamanankan na*
- French – *Vous pouvez trouver la traduction française ici*

