
Brexit, Italians' obstacle race. The UK will close borders

Long lines of elderly Italians stuck at passport control, lacking visas allowing them to return to the country where they have been living for years, since they first arrived in the UK in search of a job at a very young age, now unable to join family members who remained in the Country. It's a daunting prospect which **Pietro Molle** (in the photo), President of COMITES, the committee representing Italians resident in the consular district of London including the South of the United Kingdom and Wales, representing 350,000 Italians on the Registry of Italians Resident Abroad (A.I.R.E.), is extremely concerned about. And it could become a reality once the Brexit process is completed,



Immagine non disponibile

[Disoriented old people. "Italian older people are somewhat confused," said the COMITES chairman in London. "Many of them, who have lived here for forty or fifty years, think they have a right to remain without having to do anything. They pay taxes, are married to British citizens, and their children have dual nationality. They can't believe it will be a problem for them to remain. But under British law, only those who apply for this permit will be entitled to stay. Under the settlement scheme applicants will receive a code that matches their passport, and thereby border control officers will be able to check which EU citizens are entitled to return to Britain."](#)

[Pietro Molle and other representatives of COMITES have been travelling throughout the UK for months, trying to connect with elderly Italians that are struggling to apply for visas.](#)

[They are left to their own devices by the British State, which adopted this complex registration system without providing assistance. In fact only a small number of local administrations, at their own discretion, organize meetings to inform EU citizens about what should be done for the post-Brexit period.](#)

Visa required in a few months. "The deadline for applying for a visa is 30 June 2021, when a permit will be required to continue living in the United Kingdom - provided that Prime Minister Boris Johnson is successful in reaching an agreement with the EU on trade in goods and mobility of persons during the transitional period ending next December. Should a new Treaty between Britain and the European Union not be in place, then the application will have to be completed by the end of the year," explained the President of COMITES in London. "These deadlines could be extended again, as has happened in the past, if the negotiations between Great Britain and the European Union proved unsuccessful by next December. The EU has repeatedly raised doubts as to whether eleven months up to December will be time enough to finalise a very complex piece of legislation." Armed with mobile phones and computers, Pietro Molle and his staff respond to requests from various branches of A.C.L.I. (Catholic Associations of Italian Workers) and senior citizens' associations, who invited them to a number of locations in London, from Sutton to Kingston, to the Clerkenwell district and even to cities like Bath and Bristol, to help Italians obtain visas.

United Kingdom, doors closed. "We haven't reached North Wales yet, but we certainly will this year," pointed out the Chairman of London's COMITES.

"Being granted a settlement status is extremely important, not least because Prime Minister Boris Johnson is considering closing the borders and introducing an 'Australian', points-based immigration system that will make it much harder to enter the UK."

"I have attended several training sessions on the new legislation and I was shocked by its rigidity," Pietro Molle added. "Those entering for employment purposes will need to have a contract before leaving Italy, and a permit from the British Home Office, prior to departure, through the British consulate. In short, Europeans will be subject to the same rules that apply today to people arriving from outside the EU, although, once again, part of this legislation may not be applied if the United Kingdom and the European Union reach an agreement."

Silvia Guzzetti from London