'Next to impossible': How backlogs are delaying applications for Italian citizenship✎

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[Italian citizenship](#) For Members

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The Italian citizenship application process is getting slower in many countries as consulates struggle with backlogs. (Photo by ANDREAS SOLARO / AFP)

People applying for Italian citizenship via ancestry outside of Italy say the wait time for appointments at their consulate has shot up in recent months. Here's how applicants are getting around the problem.

If you're having trouble getting an appointment at your local Italian consulate to file an ancestry-based *jure sanguinis* citizenship application, you're not alone.

The Local's readers in the UK report waiting times for appointments have "shot up", while those in the US say booking a slot is now "next to impossible".

Aleksandra Broom, an attorney at the Rome-based firm Oliver & Partners who specialises in Italian immigration and citizenship law, says glacial wait times are something her firm is grappling with on an increasing basis.

"Unfortunately, there's a complete moratorium with regards to getting appointments at consulates, especially in Latin America, and in the UK and in the US," says Broom.

"We're talking months, if not years to get an appointment."

In the UK, Brexit is likely to be a driving force behind the backlog, as British citizens rush to reclaim ancestry-based European citizenships and the EU passport that comes with them.

Linda, a 55-year-old dual British-Italian citizen living in Scotland, told The Local that when she made her *jure sanguinis* citizenship application in December 2020 (the end of the Brexit transition period)**,** it took her around seven months to get an appointment at her local consulate.

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Since then, she says, "the waiting time in Scotland for the appointment to hand in your paperwork has now shot up to nearly two years," adding that both her son and nephew were both recently given appointments with wait times of around 18 months.

The problem isn't just restricted to the UK, however.

"Getting an appointment in the US is next to impossible," said 47-year-old Debi Holland, a dual US-Italian citizen in Chicago.

"The consulate for Chicago, Illinois is booked for two-plus years. They only open new appointments now and then (something like one or two in a week), and when they do they are snapped up at a moment's notice," she added in an email to The Local.

"I tried for months to get an appointment and gave up."

Broom, the attorney, says some applicants are happy to take their time with the process. "If people who want their citizenship are happy to wait for an appointment at their local consulate, then fine," she says.

But, she notes, some people can't wait: "Most people want it for work reasons, for study reasons or to make their life easier in Europe with a European nationality. So, they can't wait endlessly for these appointments to become available."

So how can applicants on a deadline get around the problem?

Debi says she retained the services of the Italian Citizenship Assistance Program (ICAP), and ultimately travelled to Italy in person at the start of this year to apply at one of the *comuni,* or town halls, with which ICAP had a relationship.

Once there, she says, it took just two and half months for her application to be approved (having previously spent around two years gathering all the necessary paperwork).

"Obviously you need the flexibility to go over there and spend two-three months, but it's way faster," says Debi.

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Applicants who go via this route should be prepared to shell out, however - between consulting fees, flights, rent in Italy, local consultants on the ground, and getting her documents 'apostilled' (officially certified), she estimates that she spent around $15,000 in total.

Oliver & Partners has taken a different approach with their clients: Broom says she now regularly files appeals (*ricorsi*) in Italian courts on their behalf to speed up the process.

Until recently, these cases all fell under the remit of the Rome Civil Court, which developed its own crushing backlog.

As of June 2022, new legislation requires that appeals be submitted to the appeals court closest to the last-born ancestor's town. Broom says she hopes the change, designed to ease the pressure on the Rome court, will streamline the applications process.

While going through the courts can speed things up, however, she cautions that it's not as simple as bypassing the consular route altogether.

Applicants must first gather evidence of all the attempts they've made to try to make an appointment at the consulate closest to their residence.

"We need evidence of the attempts that the applicant has made over a certain period of time to try and secure an appointment at the relevant consulate.

"Acceptance that the case can be processed through the courts in Italy will ultimately be at the discretion of the judge," she says.

This applies in all cases *except* for certain specific applications made via the maternal line.

Because of a <u>1912 Italian law</u> that disallowed Italian women from passing on citizenship if they married a foreigner, applying through the maternal line in some cases requires going straight to the courts, as consulates aren't legally allowed to take on these applications.

Though these '1948 Rule' cases tend to be more legally complex, the fact that applicants must appeal directly to the courts means no time is wasted trying to get an appointment with the consulate - ironically simplifying things slightly for the first time for people in this position.

If you've applied for Italian citizenship, how did the waiting time compare? Please share your experience in the comments section below or in our <u>reader survey</u>.