

Palermo's Citizenship Setback: Hopes Dashed in the Referendum

The recent outcome of the referendum on June 8 and 9 has left us with deep regret here in Palermo. For our community, a vibrant cross-roads of diverse histories and backgrounds, the low turnout of 30% revealed a significant shortcoming in our communication and organizational skills, more than a judgment on the referendum instrument itself. We, who are daily present in the neighborhoods and in direct contact with the people, supported these referendums with conviction. While there were five separate referendums on the ballot—four focused on labor issues and one on citizen-ship—our primary commitment and the heart of our efforts were undoubtedly centered on the citizenship referendum.



Event by Right2Be and Moltivolti

We firmly believe that citizenship rights shouldn't be determined by place of birth or origin, but rather should belong to everyone who lives in and contributes to the life of this country. This is an issue we feel particularly strongly about here in Palermo, a city where the integration and active participation of newcomers are fundamental to our social fabric. We know countless young people, like those born and raised here, who feel no connection to their parents' country of origin, yet face daunting economic hurdles to claim Italian citizenship at eighteen. Then there are those who have lived here for decades, contributing to our society, but have slowly lost faith in ever being recognized as full citizens, feeling perpetually stuck as second-class residents. Our support for the labor referendums was also strong, as we believe in fair working conditions and protections for all, but the citizenship question resonated most deeply with our community's core values of inclusion.

We collaborated with various organizations, from the CGIL—one of Italy's largest trade unions, crucial for workers' rights—to the association Italiani Senza Cittadinanza. We were united by the vision of a fairer and more equitable society. While the referendums themselves were only open to Italian citizens, a primary aim of the underlying movement was to push for changes that would eventually ensure greater political participation for those who live our reality on a daily basis, including new migrants, and to secure better protections for all workers.

This result, though disappointing, isn't a final defeat. It's a clear signal that we need to re-evaluate our strategies. We must understand why a significant portion of the eligible Italian citizen population didn't feel compelled to vote on issues that we believe are vital for social justice. Was it a lack of awareness, a sense of apathy, or a feeling that their vote wouldn't make a difference? These are questions we're asking ourselves, and we're committed to finding the answers within our community. We recognize that

building a truly inclusive society requires persistent effort, not just during referendum campaigns. It means engaging in ongoing dialogue, educating, and mobilizing people at the grassroots level. It means continuing to work alongside our partners, strengthening the networks that brought us together for this cause. Despite the outcome, the fact that so many diverse groups—from established trade unions to associations fighting for the rights of the undocumented—could unite behind common goals offers a glimmer of hope. It demonstrates that the desire for a more just society, where everyone has a voice and equal opportunities, is alive and well. We're determined to harness that collective energy, to refine our message, and to find new, more effective ways to advocate for these fundamental changes. The path forward may be challenging, but our commitment to a Palermo and an Italy where everyone has a full right to citizenship remains unwavering.

27.06.2025

ARCI PORCO ROSSO