

## ***7 – LAW AND ORDER***

This chapter contains data regarding the Sicilian judicial system, gathered from the main surveys of both criminal law (crimes and persons reported to the judicial authorities, prisoners, convicted persons, suicides and attempted suicides) and civil law (appeals, protests, bankruptcy, separations).

There were 477 bankruptcies declared in Sicily in 2007 (-17.3% over the previous year) concentrated principally in joint-stock companies (60.4%), with about 87.8% following requests by creditors. 51.4% of the sentences of declared bankruptcies recorded in Sicily were lodged at the Palermo Court of Appeal; 226 of these were lodged by creditors. However, in the period 2003-2007, the number of declared bankruptcies fell by 12%, falling from 542 to 477 (and from 20.1 to 17.1 respectively per 10,000 active businesses).

There were 140,064 protests served in 2008, a fall of 1.6% over 2007, which represented 9.5% of the national figure (1,476,127). The total value of the protested claims amounted to 315,010,000 Euros, with an increase of 0.3% over the year 2007. On the one hand, between 2003 and 2008, although there was a decrease in numerical terms of 6,682 units in the number of protests served, the same could not be said for the total value of protests served, which, in the same period, in an almost continuously positive trend, went from 284,655,000 Euros in 2003 to 315,010,000 Euros in 2008. 63.8% of the protests served in Sicily were in the form of IOUs, money orders and accepted drafts, 3.2% non-accepted drafts and 33% certified cheques.

The greatest number of protests served were concentrated in the Province of Palermo (37,410, amounting to a total of 69,861,000 Euros) followed by the Province of Catania (30,974 protests) and Messina (14,454 protests served).

In 2007, compared with the previous year, there was a rise in the number of applications for separation lodged in Sicily (+4.6%). In all, there were 8,761 applications, 50.3% of which followed judicial proceedings and accounted for 8.4% of the applications for separation lodged in the country as a whole (which amounted to 103,900, an increase of 9.6% compared to 2006). The number of separations granted (5,787 in 2007) also rose by 6.7% over the previous year, 2006. Between 2003 and 2007 the number of separations granted rose by 10.3%.

With regard to penitentiary criminal law statistics, on the basis of the latest available data from 2007, there were 201,490 reported crimes for which the judicial authorities started criminal proceedings (+8.2% compared to 2006). This figure represents 6.9% of the corresponding national figure and 54.6% of these cases involved robbery (a total of 110,102 cases), an increase of 7.9% over 2006. At the Regional level, the latest available figures from 2007 show that 28.4% of the crimes reported took place in the province of Catania (57,228 crimes reported), followed by Palermo, where the number of crimes reported totalled 53,062.

Over the period 2003-2007, there was a rise (+16%) in the overall number of crimes

reported to the forces of law and order in Sicily.

Data regarding reform and penal establishments, shows that by Dec 31, 2008, there had been a 31.9% fall (compared to the previous year) in the number of inmates in Sicilian prisons (totalling 6,870 units). 2.1% of these were women and 25.8% foreigners, (of whom there were 1,773) representing a 52.8% increase over the previous year.

During the year 2008 there were 172 suicides in Sicily (-8% compared to 2007, representing 6.1% of the national figure) and 212 attempted suicides (with a 7.8% fall over the previous year). Agrigento was the province with the greatest number of suicides (6.6 per 100,000 inhabitants), whilst Enna boasted the highest number of attempted suicides (13.8 per 100,000 inhabitants). However it was in the Regions of the centre-north of Italy that the highest suicide- and attempted suicide-rates were recorded (75.9% and 78.4% respectively of the corresponding national total)

## *Glossary*

**Bankruptcy:** judicial procedure through which the property of an insolvent entrepreneur is taken from him and, as far as possible, shared out equally among his creditors.

**Convicted person:** person tried, convicted and sentenced, for a crime.

**Court of Appeal:** collective body organised in civil and criminal sections. There is a seat in every chief city of the district. It has the civil and criminal authority to pass judgement on impugnations against those court sentences which can be appealed against.

**Crime:** an offence for which the principal penalties are imprisonment, fines and a series of lesser penalties.

**Denounced person (against whom a penal action has been instigated):** is someone, against whom the Public Prosecutor formulates a formal charge or requests that the person (where the author of the crime is known) be indicted.

**Judicial authority:** the authority administering penal, civil and administrative justice.

**Offence:** crime or violation provided for by Criminal law and by special criminal laws.

**Penal action:** activity carried out by Public Prosecutor when there are no grounds for the request to have the offence dismissed (Criminal procedure code)

**Protest:** a formal declaration of refusal to accept a draft on the part of the drawee, or the failed payment of the draft or a cheque.

**Regional Administrative Court (TAR):** first-degree administrative judicial body with its seat in the chief city of the Region.

### *Further reading*

#### Publications

Italian Statistical Yearbook– 2009 - ISTAT  
Statistics for Civil judgements– 2004 - ISTAT  
Statistics for Criminal judgements– 2004 – ISTAT

#### Internet:

<http://giustiziaincifre.istat.it/>  
Informational territorial system regarding Justice

<http://www.giustizia.it/>  
Justice statistics  
Juvenile justice statistics  
Penitentiary administration statistics

[www.poliziadistato.it/](http://www.poliziadistato.it/)  
Statistical data about:  
• Criminality  
• Anti-drug services  
• Highway services  
• Post and communications  
• Railways

[www.ristretti.it](http://www.ristretti.it)  
Area of study– Statistical surveys– “Data about convicted persons and prisons”

<http://www.istat.it/>  
Italian Statistical Yearbook - year 2009 – Chapter 6: “Law and Order”

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