

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).

On the basis of the latest available data, there were 477 bankruptcies declared in Sicily in 2007 (-17.3% fewer than the previous year) concentrated principally in joint-stock companies (60.4%), with about 87.8% following requests by creditors. A total of 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 143,878 protests served in 2009, a rise of 2.7% over 2008, which represented 9.2% of the national figure (1,570,873). The total value of the protested claims amounted to 380,463,000 Euros, with an increase of 20.8% over the year 2008. Although there was a decrease in numerical terms of 11,186 units in the number of protests served between 2005 and 2009, the same could not be said for the total value of protests served, which, in the same period, in an almost continuously rising trend, went from 336,785,000 Euros in 2005 to 380,463,000 Euros in 2009. A total of 68.8% of the protests served in Sicily were in the form of IOUs, money orders and accepted drafts, 2.9% non-accepted drafts and 28.3% certified cheques.

The greatest number of protests served were concentrated in the Province of Palermo (34,668, amounting to a total of 61,6376,000 Euros) followed by the Provinces of Catania (33,365 protests) and Messina (14,884 protests served).

In 2007 (last available figures), 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 2008, there were 200,140 reported crimes for which the judicial authorities started criminal proceedings (-0.7% compared to 2007). This figure represents 7.4% of the corresponding national figure and 53.1% of these cases involved robbery (106,310 cases), a fall of 3.4% when compared to 2007. At the Regional level, the latest available figures show that, in 2008, 28.4% of the crimes reported took place in the province of Catania (54,618 crimes reported), followed by Palermo, where the number of crimes reported totalled 51,802. Over the period 2004-2008, there was a rise (+21.6%) in the overall number of crimes reported to the forces of law and order in Sicily.

Data regarding reform and penal establishments, shows that on Dec 31, 2009, there had been a 10.3% rise (compared to the previous year) in the number of inmates in Sicilian prisons (totalling 7,581 units). Of these 2.3% were women and 25.2% foreigners (of whom there were 1,909), representing a further 7.7% 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% of the corresponding national total respectively).

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– 2010 - 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/
Statistical data about:
Criminality

Anti-drug services
Highway services
Post and communications
Railways

www.ristretti.it

Area of study– Statistical surveys– “Data about convicted persons and prisons”

<http://www.istat.it/>

Italian Statistical Yearbook - year 2010 – Chapter 6: “Law and Order”