

## **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 577 declared bankruptcies in Sicily in 2006 (-15.8% over the previous year) concentrated principally in joint-stock companies (53.9%), with about 81.6% following the request from creditors. 52.5% of the sentences of declared bankruptcies recorded in Sicily were lodged at the Palermo Court of Appeal; 288 of these were lodged by creditors. However, in the period 2002-2006, the number of declared bankruptcies fell by 6.9%, falling from 620 to 577 (and 23.1 and 20.8 respectively per 10,000 active businesses).

There were 142,352 protests served in 2007, a fall of 3.2% over 2006, which represented 9.5% of the national figure (1,494,541). The total value of the protested claims amounted to 314,010,000 Euros, with a drop of 2.9% over the year 2006.

On the one hand, between 2002 and 2007, there was a decrease, in numerical terms, of 16,036 units in the number of protests served, whereas the same could not be said for the total value of protests served, which, in the same period, in an almost continuous positive trend, went from 274,918,000 Euros in 2002, to 314,010,000 Euros in 2007. 60% of the protests served in Sicily were in the form of IOUs, money orders and accepted drafts, 2.8% non-accepted drafts and 37.4% certified cheques.

The greatest number of protests served were concentrated in the Province of Palermo (37,308 amounting to a total of 71,183,000 Euros) followed by the Province of Catania (29,499 protests) and Messina (15,757 protests served).

In 2006, compared with the previous year, there was a fall in the number of applications for separation lodged in Sicily (-1.7%). In all, there were 8,377 applications, 49% of which followed judicial proceedings and accounted for 8.8% of the applications for separation lodged in the country as a whole (which amounted to 94,761, a fall of 6.3% compared to 2005). The number of separations granted (5,425 in 2006) also fell by 9% over the previous year. Between 2002 and 2006 the number of separations granted rose by 12.6%.

With regard to penitentiary criminal law statistics, on the basis of the latest available data from 2006, there were 186,223 crimes for which the judicial authorities started criminal proceedings (+9.9% compared to 2005). This figure represents 6.1% of the corresponding national figure and 54.8% of these cases involved robbery (a total of 102,076 cases), an increase of 8.8% over 2005. At the Regional level, the latest available figures from 2005 show that 25% of the crimes reported took place in the province of Catania (46,594 crimes reported), followed by Palermo, where the number of crimes reported amounted to 43,288.

However there was a slight reduction (-0.3%) in the overall number of crimes reported to the forces of law and order in Sicily in the period 2002-2006.

Data regarding reform and penal establishments, shows that on Dec 31, 2007, there had been a marked rise (+37.5% over the previous year), in the number of inmates in Sicilian prisons (5,209 elements). 1.7% of these were women and 22.3% foreigners; the latter totalled 1,160, representing a decrease of +141.7%. The number of drug-addicts at the end of 2007, amounted to 19.3% of all inmates, a higher figure than the

previous year (15.9%). In absolute terms the number of drug-addicts in Sicilian prisons went from 602 to 1,003, a figure representing 7.5% of all drug-addicts locked up in penal establishments in Italy on that date.

During the year 2007 there were 187 suicides in Sicily (-7.4% compared to 2006, representing about 6.5% of the national figure) and 230 attempted suicides (with a 2.7% increase over the previous year). Enna was the province with the greatest number of suicides (9.8 per 100,000 inhabitants), whilst Agrigento boasted the highest number of attempted suicides (10.8 per 100,000 inhabitants). The highest suicide- and attempted suicide-rates were recorded in the Regions of the centre-north of Italy (74% and 74.4% respectively compared to national figures)

### *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– 2008 - 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 2008 – Chapter 6: “Law and Order”