

Opening of the Judicial Year of the Corte suprema di Cassazione of Italy

02/02/2024



On January 25, 2024, First President Christophe Soulard was represented by Ms. Florence Marguerite, Judge referee, and Mr. James Geist-Mokhefi, of the International Relations Department, at the formal sitting of the Italian Corte suprema di Cassazione.

The audience, representing the highest echelons of the Italian legal world, heard a speech by First President Margherita Cassano, who highlighted the current challenges facing Italian courts in terms of reducing trial times and institutional reform. She stressed the urgency of the prison situation, as well as contemporary and societal challenges such as workplace safety and femicide.

This was followed by speeches from Italian CSM Vice-President Fabio Pinelli, Justice Minister Carlo Nordio, Attorney General Luigi Salvato, and prominent members of the bar.

The presence of the French delegation symbolized the unity and spirit of collaboration within the European legal framework, as called for by the "enhanced cooperation" model set up at the initiative of First President Christophe Soulard.



The afternoon was devoted to a working session between the delegation and two presidents of chambers of the Corte suprema di Cassazione, Mr. Massimo Ferro, president of the first civil chamber in charge of the trial office, and Ms. Grazia Miccoli, president of the criminal chamber. Work focused on the urgent issue of decongesting the Supreme Court's docket, and on the work of judicial assistants, a new role introduced in Italy in February 2022, very similar to that of *jurists assistants* in France (future "*attachés de justice*"), who are grouped together in a "Trial office" - *L'ufficio per il processo (UPP)*. This office was set up at the Corte suprema di Cassazione through the recruitment of 168 contractual staff as part of the European recovery and resilience plan, which provided for the recruitment of over 8,000 contractual staff for all Italian jurisdictions assigned to these UPPs, with fixed-term contracts expiring on June 30, 2026. Valuable insights were provided by the magistrates and Ms Sveva Milano and Mr Fabrizio Vona, UPP contract staff, on the tasks entrusted to these assistants in the preliminary examination of appeals, the drafting of proposals for accelerated definition (PDA), the monitoring and filing of interlocutory orders, and the statistical monitoring of appeals.



The session provided an opportunity to share experiences and strategies for improving the efficiency of the judicial process in both countries, and to usefully and effectively consolidate the team around the judge.

This visit is part of the strategic vision of enhanced cooperation between the two jurisdictions, initiated by First President Christophe Soulard and his Italian counterpart Margherita Cassano. Their discussions in June 2023 laid the foundations for this visit and future collaboration. This cooperation represents a commitment to regular dialogue on various topics of substantive law and judicial organization, recognizing that the challenges facing one nation's judicial system are often mirrored in another. In the future, these exchanges between the French and Italian Supreme Courts promise to be a cornerstone in the evolution of judicial practices in both countries. As the legal landscape continues to evolve, the knowledge gained from these collaborations will be crucial in shaping responsive, efficient and fair judicial systems.

This visit bears witness to the dynamism of international cooperation in the field of justice. By sharing their knowledge, experience and best practices, Italian and French courts are not only strengthening their bilateral ties, but also contributing to the wider objective of improving the quality of justice throughout Europe.

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