

## The Ticino judiciary: organization

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The cantonal judiciary of Ticino is organized under the Law on Judicial Organization (*Legge sull'organizzazione giudiziaria*, LOG).<sup>1</sup> When Bellinzona became the permanent capital in 1878, Lugano received the seat of the canton's highest court, which it has kept ever since.<sup>2</sup> The Court of Appeal (*Tribunale d'appello*) sits at Via Pretorio 16 in Lugano. It consists of 28 judges and 16 substitute judges, elected by the Grand Council for terms of ten years. Every two years, from 1 June, it appoints its president, vice-president and the members of its sections. The president and vicepresident serve two-year terms and are not immediately re-eligible.<sup>3</sup>

The court is divided into three sections. The civil law section comprises three civil chambers, a chamber for civil complaints, the protection chamber for the law of adults and children, the chamber for debt enforcement and bankruptcy, and the criminal court of appeal and revision (*Corte di appello e di revisione penale*, CARP). The public law section comprises the cantonal administrative court, the cantonal insurance court, the tax law chamber and the criminal complaints court (*Corte dei reclami penali*), which hears complaints against acts of the cantonal prosecutors and the coercive measures judge. The third section is the cantonal criminal court (*Tribunale penale cantonale*), which tries serious crimes at first instance, sitting with lay assessors in the most serious cases.<sup>4</sup> An administrative commission of the president, the vice-president and the section presidents manages the court.

Below the Court of Appeal stand the district civil courts (*Preture*), the justices of the peace (*Giudicature di pace*) responsible for conciliation and small claims, the cantonal criminal magistrate (*Pretura penale*) for minor offences and the coercive measures judge (*Giudice dei provvedimenti coercitivi*).<sup>5</sup> The Public Prosecutor's Office (*Ministero pubblico*), headed by the Attorney General of the canton, is the single prosecution authority. In 2025 it opened 15,019 new files and closed 13,632, so that the number of pending

files rose from 7,174 to 8,561. It issued 7,397 decisions bringing charges, most of them penalty orders, and 6,428 decisions of abandonment or non-prosecution.<sup>6</sup> Chapter G.III described the office's resources for economic crime and the reforms of 2021 and 2026.

## 1 The Ticino courts and the financial centre

The workload of the Ticino courts reflects the financial centre in several ways. The civil chambers of the Court of Appeal decide disputes between banks and clients, between asset managers and their principals and among heirs of Italian families. At the end of 2025 the first civil chamber alone had 262 pending cases. The chamber for debt enforcement and bankruptcy, with 168 pending cases, decides the attachment proceedings against Italian debtors described in Chapter H.IV.<sup>7</sup> The criminal court of appeal and revision, with 231 pending cases, and the cantonal criminal court, with 237, hear the cases of fraud, criminal mismanagement and money laundering that remain under cantonal jurisdiction because they have a local focus. The cantonal administrative court, with 730 pending cases, reviews among other things the decisions of the cantonal supervisory authority over fiduciaries described in Chapter E.III.

The physical organization of cantonal justice has been the subject of political controversy. In March 2021 the Council of State proposed to concentrate the Court of Appeal, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the criminal courts and other judicial authorities in Lugano, in a building to be purchased from the bank that had acquired the former Banca del Gottardo.<sup>8</sup> On 9 June 2024 the voters of Ticino rejected the purchase of the building in Via Franscini in Lugano for CHF 76 million. In November 2024 the government presented a new plan that distributes the judicial authorities of the Lugano area among four separate locations: one for the prosecution and police authorities, one for the Court of Appeal with the criminal court of appeal transferred from Locarno and the seat of the Bar Association, one for the district courts and a new protection court, and one for the debt enforcement, bankruptcy and land registry offices. The Director of Institutions, Norman Gobbi, acknowledged that costs would not fall.<sup>9</sup> The episode is a reminder that the justice system of a financial centre depends on buildings, staff and budgets as much as on statutes.

## 2 Notes

1. Legge sull'organizzazione giudiziaria of 10 May 2006 (LOG), RL 177.100, status 21 August 2026,

- <https://m3.ti.ch/CAN/RLeggi/public/index.php/raccolta-leggi/legge/num/132>; Art. 42(1) (28 judges and 16 substitutes, three sections). ↩
2. Giuseppe Mondada, "Bellinzona da cent'anni capitale stabile del Cantone", Scuola ticinese No. 61, [https://m4.ti.ch/fileadmin/DECS/DS/Rivista\\_scuola\\_ticinese/ST\\_n.61/ST\\_61\\_Mondada\\_Bellinzona\\_da\\_cento\\_anni\\_capitale\\_stabile\\_del\\_Cantone.pdf](https://m4.ti.ch/fileadmin/DECS/DS/Rivista_scuola_ticinese/ST_n.61/ST_61_Mondada_Bellinzona_da_cento_anni_capitale_stabile_del_Cantone.pdf); see Chapter C.I. ↩
  3. Repubblica e Cantone Ticino, "Tribunale d'appello", <https://www4.ti.ch/poteri/giudiziario/tribunale-dappello/> (consulted September 2026). ↩
  4. Repubblica e Cantone Ticino, "Tribunale d'appello" (above). On the composition of the cantonal criminal court with assessors (assessori giurati) see LOG and the cantonal law implementing the CrimPC. ↩
  5. Repubblica e Cantone Ticino, Rendiconto della magistratura 2025. Allegato statistico, [https://www4.ti.ch/fileadmin/POTERI/GIUDIZIARIO/rapporti/Rendiconto\\_della\\_magistratura\\_2025-Allegato\\_statistico.pdf](https://www4.ti.ch/fileadmin/POTERI/GIUDIZIARIO/rapporti/Rendiconto_della_magistratura_2025-Allegato_statistico.pdf). ↩
  6. Rendiconto della magistratura 2025. Allegato statistico (above). ↩
  7. Rendiconto della magistratura 2025. Allegato statistico (above), pending cases at 31 December 2025. ↩
  8. "Verso un nuovo pretorio di Bellinzona", RSI, 2 March 2021 (above). ↩
  9. "La Giustizia del Luganese si fa in quattro", RSI, 27 November 2024, <https://www.rsi.ch/info/ticino-grigioni-e-insubria/La-Giustizia-del-Luganese-si-fa-in-quattro--2393545.html>. ↩

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