

**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SUPREME ADMINISTRATIVE
JURISDICTIONS (IASAJ)**

MAGISTRATE'S EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

September, 2025

INTERNSHIP REPORT

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JURISDICTION: SUPREME ADMINISTRATIVE COURT OF PORTUGAL

HOST JURISDICTION: SUPERIOR TRIBUNAL OF JUSTICE OF BRAZIL

(Preliminary note: for data protection reasons, the individuals contacted during the exchange programme in Brazil are not identified by name.)

1) APPLICATION, SELECTION PROCESS AND ORGANISATION OF THE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

In May 2025, the Association informed me that I had been selected to participate in the exchange programme.

From this initial communication onwards, the entire process proved to be efficient and consistently supported by both the organising bodies (IASAJ and the Superior Tribunal of Justice of Brazil – STJ).

The travel arrangements made through the Association were handled very efficiently, as was the provision of financial support. I would also like to emphasise the exceptional kindness and availability shown by the Superior Tribunal of Justice of Brazil. Possible periods for carrying out the programme and its contents were promptly proposed, with constant openness to adjustments whenever necessary.

2) PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The exchange programme lasted approximately two weeks.

□ DAY 1

On the first day, I had the opportunity to attend the **1st STJ Congress of Federal and State Second Instance**, held at the auditorium of the Superior Tribunal of Justice (STJ).

The Congress addressed the role of the Judiciary, with a particular focus on second-instance courts, and resulted in the approval of several “statements” relating to five areas: institutional matters, public law, private law, criminal law, and civil procedural law. Judges from all 27 State Courts of Justice and the 6 Federal Regional Courts took part in this event.

These “statements” are especially significant, as they represent consensual legal understandings approved by judicial bodies and may serve as references for future decisions, thus contributing to the standardisation of case-law. This legal mechanism, in this specific formulation, has no direct equivalent in Portuguese law and was of particular interest to me.

This was followed by an insightful **presentation on the STJ** and its **use of artificial intelligence systems**. The session was attended by other Portuguese judges who were in Brasilia for the 1st STJ Brazil – STJ Portugal Meeting.

The Superior Tribunal of Justice is composed of 33 Ministers. The Constitution provides for a diversified background among the Ministers: one third must be chosen from among Federal Appellate Judges, one third from among State Appellate Judges, and the remaining one third from among lawyers and members of the Public Prosecutor’s Office.

The 33 Ministers of the Superior Tribunal of Justice (STJ) are internally organised into specialised judicial bodies responsible for adjudicating most matters falling within the Court’s jurisdiction.

Composition of the Court’s collegiate bodies:

- Plenary

The Plenary is composed of all the Ministers of the STJ. The Plenary has administrative jurisdiction, including the election of members to managerial and representative offices, the approval of amendments to the Court’s Internal Rules, and the preparation of shortlists of three candidates for appointment to the Court.

- Special Court

The Special Court is composed of the 15 most senior Ministers of the Tribunal. It has jurisdiction over criminal proceedings against State Governors and other authorities. The Special Court is also competent to rule on appeals in cases where there are conflicting interpretations among the Court’s specialised judicial bodies. Sections and Panels

The STJ is divided into three specialised Sections. Within their respective fields of specialisation, the Sections adjudicate applications, complaints, and conflicts of jurisdiction. They are also responsible for ruling on repetitive appeals.

Each Section is composed of Ministers from two specialised Panels. The Sections consist of ten Ministers, while each Panel is composed of five Ministers.

The Panels adjudicate non-repetitive special appeals, criminal habeas corpus proceedings, appeals in habeas corpus cases, appeals in proceedings, as well as other types of cases.

I also participated in a **guided tour of the STJ facilities**, including the plenary session room, the television studio, and the document digitisation unit operated by deaf employees. I would like to highlight the outstanding work carried out in this area: the level of professionalism and adaptation demonstrated by these employees was truly remarkable.

□ DAY 2

The day began with a visit to the **National School for the Training and Improvement of Magistrates** (ENFAM), the official body responsible for the training of Brazilian state and federal judges. ENFAM regulates, authorises and supervises official courses for entry into and promotion within the judiciary. Accompanied by a senior official of the institution, I learned about its responsibilities and organisational structure.

Later, I was given an excellent guided tour of the **National Congress**, which provided valuable insight into its facilities, institutional functioning and the organisation of the Brazilian legislative process.

The day concluded with a visit to the **Itamaraty Palace**, the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This visit allowed me to learn about the functioning of the Ministry and to admire the renowned architectural spaces designed by Oscar Niemeyer, harmoniously integrated with the gardens of Burle Marx.

□ DAY 3

1st STJ Brazil – STJ Portugal Meeting

This meeting took place in the Noble Hall of the STJ and aimed to strengthen institutional ties and promote discussion on judicial issues common to the highest courts of Brazil and Portugal.

The programme included three panels addressing civil liability, domestic violence, and shared challenges faced by the justice systems of both countries. The panels were conducted jointly by Ministers of the Brazilian court — the term used in Brazil for judges of supreme courts — and Judges of the Portuguese Supreme Court.

The meeting highlighted the importance of international judicial cooperation and reinforced the close relationship between Brazil and Portugal in addressing common challenges in the administration of justice.

Still at the STJ, I had the opportunity to visit the **Exhibition “Indigenous Peoples: Warriors of Time”**, by photographer Ricardo Stuckert, which documents over two decades of the life and culture of the Yanomami people.

The day ended with a cultural visit to the **Metropolitan Cathedral of Brasília** and the **Dom Bosco Sanctuary**, two iconic examples of modern architecture, particularly renowned for their impressive stained-glass windows.

□ DAY 4

An informative visit was made to the **Superior Electoral Court (TSE)**, where the structure and functioning of the Court were presented, highlighting its central role in the Brazilian democratic system. I attended a plenary session, visited the historical gallery of Electoral Justice, the museum, and the electronic voting system area, where I took part in a voting simulation.

Later, I visited the **Office of the President of the Superior Tribunal of Justice**. This visit provided insight into its organisation and operation and included a presentation of

the “**Logos**” **artificial intelligence project**, used internally for procedural analysis and the preparation of draft decisions.

It should be noted that this system was developed entirely within the Court itself as part of its modernisation efforts. It provides direct support to judges’ offices, accelerating procedures and increasing efficiency, while fully preserving judicial independence. Judges remain entirely responsible for the final decisions.

Brazil, and the STJ in particular, has achieved a remarkable level of development in this field, deploying highly sophisticated technological tools that assist in identifying relevant information and analysing legal controversies without compromising judicial autonomy.

Later that day, I visited **additional STJ facilities**, including its exceptional **library** — the largest legal collection in the country — and the **Lawyer’s Space**, designed to support in-person services for legal professionals and litigants. This space offers meeting rooms, printing facilities, luggage storage and refreshments. I also learned about the **Virtual Helpdesk**, a platform that allows remote public service through videoconferencing in virtual rooms accessible to interested parties.

□ **DAY 5**

The programme continued with a visit to the **Federal Justice Council (CJF)**. Its structure and functions were presented, followed by discussions on similarities and differences between the Brazilian and Portuguese judicial systems.

The CJF serves as the central administrative and budgetary oversight body of the Federal Justice system, with corrective powers and binding decisions applicable to all first and second instance federal courts.

□ **DAY 6**

I visited the **Federal Court of Accounts (TCU)**, where I attended a guided tour followed by a meeting on its organisation and competences.

The TCU is the external control body of the federal government and assists the National Congress in monitoring budgetary and financial execution. It is responsible for accounting, financial, budgetary, operational and asset oversight of public entities, ensuring legality, legitimacy and cost-effectiveness.

This was followed by a visit to the **Comptroller General of the Union (CGU)**, the federal body responsible for protecting public assets and promoting transparency through internal control, public auditing, ombudsman services, corrective action and the prevention and combating of corruption.

□ DAY 7

This day was dedicated to a fruitful **meeting with a Minister (JUDGE) of the STJ** belonging to the 1st Section (2nd Panel), which has jurisdiction over public law matters, including social security, administrative and tax law.

Following lunch at the STJ, we discussed and compared the jurisdictions of the Brazilian and Portuguese courts, work methodologies, procedural rules, chamber composition and organisational structures, among other relevant aspects.

I then attended a **public session of the Second Panel**, seated in the area reserved for Magistrates and wearing the official judicial attire of the STJ.

Among the cases heard, I would highlight:

- an appeal in an administrative misconduct case;
- a tax appeal concerning the Tax on Services of Any Nature (ISS), comparable to European VAT;
- an administrative misconduct case addressing limitation periods and their suspension;
- a case dealing with preferential treatment in adjudication, based on statutory priority rules for vulnerable groups;
- a case concerning the transfer of liability for sanctions to the heirs of a defendant convicted of administrative misconduct.

Key Differences Between Hearings at the STJ (Brazil) and the STA (Portugal)

- Public hearings
- Participation of lawyers in oral argument
- Hearings broadcast on YouTube
- Sign-language interpretation
- Presence of the general public,

These features significantly enhance transparency and public trust in the justice system.

I would also like to emphasise the importance of the “**repetitive appeal**” mechanism, a Brazilian procedural tool that allows several appeals raising the same legal issue to be decided together. Once decided, the ruling becomes a “repetitive theme”, applied uniformly to all suspended cases, promoting efficiency, equality and legal certainty.

In the first half of 2025, there were 37 such repetitive themes at the STJ, most relating to public law.

□ **DAY 8**

I had the opportunity to visit the **National Council of Justice (CNJ)**, a public institution that aims to improve the work of the Brazilian Judiciary, mainly with regard to administrative and procedural control and transparency.

It is an interesting institution that safeguards the autonomy of the Judiciary and the fulfillment of the Statute of the Judiciary, defining the strategic planning, the target plans, and the institutional evaluation programs of the Judiciary. It is also the body that receives complaints, electronic petitions, and representations against members or bodies of the Judiciary, including its auxiliary services, offices, and bodies providing notarial and registry services that act by delegation of public power or are officially appointed. It promotes best practices aimed at modernizing and expediting the services of judicial bodies.

Following this was an **appearance at a session of the Special Court of the Superior Court of Justice (STJ)**, composed of the 15 most senior ministers of the Court.

The panel, as i said before, judges criminal cases against governors and other authorities. It is also responsible for deciding appeals when there is a divergent interpretation between the specialized bodies of the STJ.

□ DAY 9

I visited the **Supreme Federal Court (STF)**, the highest court in Brazil, responsible for safeguarding the Constitution. The Court is composed of eleven Judges and has jurisdiction over matters such as constitutional review, non-compliance with fundamental constitutional precepts, and extradition requests.

I attended a **plenary session** and participated in a **guided tour of the Court's facilities**, including its museum, which contains extensive documentary and photographic collections. The museum includes material related to the attacks on the Court's on 8 January 2023.

The programme concluded with a **meeting at the Office of Cooperation and International Relations of the STJ**, providing an opportunity to exchange final impressions and to reflect upon two weeks of professional experience.

3) CONCLUSION

The exchange programme was outstanding on both a personal and professional level.

It successfully combined professional, social and cultural dimensions, offering a truly enriching experience. I am confident that the objectives of the Association were fully achieved, particularly its aim to promote the exchange of views and experiences between courts of last instance regarding public administration and judicial organisation.

4) FINAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to IASAJ, to all those involved in organising this programme, and to the Superior Tribunal of Justice of Brazil — its President, Judges, all those responsible for International Relations and other staff — whose exceptional professionalism, dedication and kindness made this experience possible.

I also wish to thank all the representatives of the institutions visited in Brasilia, who welcomed me so warmly.

Lisbon, 30/11/25

Catarina Almeida e Sousa