

The Supreme Court's Business in 2011

The Supreme Court's Main Objectives

The Supreme Court is the court of final instance and is the appellate court for the rulings of the lower courts. The main objective of the Supreme Court is to ensure uniformity, clarity and developments in lawmaking. As a consequence, the Supreme Court focuses on cases which involve issues of legal principle and cases that give guidance on important legal issues. The Supreme Court hears both civil and criminal cases and has general jurisdiction in all areas of law.

Caseload

The Supreme Court deals with a large variety of cases and the caseload has increased in recent years. In total, the Court dealt with more cases in 2011 than in 2010.

In 2011, the Supreme Court received a total of 431 notices of civil appeal against judgment. The corresponding figure for 2010 was 426. Approximately 17% of the appeals against judgment in civil cases were referred to a chamber of the Court for hearing. The Court received 530 notices of civil interlocutory appeals (appeals against procedural orders and decisions), while the corresponding figure for 2010 was 502.

The Supreme Court received 444 notices of criminal appeal against judgment and 661 notices of interlocutory appeal. The corresponding figures for 2010 were 446 notices of appeal against judgment and 658 notices of interlocutory appeal. Approximately 16% of the appeals against judgment in criminal cases were referred to a chamber of the Court for hearing.

In 2011, a total of 82 civil cases were heard by a chamber of the Supreme Court, while the corresponding figure for 2010 was 68. 92 criminal cases were heard by a chamber of the Supreme Court in 2011, while the corresponding figure for 2010 was 75. The caseload includes a considerable number of complex and demanding cases. Many of the cases have raised legal issues where international sources of law have been significant.

The Grand Chamber and plenary

Under section 5 of the Courts of Justice Act cases, where leave to appeal is granted by the Appeals Committee, can be decided by a Grand Chamber consisting of 11 justices or a hearing in plenary where all of the justices of the Supreme Court participate. The Grand Chamber and hearings in plenary are alternatives to ordinary hearings by five justices in a chamber of the Supreme Court. The Courts of Justice Act provides that hearings by the Grand Chamber shall be reserved for cases of special importance, while plenary shall be used in exceptional cases.

In 2011, the Grand Chamber of the Supreme Court did not hear any cases, while the Grand Chamber heard one case in 2010. Nor has the Supreme Court in 2011 heard any cases in plenary. In 2010, the Supreme Court heard four cases in plenary, two of which were heard together.

Case Handling Time

In 2011, the Supreme Court maintained the very satisfactory case handling time from 2010. Cases are listed for trial as soon as possible bearing in mind the preparation time needed by legal counsel and their availability. There is no backlog of cases in the Supreme Court. On

average, it takes less than a month from notice of appeal is filed with the Supreme Court until the Appeals Committee decides whether to grant leave to appeal. The average time from notice of appeal is filed with the Supreme Court until appeal proceedings start is three and a half months in criminal cases and a little over five months in civil cases.

Changes in the Composition of Justices

Supreme Court Justices Ms. Kirsti Coward and Ms. Karin M. Bruzelius retired on 1 January, and 1 March 2011 respectively. Supreme Court Justice Mr Erik Møse was appointed new Norwegian Judge of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. He took up his position on 1 September 2011. Judge of the EFTA Court Mr .Henrik Bull and Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions Knut Kallerud were appointed Supreme Court Justices on 17 January and 16 July 2011 respectively. In a cabinet meeting held on 11 November 2011, the lawyer Mr. Erik Bergsjø was appointed Supreme Court Justice. He will take up his appointment on 1 March 2012.

Professor Kirsten Sandberg JD served as temporary Supreme Court Justice from 15 November 2010 to 20 February 2011. Court of Appeal Judge Eirik Akerlie served as temporary Supreme Court Justice from 28 February to 3 July 2011, and Professor Finn Arnesen JD serves as temporary Supreme Court Justice from 12 September 2011 to 29 February 2012.

Travel in Norway

As the highest judicial body in Norway and the only court whose jurisdiction covers the whole country, the Supreme Court endeavours to acquaint itself with all parts of Norway. With this in mind, the Supreme Court visits different parts of the country to learn in particular about local industry, public institutions and culture. In 2011, the Supreme Court visited Finnmark where the topics in focus were specifically future energy efficiency and the Barents cooperation.

International Business

In addition to its judicial business, the Supreme Court has carried out a substantial amount of international business in 2011. The Supreme Court has received visits from foreign legal delegations, particularly foreign courts. The Justices and other employees of the Supreme Court have attended congresses, seminars and other meetings abroad. The cooperation with the other Nordic countries occupies a special position in this respect. The purpose of the Supreme Court's international business is twofold: to enhance the expertise of the Supreme Court and to help develop the legal systems and rules of law in other countries.

Visitors to the Norwegian Supreme Court

Visit from representatives of the Storting (11 January)

- Visit from American law students from the American School of Norway (18 May)
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- Visit from The Constitutional Court of South Africa and other South African courts - including a visit to the National Courts Administration, Trondheim (8-11 June)
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- Visit from American law students from Hamline University (14 June)

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- Visit from a South-Korean delegation from an organisation corresponding to the National Courts Administration (13 July)
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- Visit from City Montessori School, Lucknow (India), arranged by the International Conferences of Chief Justices of the World (20 September)
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- Visit from a delegation from Thailand's Institute of Administrative Justice (26 September)
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- Visit from a delegation of Parliamentarians from Mozambique (29 September)
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- Visit from the President of the EFTA Court, Mr. Carl Baudenbacher (29 September)
- Visit from the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, (20 October)
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- Visit from lawyers from Moldova under the auspices of Norlag (1 December)
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- Visit from a delegation of parliamentarians from Vietnam (5 December)

The Supreme Court has sent delegates to the following events abroad

- A farewell celebration honouring the President of the Swedish Supreme Administrative Court, Sten Heckscher, Stockholm (13 January)
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 - The 2nd Congress of the World Conference on Constitutional Justice, Rio de Janeiro (16.-18 January)
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 - Opening of the judicial year of the European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg (28 January)
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 - The Danish Supreme Court's 350th anniversary, Copenhagen (14 February)
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 - Study tour with visits to international legal institutions, the Hague (26 - 28 April)
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 - The General Assembly of ACA-Europe (Association of the Councils of State and Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions of the European Union), Madrid (9 May)
- Nordic Meeting of Secretary Generals, Copenhagen, (12-13 May)
- The XVth Congress of the Conference of European Constitutional Courts, Bucuresti (23-25 May)
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 - Nordic Supreme Court Librarians' Meeting, Copenhagen (30 May -1 June)
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- Nordic litigation contest relating to human rights, Helsinki (10 June)
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- Seminar organised by the EFTA Court, Luxembourg (16-18 June)
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- Venice Commission: The 10th Joint Council Meeting and Mini-Conference, Ankara (30 June - 1 July)
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- The 39th Nordic Lawyers' Meeting, Stockholm (18 - 20 August)
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- Nordic Supreme Court Presidents' Meeting, Iceland (29 - 30 August)
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- Seminar on the Children Act, Toscana (13-18 September)
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- ACA-Europe: Seminar on identification of court decisions (ECLI), Warsaw (30 September)
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- 15th anniversary of the Constitutional Court in Armenia, Yerevan (5 - 9. October)
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- Conference of The Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union, 12 - 14 October (Sofia)
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- Information meeting about the common portal for the Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union, 8. December (Brussels).

Other events

- Press lunch in the Supreme Court (10 January)
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- Dinner at the Palace for Supreme Court Justices and Director (1 February)
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- Meeting with representatives at the kick-off course for newly-appointed Justices (24 January)
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- Common seminar for the Supreme Court (21 and 22 March)
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- Visit to Halden prison (2 May)
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- Court Presidents' meeting, Trondheim (26-27 May)
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- The Supreme Court's trip to Finnmark (5-7 September)
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- Supreme Court Justices Seminar (17 and 18 October)
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- Meeting of the Courts' Directors and Chief Administrative Officers (19-20 October)

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- The Justices of the Supreme Court have acted as judges in the finals of moot competitions at Norwegian universities

Guided tours and lectures

In 2011, the Supreme Court conducted 23 guided tours of the Court building for a total of 562 visitors. Among the visitors were a district court, law students and foreign exchange students from universities and colleges as well as secondary school legal studies students. In addition, there were guided tours for a Rotary club and various pensioners' associations.

Because of repair work to the Supreme Court building the annual open-house event was not feasible in 2011.