



# **LA MAISON DU DROIT**

*A BILATERAL INSTITUTION  
FOR  
JURIDICAL COOPERATION*

In a traditionally civil-law oriented country, where the law is seen as an essential factor towards international integration, the Franco-Vietnamese juridical cooperation had to become especially significant.

The origin of this cooperation is two-fold. On the one hand, it grew out of Vietnam's expression of its needs at the end of the war, and on the other out of the commitment of several French juridical key figures who succeeded in striking up mutual trust with their Vietnamese counterparts and in strengthening a common juridical tradition. During President François Mitterrand's visit, on February, 10, 1993, the first accomplishments of this cooperation led to the creation of an institute of juridical cooperation, namely the *Maison du Droit Vietnamo-Française* (the Franco-Vietnamese House of Law).

- Managed by a Franco-Vietnamese team

First and foremost, the *Maison du Droit* has responsibility for developing an intergovernmental cooperation, initiated by both countries' Departments of Justice. Accordingly, it appeals to and brings up together all the components of the juridical world, be they the members of the judicial professions, the University or state executives. All its missions are carried out in close collaboration with the authorities in charge of the diplomatic representation of both countries, particularly the French Embassy in Hanoi.

- Dedicated to the promotion of a constitutional State

The aim of the project is to support the Vietnamese Government in its efforts to improve its juridical organization, to update its judicial institutions, and to encourage the different sectors of the public services to respect the principle of legality.

The different areas of the *Maison du Droit's* activity thus include how to elaborate the norms of the law, the training of jurists or how to deal with institutional reforms.

- Responsive to economic stakes

Juridical security is a precondition for economic development, and the juridical reform undertaken by Vietnam constitutes an essential factor for its integration in international trade. Therefore the *Maison du Droit* advocates taking into account international juridical standards and is out to maintain a close connection between economic stakes and juridical solutions.

Besides, it favors a regional approach of the issues it tackles by regularly opening up its audience to Asian jurists and more particularly jurists coming from Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

## MISSIONS

### - From expertise to training: a targeted intervention

Precisely defined by the 1993 Convention, the *Maison du Droit's* missions have been gaining momentum around three major issues: juridical expertise, training and teaching, and as a documentation resource center. Nevertheless, all these activities have been undergoing a significant evolution with the branching out of the issues addressed, their growing technical nature, and the on-going integration of this institution within the Vietnamese juridical cooperation process.

### - The juridical expertise

For some years now, Vietnam has been carrying out an ambitious program aimed at modernizing its juridical organization.

The *Maison du Droit* is instrumental in promoting this evolution by offering French jurists to share their knowledge on legislative matters that are currently being reformed in Vietnam. The different projects are assigned by the Vietnamese authorities based on an annual schedule decided on by the Orientation Committee presided by both the Vietnamese and the French Ministers of Justice.

During this decade's research seminars gathering the representatives of interdepartmental committees in charge of drafting new texts, a great many issues have been addressed, covering a wide range of domains, from the judicial sphere strictly speaking to the economic field or the domain of public institutions.

Missions to France are organized with a view to completing this plan of action by making it possible for the officials directly in charge of the reform projects to analyze in practical terms the relevance of a foreign model so as to possibly draw from it and adapt some elements.

At last, the *Maison du Droit* organizes on a yearly basis and with the support of institutional partners far-reaching conferences and symposiums that attempt to deal from a pluridisciplinary point of view with a theme that is of common interest to both countries and their relations.

### - Training for judicial professions

Launched within the framework of the training of magistrates, as early as 1999 and with the partnership of the *Ecole Nationale de la Magistrature* in Bordeaux (the National School of Magistrature), the cooperation program for the training of judicial professions has rapidly broadened in scope and now involves lawyers, notaries, and clerks of the court.

All these activities are carried out in close collaboration with the Vietnamese Training School for Judicial Professions and with the support of the main institutions representing these professions in France, such as the *Ecole de formation des Barreaux de la Cour d'Appel de Paris* (the Training School for the Bar of Paris Court of Appeal), the *Conseil Supérieur du Notariat* (the Council of the Notary Profession), or the *Ecole Nationale des Greffes* (the National School for Court Clerks).

As the most suitable contact between the Vietnamese and the French parties, the *Maison du Droit* fulfills its function by coordinating and providing logistic assistance to the organization of training activities. These activities consist in the missions of French experts who for a few weeks take part in the initial training provided by Vietnamese contributors, and in sending trainers to France. In addition to contributing to provide instruction focusing on the practical exercise of these various professions, the *Maison du Droit* is collecting documentation resources and creating teaching aids.

- Juridical French teaching

The *Maison du Droit* offers an annual syllabus for juridical French courses intended for various students who are interns, or already holding a position, or likely to work in the juridical domain. There are four different teaching levels, depending on the students' command of French. For the most advanced level, law courses are much the same as in French universities. The teaching staff is composed of Vietnamese professors, lawyers from the Bar of Hanoi, lawyers in charge of teaching business law, as well as project leaders assigned by the *Maison du Droit* or other cooperation institutions.

- Academic education

In partnership with the *Université François Rabelais* in Tours and the *Université Paris II*, the *Maison du Droit* contributed to setting up an international corporate law *DESS* (a two-year post-graduate diploma in applied international corporate law) as well as a regular law *DEA* (a one-year post-graduate law diploma). The main objective of these two post-graduate diplomas consists in providing the country and its economy with future executives who will have acquired the skills indispensable to its development. Students are enabled to enjoy the advantage of a diploma issued by France and marking the successful conclusion of an academic education received in Vietnam.

## A CENTER FOR THE DIFFUSION OF LAW

- A documentation center

The *Maison du Droit's* library puts at the disposal of juridical professionals and students a collection of up-to-date documents covering all the domains of French and Vietnamese law. With a total of more than 5,000 books, the institution is now the leading documentation center in French language in the region. The center is also equipped with computer facilities to provide access to juridical data bases on CD-ROMs and on the Internet.

- Publications

The *Maison du Droit* publishes not only the proceedings of the seminars and conferences it arranges but also documents relative to Vietnamese law or to the organization of the authorities. In 2002, an editorial line was created to make it possible for French juridical books translated in Vietnamese to be distributed.

- A website: [www.maisondudroit.org](http://www.maisondudroit.org)

The *Maison du Droit* shares real-time information on its activity with all its interlocutors worldwide.

One of the main interests of this website consists in the consultation of French and Vietnamese laws translated in both languages. The Vietnamese juridical documentation that has been collected over the past decade and is now at one's fingertips on the site will be of interest to companies that have invested or look for investment opportunities in Vietnam, to law professionals as well as to private individuals searching for juridical information.

This collection of documents deals with many aspects of the legal system, particularly trade law, family law, criminal law, social law, or the laws relative to the situation of foreigners in Vietnam. It is regularly expanded and up-dated according to juridical current events.

#### THE *Maison du Droit*'S STATISTICS

Over the past twelve years, the *Maison du Droit* has organized many seminars, conferences and courses:

Seminars (101)	379 experts 2920 participants
Conferences (12)	7 regional conferences 1420 participants
Students registered in juridical French courses up to now	2084
Auditors from judiciary professions	1600 lawyers 194 notaries
Library	5000 books 1495 library cards issued

Since its creation, the *Maison du Droit* has been mainly subsidized with cooperation funds from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nevertheless, as over the past few years the cooperation plan of action has been developing, other backers have been resorted to through financial partnerships and direct collaborations. There are various institutions such as the French Parliament or the European Commission, international organizations like the *Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie* (the Intergovernmental Agency for the French-speaking World), professional organizations as well as companies taking part in juridical cooperation activities in Vietnam.