



Camera
dei
deputati

18TH PARLIAMENT

Inside the Chamber of Deputies

A DAY IN MONTECITORIO



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Welcome



Of the goods we hold in common, democracy is the most precious. Secured by the Constitution, democracy, which descends from the Resistance and the sacrifice of so many of our fellow citizens, is a good that all of us must defend and cherish in our everyday lives. By participating in the civil and democratic life of the nation, we can all contribute to the betterment of our country.

If we wish to live as active and informed citizens, we must become intimately acquainted with the institutions of our nation. This is why I am particularly happy to welcome you today to the Chamber of Deputies, the House of all citizens, for it is here that popular sovereignty takes concrete form. This is where the discussion of contrasting ideas and discrete perspectives gives rise to decisions that will affect the life of the entire polity.

Lying at the heart of the legislative process, Parliament is not only a mainstay of the nation's political and institutional architecture, but is also a vital part of our daily lives. We must never lose sight of the importance of Parliament for our way of life, for it gives tangible form to the ideals of freedom, dignity, solidarity, equality, and legality that are enshrined in our Constitution.

Throughout the history of the Italian Republic, from 1948 to the present day, all the laws giving practical effect to the democratic principles and values enshrined in our Constitution have

been debated and approved in this building. It is here that Italy's accession to the European Community was approved; it is here that Italy voted to join the United Nations and other international bodies dedicated to the preservation of peace and justice among the nations of the world.

To be conscious of these events is to feel a powerful sense of communal belonging to the nation, to be deeply sensible of our democracy, and to apprehend the constitutional precepts that guarantee our fundamental rights and freedoms and underpin the rule of law.

So that citizens, especially the young, do not regard Parliament as remote and inaccessible, Montecitorio offers guided tours, occasionally throws open its doors to the public as part of the "Open Door Day at Montecitorio" initiative, and holds events and meetings in its conference halls and rooms. For we are all members of one community. Our vision of society and the nation is inspired by the idea that ordinary people must feel able to participate in institutional activities and decision-making processes. Openness leads to quality in public decisions.

I firmly believe that Parliament, being a deliberative body, should also be a forward-thinking and self-questioning institution that seeks the best policies for the country. It should be capable of anticipating, and therefore of guiding rather than merely following, social change. It should be capable of com-

prehending and responding to the expectations of the people by propounding a holistic vision of the country. At the same time, it needs to fulfil its equally vital cultural function of fostering and developing the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Parliament must serve as a crucible of ideas, a place of deep thought and reflection that elevates the character of public discourse. To achieve this, Parliament must pay direct heed to the demands of the citizenry.

You are now about to spend several hours or an entire day in Montecitorio. You will have the opportunity to take a close-up look at the places where parliamentary activity is conducted. You will learn about the history of this building and its priceless artworks; and you will deepen your knowledge of the workings of the Chamber of Deputies. You will gain an understanding of the structural complexity and diversity of the spheres of competence and procedures of Parliament, as well as insight into the working practices of MPs and the tasks of parliamentary bodies.

All that remains for me is to wish you a pleasant and enjoyable visit.

A handwritten signature in white ink, reading "Roberto Eco". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a stylized "Eco" at the end.

President of the Chamber of Deputies

The Italian Parliament

ZOOM

By virtue of two constitutional amendments (Law No 1 of 2000 amending Article 48, and Law No 1 of 2001 amending Articles 56 and 57), Italian citizens living outside the country have the right to elect Members to the two Houses of Parliament in representation of the Overseas constituency.

One Parliament, two Houses

The Italian Constitution divides Parliament into two Houses, both of which are directly elected by citizens: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Republic. As the two Houses have identical powers, the Italian Parliament is fully bi-cameral even though the Houses, as prescribed by Articles 56 and 57 of the Constitution, differ in their number of members.

The Chamber of Deputies

The seat of the Chamber of Deputies is Palazzo Montecitorio in Rome.

Like the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies is elected every 5 years, except in cases of early dissolution. Members of the Chamber are known as Deputies, and are elected by citizens who have reached the age of 18 years. The minimum age for election to the Chamber of Deputies is 25 years.



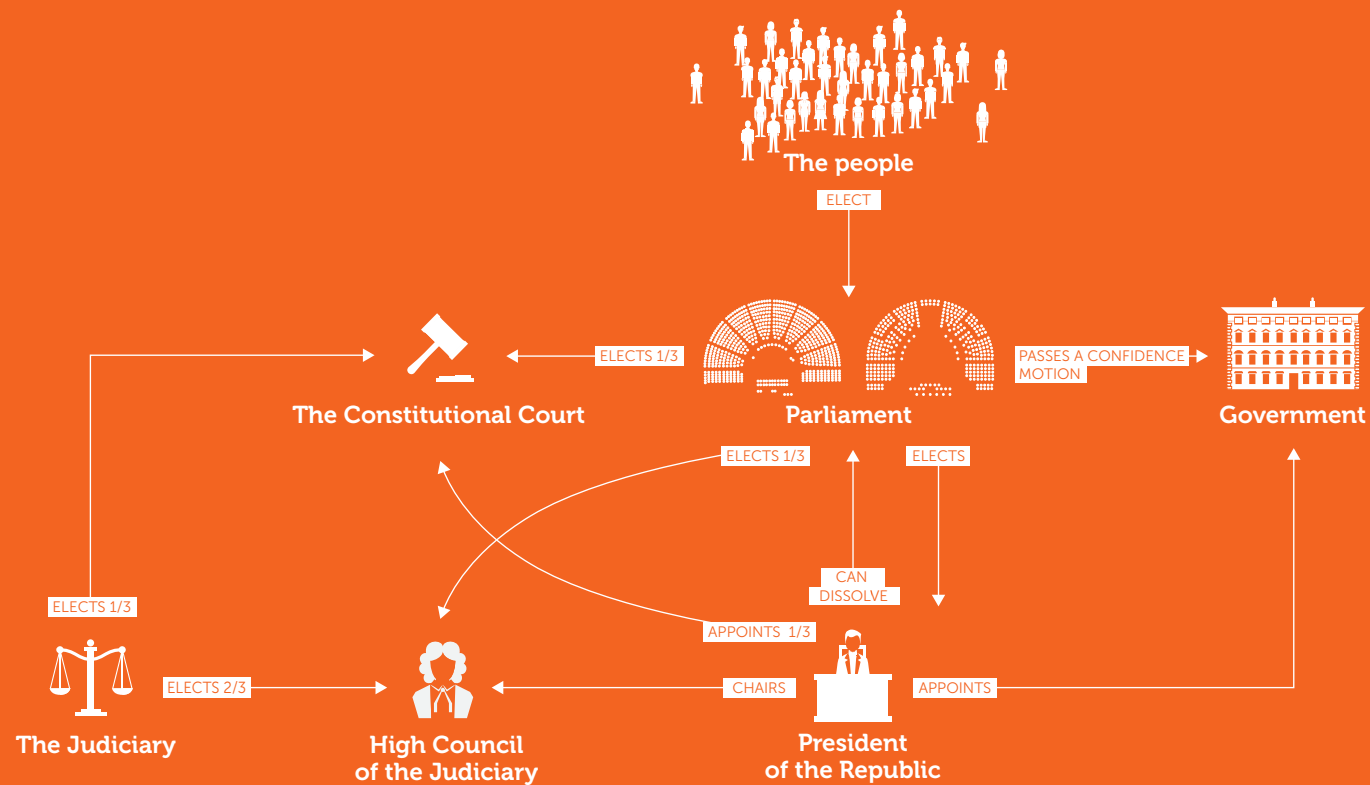


The Senate of the Republic

The seat of the Senate is Palazzo Madama in Rome. Senators are elected by Italian citizens who have reached the age of 25. The minimum age for election to the Senate is 40 years. In addition to its elected members, the Senate also contains some life-long appointees, known as Senators for life. These consist of former Presidents of the Republic or citizens “who have brought honour to the Nation because of outstanding merits in the social, scientific, artistic or literary fields” (Article 59 of the Constitution).

*The façade of
Palazzo Montecitorio*

Parliament and the powers of the State





The functions of Parliament

ZOOM

Every seven years the two Houses of Parliament convene in joint session in the Plenary Hall of Palazzo Montecitorio to elect the President of the Republic. In addition to the Members of Parliament, three delegates from each region of Italy (apart from Valle d'Aosta, which has one delegate only) also participate in the presidential election.

The election of the President of the Republic is held by secret ballot and initially requires the favourable votes of two thirds of the Assembly. After the third ballot, a simple majority of favourable votes shall suffice.

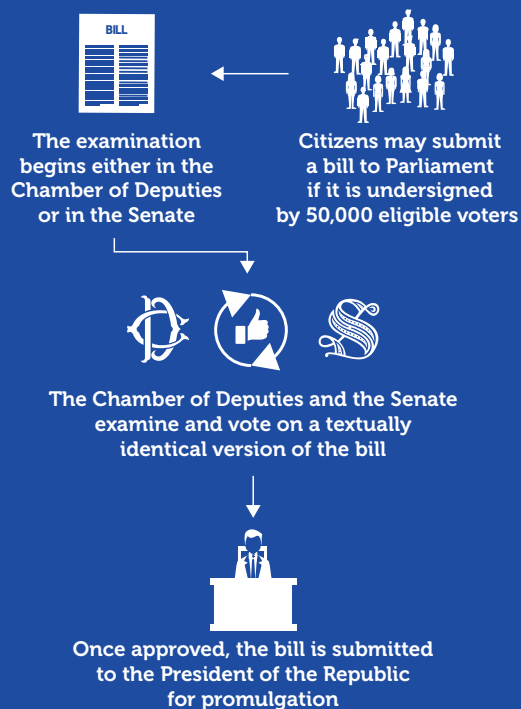
Democratic deliberation

Parliament represents all citizens and is the place where elected political parties engage in democratic debate. Its principal tasks are law-making, policy-setting and oversight of the government action.

Under Article 64 of the Constitution, a parliamentary vote is binding only if it obtains the approval of a majority of the Members of the relevant House and only if at least half plus one of the MPs are present, except for those votes that require a qualified majority.

The legislative function

Law-making powers reside collectively in both Houses of Parliament, so that for a bill to become law, a textually identical version of the same must be passed by both. Until both Houses of Parliament concur on the same text, the bill will continue to pass or "shuttle" back and forth from





one House to the other. If a bill has been approved by the Chamber of Deputies and then passed with amendments by the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies will limit itself to deliberating and potentially modifying the amendments only at the next reading before sending the new version of the bill back to the Senate. The Constitution stipulates that the Government, unless accorded specific delegated powers by Parliament, may not issue decrees that have the force of law except in cases of necessity and urgency. In such exceptional cases, the Government may promulgate provisional measures with immediate legal force by means of a decree-law, which, on the day of its promulgation, must be submitted to Parliament for enactment into law within sixty days.

*External elevation
of Palazzo Montecitorio*

Votes of confidence

Within ten days of its formation, the Government must submit itself to a vote of confidence in plenary session in each House. Given that all parliamentary activity is premised on the existence of a fiduciary relationship between the Government and majority of the MPs of both Houses, the vote on the motion of confidence in the Government is a solemn and consequential act during which MPs are called up one by one to declare aye or nay before the bench of the President of the relevant House. A Government that fails to win the confidence of Parliament must resign from office.

If the Houses are unable to secure majority support for a government, the President of the Republic, after consulting the Presidents of the two Houses, may dissolve Parliament and call early elections.

At any time, Deputies or Senators may call for a vote of no confidence in the government by presenting a motion to this effect signed by at least one tenth of the Members of the relevant House.

Governmental oversight

Governmental oversight is one of Parliament's crucial functions. To this end, it has numerous tools at its disposal.

MPs may submit written questions to the Government seeking information about specific matters or about the Government's intentions in respect of certain issues. The Government responds to these questions either in the plenary or before a parliamentary committee. On most Wednesdays, the plenary of the House holds a "question-time" session, which is broadcast live on television, at which the Government responds directly to questions pertaining to matters of particular urgency or political relevance. Both the questions and the answers are kept brief. Question time can also take place before a standing parliamentary committee.

Interpellations are written requests for clarification of the reasons for political action taken by the Government. The Government replies to interpellations during plenary sittings. Both House of Parliament also have the power to investigate matters of public interest by establishing a committee of inquiry, which may also be bicameral. A committee of inquiry enjoys the same powers, and is subject to the same restrictions, as the judiciary.

The Presidents of the Republic

ENRICO DE NICOLA



1 January 1948
12 May 1948
1st ballot

LUIGI EINAUDI



12 May 1948
11 May 1955
4th ballot

GIOVANNI GRONCHI



11 May 1955
11 May 1962
4th ballot

ANTONIO SEGNI



11 May 1962
6 December 1964
9th ballot

GIUSEPPE SARAGAT



29 December 1964
29 December 1971
21st ballot

GIOVANNI LEONE



29 December 1971
15 June 1978
23rd ballot

SANDRO PERTINI



9 July 1978
29 June 1985
16th ballot

FRANCESCO COSSIGA



3 July 1985
28 April 1992
1st ballot

OSCAR LUIGI SCALFARO



28 May 1992
15 May 1999
16th ballot

CARLO AZEGLIO CIAMPI



18 May 1999
15 May 2006
1st ballot

GIORGIO NAPOLITANO



15 May 2006
22 April 2013
4th ballot

GIORGIO NAPOLITANO



22 April 2013
14 January 2015
6th ballot

SERGIO MATTARELLA



3 February 2015
current office-holder
4th ballot

The history of the Italian Parliament

ZOOM

The referendum of 2 June 1946 recorded a very high voter turnout. The voters numbered 24,946,878, which corresponded to 89.08% of the electorate. The votes in favour of establishing a republic numbered 12,718,641, or 54.27% of valid ballots; the votes in favour of retaining the monarchy numbered 10,718,502, or 45.73% of valid ballots.

*The first sitting of the
Constituent Assembly
25 June 1946*

The Albertine Statute

In 1848, before the unification of Italy, King Carlo Alberto granted the subjects of the Kingdom of Sardinia a constitutional charter, known as the Albertine Statute. The Statute provided for two Houses of Parliament, the Senate of the Kingdom and the Chamber of Deputies.

Only the Chamber of Deputies was elected (the franchise was based on the census and excluded women). Senators, on the other hand, were appointed by the King acting on the advice of the Government, and were drawn from a restricted social class: former MPs, former ministers, ambassadors, prefects, senior army officers, industrialists, magistrates, bishops and figures from the world of culture. Royal princes were members of the Senate by birthright.

United Italy

After the unification of Italy, the Albertine Statute

was extended to the whole country. The first Italian Parliament, convening in Turin, proclaimed the birth of the Kingdom of Italy. The enacting law was promulgated on 17 March 1861. The nation's capital and parliament were transferred to Florence in 1865, and ultimately to Rome in 1871 after the Papal State was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy.

Fascism

During the Fascist period (1922-1943), the autonomy of the Chamber of Deputies was progressively restricted and free elections were banned. In 1924, the reformist Socialist MP Giacomo Matteotti was seized and killed after he spoke out in Parliament against the electoral fraud that had accompanied the elections of that year. Between 1925 and 1926, the promulgation of a series of "ultra-fascist" laws (*leggi fascistiche*) definitively transformed Italy into an authoritarian state. In 1939, the Chamber of Deputies was replaced by a



national Chamber of Fasces and Corporations [Camera dei fasci e delle corporazioni] whose members were directly appointed by Mussolini.

The rebirth of democracy

On 2 June 1946, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Italian electorate was asked by referendum to choose between a republic and a monarchy, and chose the former. On the same day, a Constituent Assembly was elected and assigned the task of replacing the Albertine Statute with a new constitution. The referendum of 2 June and the election of the Constituent Assembly were the first national votes in which Italian women had the right to the franchise.

On 1 January 1948, the Italian Constitution came into force. The Constituent Assembly resolved to establish a parliament made up of two elected Houses with equal powers. The first Parliament of the Republic was elected on 18 April 1948.



The right to vote and its historical evolution

According to Article 48 of the Constitution, “all citizens, men and women, who have attained the age of majority, are entitled to vote. The vote is personal and equal, free and secret.” This affirmation, which now seems no more than the avowal of an indisputable right, asserted what was actually a relatively recent attainment that had taken several steps to be achieved. It was in 1848 that the first electoral law was enacted in Italy enfranchising only male citizens over the age of 25 who could read and write and paid at least 40 lire in taxes. In 1882, the franchise was expanded to include male citizens who had reached the age of 21 and had received at least an elementary school education. The qualifying level of income was also lowered.

In 1912, under the government of Giovanni Giolitti, a large majority approved an electoral reform extending voting rights to all male citizens over the age of 30. Men who had reached the age of 21 were also eligible to vote provided that they could read and write or were in possession

of additional requisites, such as past military service or liability to a certain level of taxation.

The enfranchisement of women and universal suffrage

Women's right to vote is a fairly recent achievement in almost all countries. In Europe, the first country to enfranchise women was Finland in 1906. In 1912 in Italy, following the expansion of the male suffrage, the Chamber of Deputies, in a vote held by roll-call, rejected a motion to grant women the vote (with 209 votes against, 48 in favour and 6 abstentions).

Female suffrage therefore had to wait until 1946 when, for the first time, women across the country were allowed to vote in the referendum on the monarchy and in the elections for the Constituent Assembly, to which 21 women MPs were returned. In the 18th Parliament, 226 women were elected to the Chamber of Deputies, equal to 35% of the Members of the House, an increase with respect to the previous Parliament, where women made up 31% of Members.

ZOOM

At the time of the unification of Italy, just 22% of the population was literate, and a tax bill of 40 lire per year corresponded to a very high level of income. As a result of these restrictions, the electorate made up just 2% of the population.

The Hall of the She-Wolf

The Italian Constitution

The Basic Law of the Republic

The Constitution forms the Basic Law of the Italian Republic and is fruit of the work of the Constituent Assembly, which approved it on 22 December 1947. The Constitution prescribes the values and basic precepts of our civil life, articulates the rights and duties of citizens, and lays out the basic laws governing the organisation of the Republic. Knowledge of the Constitution is a prerequisite for good citizenship and for participating in democratic life with sound understanding and independence of judgement.

The structure of the Constitution

The Constitution is made up of 139 articles and 18 transitional and final provisions. The first 12 articles lay down the "Fundamental Principles", which enumerate the general, basic values on which the Republic is founded. The remaining articles are divided into two parts: the first, divided into Titles, sets out the "Rights and Duties of Citizens", namely individual civil rights (personal liberty), ethical and

social rights (family, health, education), economic rights (work, trade unions, etc.) and political rights (voting, citizen participation in political life through parties, access to elected and public office, duties towards the State, etc.). The second part, which is dedicated to the "Organisation of the Republic", is likewise divided into several Titles, the first of which relates to the structure, composition, powers and procedural rules of Parliament and, in a separate section, to the legislative process. Title II of this second part of the Constitution relates to the President of the Republic, who embodies the unity of the nation. Title III deals with Government and is divided into sections relating to: the Council of Ministers; the Public Administration and auxiliary bodies (i.e. consultative bodies serving Parliament and the Executive, namely the National Council for Economics and Labour, the Council of State and the Court of Accounts). Title IV refers to the judiciary and the administration of justice. Title V refers to the governing powers and functions of the regions, provinces and municipalities. Title VI, which is dedicated to constitutional guarantees, consists of two sections, one relating to the Constitutional Court and the other to the procedures for constitutional amendments and the passage of constitutional laws.

Original text of the Constitution on display in the Hall of the She-Wolf

COSTITUZIONE DELLA REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

IL CAPO PROVVISORIO DELLO STATO

VISTA la deliberazione dell'Assemblea Costituente, che nella seduta del 22 dicembre 1947 ha approvato la Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana;

VISTA la XVIII disposizione finale della Costituzione;

PROMULGA

la Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana nel seguente testo:

PRINCIPI FONDAMENTALI

ART. 1.

L'Italia è una Repubblica democratica, fondata sul lavoro.

La sovranità appartiene al popolo, che la esercita nelle forme e nei limiti della Costituzione.

ART. 2.

La Repubblica riconosce e garantisce i diritti inviolabili dell'uomo, sia come singolo sia nelle formazioni sociali ove si svolge la sua personalità, e richiede l'adempimento dei doveri inderogabili di solidarietà politica, economica e sociale.

ART. 3.

Tutti i cittadini hanno pari dignità sociale e sono eguali davanti alla legge, senza distinzione di sesso, di razza, di lingua, di religione, di opinioni politiche, di condizioni personali e sociali.

È compito della Repubblica rimuovere gli ostacoli di ordine economico e sociale, che, limitando di fatto la libertà e l'uguaglianza dei cittadini, impediscono il pieno sviluppo della persona umana e l'effettiva partecipazione di tutti i lavoratori all'organizzazione politica, economica e sociale del Paese.

ART. 4.

La Repubblica riconosce a tutti i cittadini il diritto al lavoro e promuove le condizioni che rendano effettivo questo diritto.

Ogni cittadino ha il dovere di svolgere, secondo le proprie possibilità e la propria scelta, un'attività o una funzione che concorra al progresso materiale o spirituale della società.

ART. 5.

La Repubblica, una e indivisibile, riconosce e promuove le autonomie locali; attua nei servizi che dipendono dallo Stato il più ampio decentramento amministrativo; adegua i principi ed i metodi della sua legislazione alle esigenze dell'autonomia e del decentramento.

ART. 6.

La Repubblica tutela con apposite norme le minoranze linguistiche.

ART. 7.

Lo Stato e la Chiesa cattolica sono, ciascuno nel proprio ordine, indipendenti e sovrani.

I loro rapporti sono regolati dai Patti Lateranensi. Le modificazioni dei Patti, accettate dalle due parti, non richiedono procedimento di revisione costituzionale.

ART. 8.

Tutte le confessioni religiose sono egualmente libere davanti alla legge.

Le confessioni religiose diverse dalla cattolica hanno diritto di organizzarsi secondo i propri statuti, in quanto non contrastino con l'ordinamento giuridico italiano.

A day in Montecitorio

Amendments to the Constitution

The Italian Constitution has been revised several times since 1948. The amendments have been introduced in accordance with the special procedure envisaged by Article 138 of the Constitution itself, which prescribes that any changes require a special majority rather than the simple majority that suffices for the approval of ordinary laws.

Both Houses of Parliament must approve a constitutional amendment twice, without any intervening changes in the wording of the amendment, and with an interval of at least three months between the first and second approval. The second vote in each House requires at least an absolute majority (half plus one of the Members) to be valid. Further, if the amendment is approved on the second vote by an absolute majority only, and therefore by less than two thirds of the Members of either House, a confirmatory referendum may be demanded by 500,000 voters, by one fifth of the Members of either House, or by five regional assemblies. All citizens who have reached the age of 18 are eligible to vote in the confirmatory referendum. If a majority of the valid votes of the electorate is favourable, the amendment takes effect.

The autonomy of the Chamber of Deputies

ZOOM

The current Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies came into effect in 1971 when, under the presidency of Sandro Pertini, Deputies approved their adoption with 465 votes in favour, 41 against and just one abstention. The Rules of Procedure have been modified several times since, and some of the changes have been significant. The latest rule changes, approved in 2012, concerned the Parliamentary Groups and notably imposed strict obligations of transparency and financial reporting with respect to the financial resources allocated to them.

The Plenary Hall seen from the President's desk

The House Rules

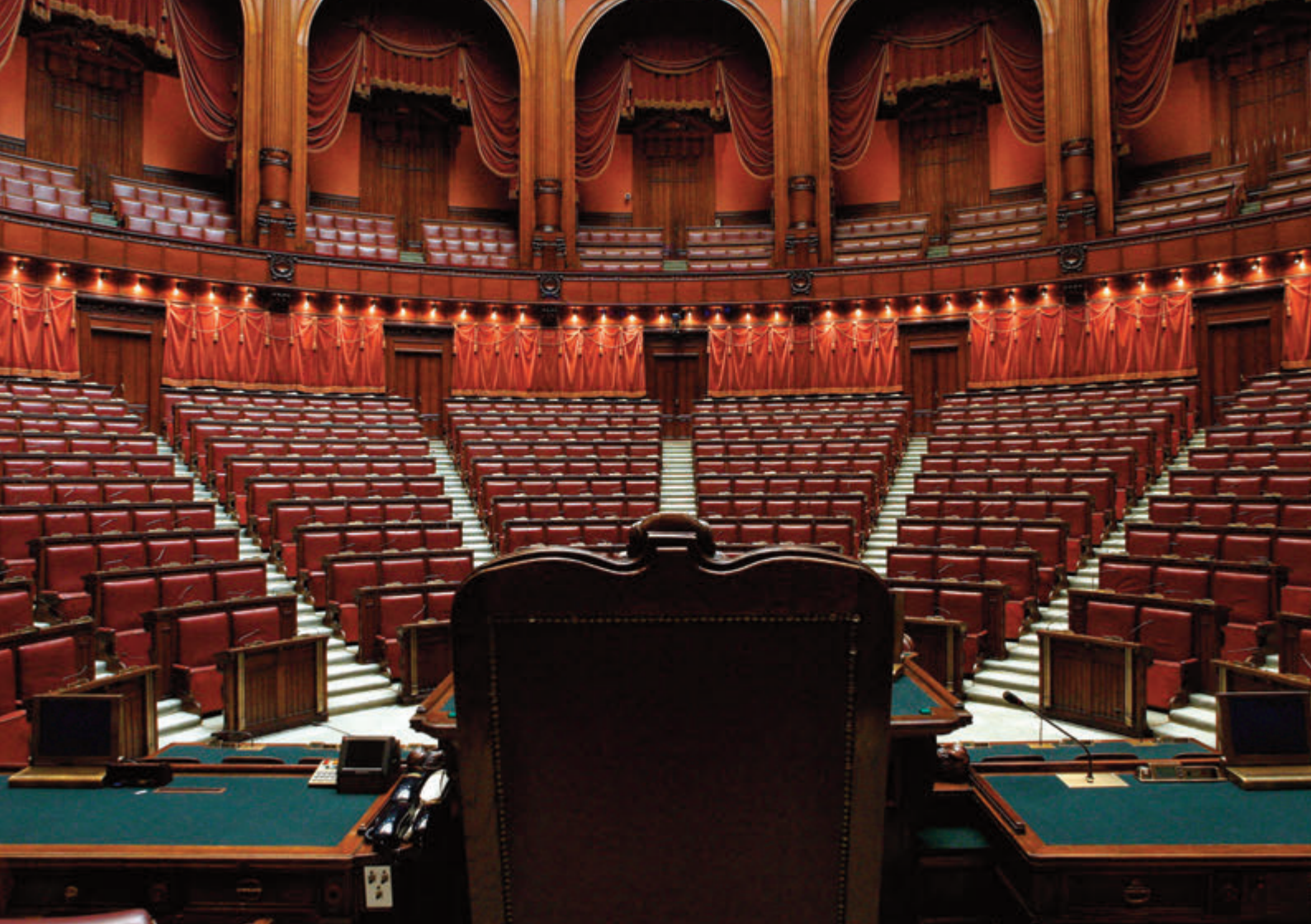
As befits the principles of a modern Constitution, the Italian state divides its institutional powers among mutually independent and autonomous branches of government. The independence of Parliament is asserted primarily through its right to adopt its own rules of organisation and procedure. While the Constitution lays down the general rules to which Parliament is bound, it also grants each House the power autonomously to regulate its own activities and to adopt its own rules provided that they comply with the precepts of the Constitution. The Rules of the Chamber of Deputies enumerate the rights and duties of Deputies, prescribe the methods for the election of the President and other organs of the House and specify the tasks to be assigned to them, determine how parliamentary work is to be organised and how to set the order of business for each session, and establish the procedures for the debate and voting of bills and other matters to be considered by the Chamber and its bodies.

Amendments to the Rules

The approval or amendment of the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber requires the favourable votes of an absolute majority (50% plus one) of its Members. Since consensus on the validity of rules is fundamental for a democracy, Parliament throughout its history has always sought to achieve the broadest possible agreement between the Majority and the Opposition on the adoption or amendment of the Rules of Procedure.

The budget

The Chamber also enjoys financial autonomy from other organs of the State. Every year, Parliament approves its own internal budget, specifying how it intends to use the financial resources available to it to carry out its functions.



The President of the Chamber of Deputies

Functions

At the start of a new parliament, the Deputies elect the President of the Chamber by secret ballot. The President has several different functions corresponding to different aspects of parliamentary life. Above all, the President represents the Chamber of Deputies and is responsible for ensuring the unimpeded performance of its activities by enforcing observance of the Rules of Procedure. The President also chairs the Bureau, the body responsible for the internal administration of the Chamber, which is under the direction of a Secretary General who reports to the President.

The President also has specific tasks pertaining directly to his or her speakership functions in the Chamber. The President therefore chairs and moderates parliamentary debates, gives the floor to Deputies, maintains order in the House, decides the admissibility of bills, amendments, orders of business, motions, questions, interpellations and other parliamentary instruments, determines the order of voting, clarifies the meaning of votes, and announces the outcome of votes. The President also convenes the Conference of Group Chairpersons to organise and schedule the activities of the House. If a majority as prescribed by the House Rules cannot be found

among the Group Chairpersons, the task of the organisation and scheduling of business falls to the President alone.

The President carries out these functions impartially and disinterestedly by ensuring that the Rules of Procedure are observed by all parties. The President is thus a guarantor without partisan interests who, with impartiality and even-handedness, enables every MP, Group, and the Government itself to freely exercise their functions in accordance with the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure.

Duties beyond the chairing of debates

The President is the presiding officer not only of the plenary but also of other collegiate bodies that, though less well known to the public, are of fundamental importance for the organisation of the Chamber's activities.

- The Bureau, an administrative body, is one such. It is made up of: four Vice-Presidents, who stand in for the President in case of the latter's absence or incapacity; three Quaestors, who monitor the spending of the Chamber, organise ceremonial matters and draw up the budget; and at least eight Secretaries drawn from the ranks of Deputies, who assist



the President in managing debates on the Floor of the House and in verifying the validity of votes. The Bureau concerns itself with high-level administrative business and is responsible for imposing penalties on Deputies for rule violations.

- The Conference of Group Chairpersons has the important task of organising the work of the Chamber, to which end it schedules the programme of activities and sets the order of business.
- The Committee on the Rules of Procedure is responsible for issuing opinions on the interpretation of the Rules of Procedure and for drawing up proposed rule changes, which must be submitted to the plenary for approval.

The Presidents of the Chamber of Deputies since 1948

Roberto **Fico** since 2018, Laura **Boldrini** 2013-2018, Gianfranco **Fini** 2008-2013, Fausto **Bertinotti** 2006-2008, Pier Ferdinando **Casini** 2001-2006, Luciano **Violante** 1996-2001, Irene **Pivetti** 1994-1996, Giorgio **Napolitano** 1992-1994, Oscar Luigi **Scalfaro** April - May 1992, Leonilde **Iotti** 1979-1992, Pietro **Ingrao** 1976-1979, Sandro **Pertini** 1968-1976, Brunetto **Bucciarelli Ducci** 1963-1968, Giovanni **Leone** 1955-1963, Giovanni **Gronchi** 1948-1955.

The Presidents of the Constituent Assembly

Umberto **Terracini**, Giuseppe **Saragat**

The Deputies

ZOOM

The Rules of Procedure provide for two parliamentary bodies whose purpose is to give material effect to the constitutional prerogatives of Deputies. They are: the Committee on Elections, which evaluates the electoral qualifications of Deputies and considers cases of possible ineligibility, incompatibility with elected office and expiry of term; and the Committee for the Authorisation of Prosecution, whose main tasks are to consider instances of non-liability for parliamentary statements and votes and to examine judicial warrants and acts that refer to Deputies. Both Committees issue recommendations, which must be submitted to the House for approval.

The functions and prerogatives of Deputies

A 'deputy' is a person appointed or authorised to perform a function on behalf of another or others. Under the Italian system of representative democracy, a Deputy is one who has been elected to sit in the lower House of Parliament: the Chamber of Deputies.

Under the meaning of the Constitution, each House of Parliament decides on the validity of the election of each of its Members. Accordingly, each House verifies the soundness of the results of the election and examines whether an elected Member should be disbarred from office for reasons of ineligibility or incompatibility.

According to the Constitution, "Each Member of Parliament represents the Nation and carries out his duties without a binding mandate." In other words, an MP's decisions are not constrained by commitments to any specific programme and remain completely discretionary. To reinforce the principle that MPs shall enjoy full freedom of decision in the exercise of their

mandate, the Constitution enshrines the doctrine of parliamentary privilege by further affirming that "Members of Parliament cannot be held accountable for the opinions expressed or votes cast in the performance of their function." Further safeguarding the right of MPs freely to exercise their parliamentary mandate is the obligation of judicial authorities to seek authorisation from the relevant House before ordering the arrest of an MP or taking any action that restricts the MP's personal freedom. Another guarantee of the freedom of MPs to exercise their electoral mandate is embodied in the constitutional provision that parliamentarians be remunerated for their work by an amount fixed by law. MPs are entitled by law to a daily allowance to cover the expenses of staying in Rome. The Rules of Procedure stipulate that a deduction shall be made from the daily allowance whenever an MP is absent from work in Parliament. The Chamber of Deputies also provides all its members with the necessary means and instruments for the efficient performance of their duties.



Inside and outside the Halls of Parliament

Participating in debates in the Plenary Hall, in the meetings of various parliamentary bodies and in the activities of political Groups, presenting bills and amendments, and submitting questions, interpellations, motions, etc. are all part of the work that MPs carry out inside the premises of Parliament, but their duties also entail plenty of off-premises work such as attending meetings in the offices of political parties and visiting citizens' associations and electoral constituencies. The political work of the Chamber of Deputies is sustained and enriched by this direct and on-going contact with the social and economic fabric of the country.

*MPs' benches viewed
from unusual angle*

Parliamentary Groups

ZOOM

The Rules of Procedure of the Chamber expressly state that a Deputy shall be free to take the floor to dissent from the position of his or her Group, and that a portion of the parliamentary debating time must be set aside for this purpose.

The Globe Hall

A Group for every Deputy

The Rules of Procedure state that every Deputy must belong to a Parliamentary Group.

For the most part, Parliamentary Groups correspond to political parties and movements that have seats in the Chamber of Deputies. A Group must contain at least twenty Deputies. A Group containing fewer than twenty Deputies can be formed if it meets certain requisites set out in the Rules of Procedure and receives the authorisation of the Bureau.

The Mixed Group encompasses all Deputies not belonging to another Group. Under certain conditions, as laid down in the Rules, members of the Mixed Group may form themselves into discrete subgroups.

Majority and Opposition

The Groups that have voted for the government in a confidence motion and thereby approved the Government's programme and agreed to support its action form the governing Majority. The Opposition, by contrast, consists of the Groups that withheld their support in the confidence motion and that, by submitting alternative proposals in Parliament, seek to gather sufficient consensus to become the Majority in the future. There can be more than one Opposition if the various political Groups that did not vote confidence in the Government pursue policies that not only differ from those of the Government and the Majority but also differ from each other. A healthy democracy must be able to tolerate political confrontation, including robust disagreement, between the Majority and the Opposition (or Oppositions) in Parliament.

The presence of an Opposition is essential for our democratic system. Although they constitute





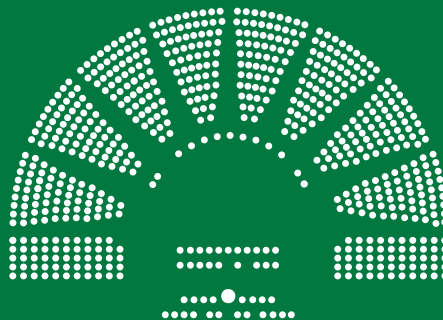


Entrance to the Building of Parliamentary Groups

a parliamentary minority, the Groups that make up the Opposition actively participate in the work of Parliament where their criticism and vigilance serve to discipline executive action, enrich and deepen the political debate, articulate their objections to the Government's decisions and propose alternative policies. The more intense the debate and the more societal conflicts find expression in the plenary, on the basis of an agreed set of rules, the greater the proof of the strength and vitality of our democratic institutions. Natu-

rally, the Majority and Opposition may come together on certain issues and combine their forces when the vital interests or the fundamental laws of the country are at stake.

The Groups in the Chamber today



An up-to-date list of the Parliamentary Groups is available under the relevant section of the website of the Chamber of Deputies:
www.camera.it.

ZOOM

If decisions pertaining to the organisation of the work of the Chamber of Deputies and parliamentary committees are made without the backing of a large majority (at least three quarters of the Members), the Rules of Procedure ensure that the Opposition shall in any case be guaranteed the right to determine one fifth of the items on the order of business or else shall be allocated one fifth of the time dedicated to discussions.

*The new Plenary Hall
of Parliamentary Groups*

Activities carried out in the Plenary Hall

ZOOM

When the Chamber of Deputies holds elections (such as for the appointment of its President or members of the Bureau), the voting is by secret ballot, usually by means of ballot papers. A Bureau Secretary (who is himself or herself a Deputy) calls the Deputies by name who, one at a time, receive the ballot paper, enter one of the voting booths set up in front of the President's desk, mark the ballot out of the sight of the other Members of the House and place it in an urn as they leave the booth. The same voting system is used when the two Houses of Parliament are meeting in joint session.

The Chamber of Deputies prepared for a ceremony

The heart of the Chamber of Deputies

The hub of the activities of the Chamber of Deputies is the Plenary Hall in Montecitorio. This is the meeting room where all Members of the House sit, and where all the main decisions of the House are taken after the discussion and debate of the items of the order of business. In particular, this is where Members debate and vote on bills and on policy-setting instruments (motions and resolutions to guide government action), and where questions are raised and interpellations submitted.

Examining and voting on bills are the activities most associated with Parliament.

Seating in the Plenary Hall

Every Deputy has his or her own place in the Plenary Hall. The seats, which are arranged in a semicircle around the President's desk, from left, to

centre to right, are allocated to match the political disposition of the Groups, and thus give concrete shape to the spectrum of political opinion in the country resulting from the elections. At the centre of the semicircle, beneath the chair of the President and facing the Deputies, are the benches of the Government, where the President of the Council of Ministers sits flanked by his or her ministers and under-secretaries. The President of the Chamber is flanked by MPs who have been appointed Bureau Secretaries and by other officers who assist the President in his or her work, see to the taking of the verbatim minutes of sittings, and prepare the official parliamentary reports.

Voting

Most voting in the plenary is by open ballot, with certain exceptions as specified in the Rules of Procedure. Voting is conducted by roll-call using an electronic system that immediately displays the names of the MPs who voted and the result





Unusual view of the façade facing Piazza del Parlamento

of the vote. When electronic voting is used, the names of the MPs and the voting choice of each are published in the minutes of the sitting. Votes are called by the President, who also announces the results of the same. Each Deputy's desk has three voting buttons: green for an 'aye', red for a 'nay' and white for an abstention. The days on which votes are held and the days on which non-voting sittings are held are set out in the work programme of the House.

Relations with Government

In addition to the motion of confidence, the continuance of the necessary fiduciary relationship between Parliament and Government may be tested by means of a motion of no confidence or by attaching a vote of confidence to a bill.

If signed by at least one tenth of the Members, a reasoned motion of no-confidence in the Government may be presented in either House. The motion must be debated and voted on at least three days after its presentation and, if approved, forces the resignation of the Government. A motion of no-confidence may also be moved against a single minister.

A vote of confidence may also be called by the Government, usually by attaching it to an article of a bill or to an amendment, if it intends to ask one of the Houses to reaffirm its confidence by approving, without modification, the text that it is sponsoring. If the motion of confidence fails, the Government must resign.

The Chamber of Deputies can also contribute to shaping government decisions by approving policy-setting instruments, such as motions or resolutions (these latter may also be examined by parliamentary committees), that commit the Executive to following a given course of action.

The Covid-19 emergency

The outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic in late February 2020 necessitated the taking of special precautionary measures in the Chamber of Deputies that were analogous to those adopted throughout the country. The anti-contagion measures include the mandatory wearing of masks on the premises of the Chamber of Deputies and the maintenance of social distancing of at least one metre.

The need to maintain social distancing during the performance of parliamentary activities entailed making some noticeable changes to the disposition of the spaces where parliamentary bodies hold their meetings. Consequently, the seating arrangements in the Plenary Hall have been changed. The number of MPs in the semicircle has been reduced, some MPs have been moved to the visitors' gallery above the Plenary Hall, and others accommodated in the Transatlantic Lobby, which has been converted to new use. The rearrangement has enabled all Deputies to attend sittings of the House while respecting the prescribed distance from their colleagues. Where necessary, other parliamentary bodies have moved into larger rooms and spaces for their meetings, such as the Globe Hall, the New Plenary Hall of Parliamentary Groups and the Queen's Hall.



Standing Committees

ZOOM

Where there is broad consensus regarding a bill, the power to examine and definitively approve it may be assigned to a committee. The bill, however, shall be returned to the plenary for discussion if so requested by the Government, by one tenth of members of the Chamber of Deputies or by one fifth of the members of a committee. A committee entrusted to the direct approval of a bill is said to be acting in a legislating capacity.

14 Mini-parliaments

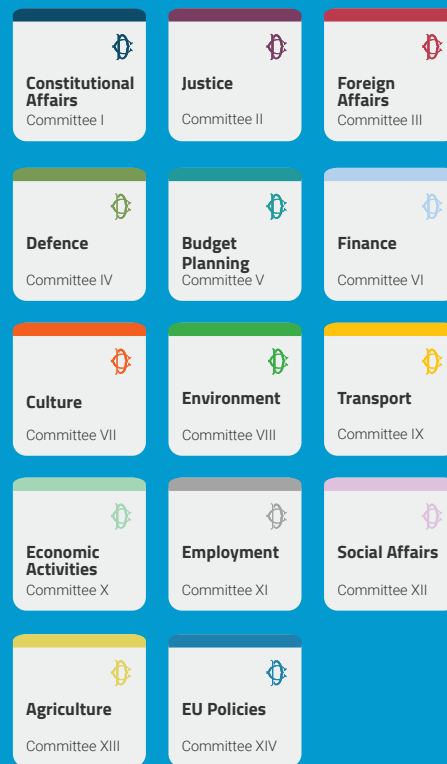
The Rules of Procedure set the number of Standing Committees at 14 and define their scope of competence. Each standing committee has a remit, encapsulated in its name, that covers a given sector of the general institutional sphere.

The membership of the committees reflects the proportionate strengths of the Parliamentary Groups, which distribute their members among the committees accordingly. In this sense, each committee can be regarded as a sort of mini-parliament.

The committees form themselves by electing a chairperson and a bureau consisting of the chairperson, two vice-chairpersons and two MPs acting as secretaries. Each standing committee has its own meeting room.

Pre-legislative scrutiny

When dealing with matters on which it must report to the plenary, a committee is said to be act-



ing in a reporting capacity. When issuing opinions, it is acting in an advisory capacity; when definitively approving a bill, it is acting in a legislating capacity; when drawing up the articles of a bill which the Plenary will enact by voting only on the articles and on the final version of the bill, it is acting in a drafting capacity. Standing committees also convene to hear and discuss government communications and to carry out the policy-setting, oversight and fact-finding functions assigned to them by the Rules of Procedure.

While the debates in the Plenary Hall are the most visible and therefore best known part of the work of the Chamber of Deputies, the work done by the 14 standing committees is no less important and no less intense. As a rule, committees cannot convene at the same time as the voting sessions are being held on the Floor of the House.

Informed decision-making

The standing committees have specific procedures for gathering documents and information



Detail of the meeting room of the Constitutional Affairs Committee

through direct dialogue with representatives of the Government and other public servants, representatives and exponents of civil society, the labour market, the professions and industries. In particular, committees can conduct fact-finding investigations and hearings into matters that fall within their scope of competence in order to gather elements useful to their work and to the work of the Chamber of Deputies as a whole, and may hold hearings with any person who is in a position to offer evidence pertinent to the matter under consideration.

Stages of law-making

The following are constitutionally entitled to present a bill to Parliament: any Member of the Senate or the Chamber of Deputies, the Government, a regional assembly, the National Council for Economics and Labour, and citizens who have collected 50,000 signatures from the electorate. The normal passage of a bill from introduction to enactment can be divided into the following phases:

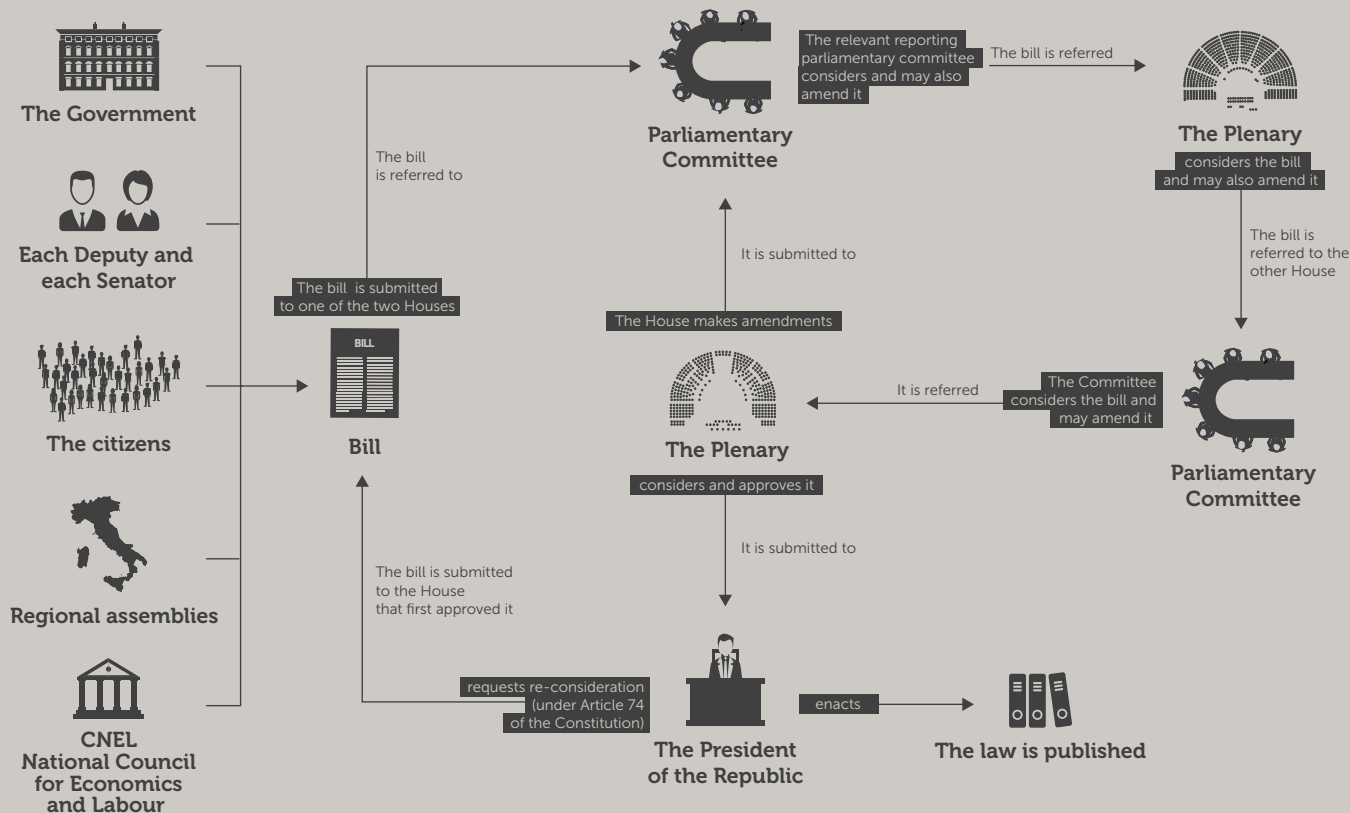
- The bill is first referred to the appropriate parliamentary committee which, acting in a reporting capacity, examines it and may carry out a preliminary, often highly detailed, scrutiny as it acquires whatever documentation or information it deems needful. At the end of this preliminary examination, the committee scrutinises the articles of the bill, often rewriting them in whole or in part and making amendments. During this phase, other committees acting in a consultative capacity may contribute to the legislative process by issuing opinions on the text when the bill relates to matters associated with their remit. The committee stage comes to an end when the relevant committee reports on the bill to the plenary, including the text drafted by the committee.
- The plenary then holds a general debate on the bill. Subsequently, each article of the bill is examined, and the amendments presented to the text drafted by the committee are put to the vote. Finally, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the plenary votes on the bill as a whole

which, if approved, passes to the Senate. In the plenary, the members of the reporting committee that has considered the bill are seated around a semi-circular table facing the benches of the Deputies. From this position at the base and centre of the Plenary Hall, the committee rapporteur, the committee chair and the representatives of the political Groups on the committee pilot the bill through the approval process.

Once both Houses of Parliament have approved identically worded versions of the bill, it passes to the President of the Republic for final promulgation. The President, however, has the right to return the bill to Parliament and demand its re-examination with a memo stating grounds for doing so. After promulgation, the Act is published in the Official Journal and, as a rule, comes into force after 15 days.

Ensuring better quality laws

The Committee on Legislation is made up of 10 Deputies, half of whom are drawn from the Majority and half from the Opposition. Where so required by the Rules of Procedure, this Committee provides other committees with an opinion on the quality of the draft legislation they are considering. It evaluates the homogeneity, clarity and simplicity of the draft legislation, and assesses how effectively it simplifies existing legislation.



The Administration of the Chamber of Deputies

ZOOM

The operating procedures of the Chamber of Deputies have been restructured and revamped over the years in a process that has entailed the large-scale adoption of innovative technologies (notably, the deployment of digital instruments) and the progressive functional integration of the various departments that make up the administrative apparatus.

*Detail of the ceiling
of the Hall of the
She-Wolf*

The administrative structure of the Chamber of Deputies

Every day, the Chamber of Deputies' administrative departments carry out a wide spectrum of tasks that are necessary for the efficient running of the institution. The Administration is particularly responsible for ensuring the smooth execution of parliamentary activity, to which end it lends professional assistance and support to Deputies. The Secretary General, who reports to the President, is the head of the departments and offices of the Administration. The Administration divides its activities into:

- legislative text services, which organise the work of the several bodies of the Chamber (the plenary and the committees), prepare reports on the texts under discussion, and assist the bodies in the conduct of their business;
- documentation services, which contribute to the work of parliament by preparing dossiers

and research papers relating to the subject matter being examined by committees and the House as a whole, including documents pertaining to EU and international affairs. The same department providing these services is responsible for updating the public information on the Chamber of Deputies' website;

- administrative and technical services, which are concerned with the forward planning of the activities of the Administration, the supply of goods and services, procurement, contract management, the protection of the artistic and architectural assets of the Chamber of Deputies, security, and personnel management.



The Chamber as a glasshouse

ZOOM

At the end of every July, just before the summer break, the President of the Chamber of Deputies meets journalists for the so-called "Ceremony of the Fan". The ceremony involves the presentation of a fan to the President of the Chamber. The tradition dates back to the late nineteenth century, when the MPs used to conduct their business in the Aula Comotto (located in what is now the Courtyard of Honour), a meeting room that was notorious for its high summertime temperatures.

*The Queen's Hall
prepared for an event*

Publicity and transparency

As established by Article 64 of the Constitution, all the sittings of the Houses are public (without prejudice to the right of Parliament to convene a closed session). The requirement for the publicity of parliamentary sittings ensures that citizens can always apprise themselves of the matters being discussed and remain abreast of the current debates and the positions of their representatives in Parliament.

Anyone may observe the House at work in Palazzo Montecitorio by entering the visitors' gallery that overlooks the semi-circular Plenary Hall. On the website www.camera.it a web TV service provides a live feed of the Chamber, which is also broadcast on a satellite TV channel and on the Chamber of Deputies' YouTube channel. The website also gives visitors access to reports of sittings, which are also available in print. Verbatim reports of committee sittings are also publicly

available, both in print and on the Internet, and many committee sittings, especially those involving hearings, are broadcast on the Web TV. Particularly important sittings of the Chamber are televised by public service broadcasters.

The website www.camera.it also provides information on parliamentary activities, scheduled events, the organisation of the Chamber of Deputies, the art and architecture of parliament buildings, and the services available for members of the public. The Montecitorio press room is at the disposition of parliamentary journalists who report daily on the work of the Chamber and on the decisions of the political groups and parties.

A House for citizens

The activities of the Chamber of Deputies are predicated on the principle of transparency, according to which everyone has the right to be in-





BIBLIOTECA

formed about the work being done and the subjects of debate in the House. In recent years, therefore, the Chamber of Deputies has undertaken several initiatives in fulfilment of its vocation to be an institution "at the service of the citizens". In addition to the Web TV service (webtv.camera.it) on the institutional website, it also offers - for those interested in real-time updates - a Facebook page, a Twitter account, @Montecitorio, an Instagram channel and a YouTube channel. Many MPs interact with citizens through social networks.

The website "The Chamber of Deputies for young people" (giovani.camera.it) is dedicated to young people.

The historical archives, which can also be consulted online, preserve the original documents produced by the Chamber of Deputies from its origins to the present day. The "Luce" portal of the Chamber of Deputies contains a photographic and audio-visual archive, which includes all the digital records of the political and parliamentary history of Italy.

Anyone interested in visiting the Parliament Building can take part in the Open Door Day at Montecitorio. Usually held on the first Sunday of the month, the Open Door Day offers visitors a guided tour of the halls and the artistic treasures of Montecitorio. The opening of Montecitorio and of the other buildings that form part of the Chamber of Deputies' complex of premises attracts three hundred thousand visitors a year, including seventy thousand school pupils. In particular, from October to May, pupils in their final two years of secondary school who are studying topics pertaining to the current political situation get the chance to attend a training day in Montecitorio, where they can carry out research exercises and meet MPs, members of the Bureau and members of parliamentary committees. The Library of the Chamber of Deputies, open to the public, was renamed in honour of Nilde Iotti in 2019. It contains more than one million published works and, together with the Library of the Senate, forms one part of the Joint Parliamentary Library.

*Detail of pneumatic
post tubes*

International activity

ZOOM

Most of the general provisions governing Italy's participation in the formation and implementation of European Union legislation and policies are laid out in Law 234/2012 and in the Rules of Procedure. Other related provisions are included in European treaties, specifically the Lisbon Treaty, in force since 1 December 2009, which accords national parliaments certain participatory powers in the EU decision-making process.

The Horseman's Room

The Chamber of Deputies within international fora

As political challenges take on an increasingly cross-border dimension, so international parliamentary cooperation has become increasingly relevant.

All the bodies of the Chamber of Deputies engage in some form of international relations, thanks to which lawmakers have been able to broaden their experience, enrich their knowledge and benefit from the sharing of parliamentary best practices.

The interchange of ideas among national parliaments and international organisations is also intended to promote democracy, human rights, peace and intercultural dialogue. The Chamber of Deputies sends MPs as delegates to several international parliamentary assemblies: the Council of Europe, NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Parlia-

mentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM).

The activities of the Italian Parliament intersect with those of the European Union in three main areas: in its contributions to the joint formation of European policies; in its contribution to inter-parliamentary cooperation; and in its work of transposing European Union regulations into domestic law. To keep the Italian legal system aligned to EU law, the Italian Parliament periodically approves an EU Act and an EU Delegation Law covering European affairs.









clement. The architect Ernesto Basile was therefore appointed to build an extension to the Parliament Building, which he did by constructing behind the original palace a whole new building made of travertine and red brick and surmounted by four towers. The work was completed in 1918. The graceful interior of the new building is remarkable for the refined Art Nouveau style that characterises the architecture and decorative details.

Art in Montecitorio

Montecitorio houses a wealth of artistic treasures: it has more than a thousand separate works consisting of paintings, sculptures, prints, tapestries, and archaeological relics. Perhaps the best known work is the great frieze by Giulio Aristide Sartorio, an allegorical depiction of the history of Italian civilization that unfolds across a canvas 105 meters long and 4 meters high.

*Detail of the frieze by
Giulio Aristide Sartorio*

Inside the Palace

The Plenary Hall

A masterpiece of the Italian Art Nouveau, 'Liberty' style, the Plenary Hall is a semi-circular hall where the Chamber of Deputies holds its sittings and MPs from both Houses convene whenever Parliament meets in joint session. All the architectural, decorative and design elements of Ernesto Basile and the artists who collaborated with him are still intact. The Plenary Hall was inaugurated on 20 November 1918 by the President of the House, Giuseppe Marcora, to coincide with a celebration of victory in the Great War. In addition to Sartorio's frieze and the velarium, one of the most noteworthy artworks in the room is Davide Calandra's great bronze panel representing the "Glorification of the Savoyard Dynasty".

The velarium

The elegant stained glass and oak velarium that forms the ceiling of the Plenary Hall is by Giovanni Beltrami.





The frieze by Giulio Aristide Sartorio

One of the greatest masterpieces of Palazzo Montecitorio is the frieze running along the walls of the Plenary Hall, which was painted by Giulio Aristide Sartorio between 1908 and 1912.



Transatlantic Lobby

The famous lobby area outside the Plenary Hall is called the Transatlantic, on account of its resemblance to the enormous hall-like spaces that were such a feature of ocean-going ships of the early 20th century. The wooden furnishings and ceiling, like many other wooden furnishings in the building, are the work of the Palermo-based Ducrot company, which followed Basile's Art Nouveau designs. Also known as the "Hall of Lost Steps", this is where MPs and journalists meet between one sitting and another.

Courtyard of Honour

Under Carlo Fontana's original plan, the Courtyard of Honour was a semi-circular space. In 1871, the first Plenary Hall was erected inside the courtyard. After Ernesto Basile was commissioned to extend the parliament building, the courtyard was refashioned into its current square shape.



Green Room

The Art-Nouveau styled Green Room is so called owing to its green furnishings. It is topped by a skylight graced by floral decorations.





Pigeonhole Room

This is the room where MPs receive their post, paper-based memos and working documents, which are placed in the appropriate pigeonhole in the wooden cabinets.



The Legislative Archive

The archive collects, collates and distributes official papers and parliamentary documents.

Presidents' Gallery

This is a broad corridor on the same floor as the Plenary Hall displaying a series of portraits of some of the presidents of Italian parliaments from the days before unification, presidents of the Chamber of Deputies of the Kingdom of Italy, and presidents of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republic.



Hall of the She-Wolf

Here, in the Hall of the She-Wolf, the result of the institutional referendum of 2 June 1946 was announced. It takes its name from a bronze sculpture of the Capitoline Wolf. The splendour of the setting is enriched by the Flemish tapestries on the walls.





Queen's Hall

The Queen's Hall is decorated with six splendid sixteenth-century tapestries of the Florentine school. The large room, used for receptions and ceremonies, owes its name to the fact that the Queen of the House of Savoy used to stay here with the court when the King was delivering the royal speech to inaugurate the parliamentary session.



Women's Hall

The Women's Hall was inaugurated in 2016 to pay tribute to the first women to become part of the institutions of the Italian Republic.

Aldo Moro Room

The room was so named on 13 May 2008 on the thirtieth anniversary of the assassination of the eponymous Italian statesman and the members of his security detail. The room is furnished with Rococo-style furniture from the Royal Palace of Caserta.



Horseman's Room

The Horseman's Room, decorated in the Rococo style, takes its name from the large 18th-century painting of the Modenese school which portrays the Marquis Bonifacio Rangoni on horseback. The room, whose walls are entirely covered in silk damask, is furnished with precious gilded furniture from the eighteenth-century and paintings from the same period. The room is used to welcome visiting dignitaries who are guests of the President and, in particular, foreign delegations.





The Corridor of the Busts

The corridor is lined with marble and bronze busts of illustrious Deputies, from Cavour and Garibaldi to the leading figures in the history of the parliament of the Italian Republic.



Globe Hall

The Globe Hall gets its name from the ancient globe located in the room. It still contains the original metal shelves of the Library, which used to be housed here. The room is equipped with multimedia technology and is mainly destined for the use of parliamentary committees, which hold their most important sittings here (such as those for the examination of the budget law). It is also used by committees convening in joint session (i.e. meetings of two or more committees at once), and by committees with a large number of participants.

The premises of the Chamber of Deputies

Other parliamentary premises around Montecitorio

In addition to Palazzo Montecitorio, the Chamber of Deputies conducts its business in other buildings of considerable historical and artistic value.

The ancient complex of Santa Maria sopra Minerva on Via del Seminario is the seat of the bicameral committees, committees of inquiry, the “Nilde Iotti” Library, and the Historical Archive.

Parliamentary Groups operate out of Palazzo dei Gruppi (on Via Uffici del Vicario), while the complex of Santa Maria in Campo Marzio in Vicolo Valdina (Piazza Campo Marzio), which dates back to early medieval times, houses the offices of MPs and, among other things, hosts exhibitions and conferences. Palazzo Theodoli-Bianchelli (Via del Parlamento) houses more MPs’ offices as well as some administrative departments. The former Banco di Napoli building (Via del Parlamento) contains several administrative departments and offices.

*Cloister of S. Maria
in Campo Marzio*





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