

A DAY AT MONTECITORIO



Camera dei deputati

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Camera dei deputati

Dear Guests,

Welcome to Palazzo Montecitorio. The Chamber of Deputies is pleased to welcome visitors from other countries who wish to get a closer look at the functioning of the democratic institutions of the Italian Republic.

Everything that takes place in Parliament is reported daily on the front pages of newspapers and in the television news reports. Now, using the new communication media – including websites and satellite TV channels – it is possible to acquire an enormous quantity of information about the work of the Chamber in real time and complete with video coverage. However, nothing can be quite the same as an actual visit to the House, where you can enter and see the places where parliamentary activity takes place and come into direct contact with the women and men that have been called here to represent Italian citizens.

Palazzo Montecitorio is one of the finest and most important monuments in Rome; it also contains priceless works of art which you will be able to admire in the course of your visit. But it is not a museum. It is a place where, every day, we address and discuss – often with great passion – decisions concerning the future of our civil community.

This is precisely what parliamentary work is all about: the dialogue between all the Members of Parliament and all the political forces – majority and opposition – about the best solutions to the problems of a great country such as Italy, open to Europe and to the world.

To achieve good results, the Chamber has a great deal of work to do, through the debates on the Floor of the House and in the Committees, the daily exchange with the Government and the constant research required to acquire the knowledge necessary to address the complex issues of our times. But most important of all, the Chamber has to listen to society as a whole and to individual citizens.

Parliamentary democracy stands to be enriched through contacts with people and institutions from other countries. I sincerely hope that your day at Montecitorio will be a positive and useful experience and, at the same time, I am sure that your presence will contribute to the enhancement of this institution.



Laura Boldrini
President of the Chamber of Deputies



PARLIAMENT INTRODUCES ITSELF

First things first

The Italian Constitution, which is the basis of the Italian State, establishes that sovereignty is vested in the people, meaning all citizens, who exercise it according to the forms and within the bounds laid down by the Constitution itself. One of the most important ways in which the people's sovereignty is expressed is the election of **Parliament**, where all Italian citizens are represented.

A job for two

The Italian Parliament is made up of two Houses: the **Chamber of Deputies** and the **Senate of the Republic**. The system they operate in is termed "perfect bicameralism", because the two Chambers have equal powers and identical tasks, although they differ in the number of members they have and in the mechanism by which their members are elected.



A view of the Plenary Hall of the Chamber of Deputies, designed by Ernesto Basile.

The Houses: basics

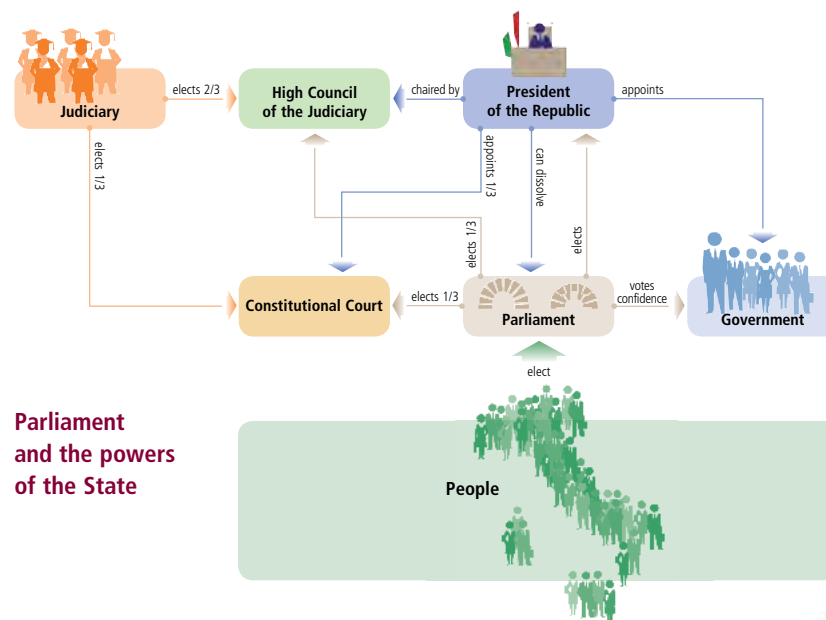
The Chamber of Deputies meets in Rome at **Palazzo Montecitorio**. Members of the Chamber are elected for 5 years unless Parliament is dissolved before the end of its term (the same applies to Members of the Senate). There are **630** Deputies, elected by citizens who are **18** and over. To be eligible for election, the minimum age is **25**.

The Senate also meets in Rome, at **Palazzo Madama**.

315 Senators are elected by citizens who are **25** or over. To be eligible for election, Senators must be at least **40**. There are also a few Senators who are not elected but who have been appointed Senators for Life. They are former Presidents of the Republic or citizens of outstanding merit in the social, scientific, artistic or literary fields.

ZOOM

As of 2006, 12 Deputies and 6 Senators are elected by Italian citizens who are resident abroad.



Parliament and the powers of the State



WHAT PARLIAMENT DOES

Democracy lives here

Parliament is the very symbol of democracy, the place where those who have been chosen by citizens through free elections engage in debate to settle the country's problems. The Italian Parliament thus serves an essential function in the political management of the State. Its main tasks are to **enact laws** and to provide **guidance** and exercise **scrutiny** over Government action.

The legislative function

Bills can be introduced by individual Members, by the Government or by other entities which are recognized as having the power of **legislative initiative** under the Constitution (Regional Councils and CNEL – the National Council for Economy and Labour). Citizens can also introduce bills as long as they are signed by at least 50,000 electors. The legislative function is exercised collectively by both Houses. This means that bills become laws only if they have been passed by both Houses. The Chamber of Deputies can generally approve a law by a majority of Members present on the Floor of the House, as long as one half of all Members plus one are present.

Views of the external façade of Palazzo Montecitorio.



ZOOM

On Wednesdays, with direct TV coverage, question time is held, when the Government provides immediate answers to questions from Deputies.



WHAT PARLIAMENT DOES

Confidence and No Confidence

Parliament has a **function of guidance** with regard to Government which is first and foremost exercised through the instrument of **political confidence**. Before beginning its activity, every Government needs to secure the confidence of Parliament, which decides whether to grant it or not by voting on a **confidence motion**.

Confidence must be granted by both Houses. This is a particularly important moment in the political life of the country. For this reason, the vote is conducted in a particularly solemn manner with the Members of Parliament pronouncing an aye or a nay vote as they proceed one by one before the President's bench. If it fails to secure the confidence of Parliament, the Government must resign.

If the Houses fail to express a majority which can support a Government, the President of the Republic can **dissolve them before the end** of their term and call new elections. Deputies and Senators can at any time propose a **no-confidence vote** in the Government. The no-confidence vote must be signed by at least a tenth of the Members of one of the two Houses.

Scrutiny over Government

In order to exercise its **function of scrutiny** over Government, Parliament has a number of instruments available to it:

- **Questions** are written requests for information addressed to the Government on the part of Members of Parliament in order to seek information on specific facts and the intended action in response thereto.
- **Interpellations** are written questions seeking clarification on the reasons for Government policy.

One of the powers vested in Parliament is its right to conduct investigations into issues of public interest, by establishing **Inquiry Committees**, which can also be bicameral Parlia-



The velarium covering the Plenary Hall of the Chamber of Deputies, an Art Nouveau work by Giovanni Beltrami.

mentary Committees and which possess the same powers and are subject to the same constraints as the judiciary.

Amendments to the Constitution

Amendments to the Constitution are so sensitive and important, in view of the consequences they may have on the very structure of democracy, that Parliament can decide on them only through procedures which guarantee the broadest possible support. They are therefore required to be approved – in the same text – **twice** by each House. An interval of at least three months must elapse between the first and second approval, and the second approval requires, as a minimum, that an **absolute majority** of Deputies and Senators vote in favour. It is also possible to submit amendments to a **referendum** if at least 500,000 electors or a fifth of the Members of a House or five Regional Councils request one. A referendum cannot however be sought if the second approval of the amendment received a two-thirds majority in both Houses.

ZOOM

Every seven years, the two Houses of Parliament meet in joint session to elect the President of the Republic. In addition to Members of Parliament, three delegates from each Region (Valle d'Aosta only has one) also take part in the vote.



THE HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT

Before the establishment of the Italian Parliament

The forerunner of the Italian Parliament was the one established by King Charles Albert in 1848 with the **Statuto Albertino** or Albertine Statute. The Statute (which, unlike the Republican Constitution, was not adopted by a freely elected Parliament but was granted to his subjects by the King) established two Houses, the Senate of the Kingdom and the Chamber of Deputies.

The Chamber of Deputies was elective, whereas the Members of the Senate were appointed by the King from the country's elite: former deputies, former ministers, ambassadors, high-ranking army officers, industrialists, members of the judiciary, bishops, representatives of the world of culture; royal princes were also Members by right.



The original
of the Constitution
of the Italian Republic.



A day at Montecitorio ■ PARLIAMENT

United Italy

On **17 March 1861**, after the unification of the country, the first Italian Parliament proclaimed the birth of the Kingdom of Italy in Turin. The capital and Parliament were transferred to Florence in 1865 and finally to Rome in 1871.

Fascism

During the Fascist period (1922-1943) the independence of the Chamber of Deputies was gradually suppressed and free elections were no longer held. In 1939 the Chamber of Deputies was replaced by the Chamber of Fasci and Corporations, whose members were national councillors appointed directly by Mussolini.

A new beginning

After World War II, on **2 June 1946**, the Italian people, called upon to decide what kind of State would be established in a referendum between Monarchy and Republic, chose a Republic. On the same day a Constituent Assembly was elected with the task of preparing a new Constitutional Charter to replace the Statuto Albertino.

The Italian Constitution

On 1 January 1948, the Italian Constitution entered into force. The Constituent Assembly decided on a Parliament with two elective Houses, each having the same powers. The first Parliament of the Republic was elected on **18 April 1948**.

ZOOM

The referendum on **2 June 1946** recorded a huge turnout at the polls: 89.1% of those entitled to vote cast their ballots. 54.3% of valid votes were for the Republic; 45.7% were for the Monarchy.



UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

The initial stages

It would seem to be self-evident that all citizens should be entitled to vote and that their vote should be “personal and equal, free and secret”, as the Constitution provides. In actual fact, **universal suffrage**, enshrined in Article 48 of the Italian Constitution, was an achievement which was the culmination of a long and laborious process.

The first electoral law was enacted in 1848. The only people eligible to vote were male citizens who paid at least 40 lire of tax per year or who had a high level of education.

In 1882, the electorate was extended, with citizens of twenty-one having a primary school certificate becoming eligible and the qualifying taxable income being reduced.

Extension of suffrage

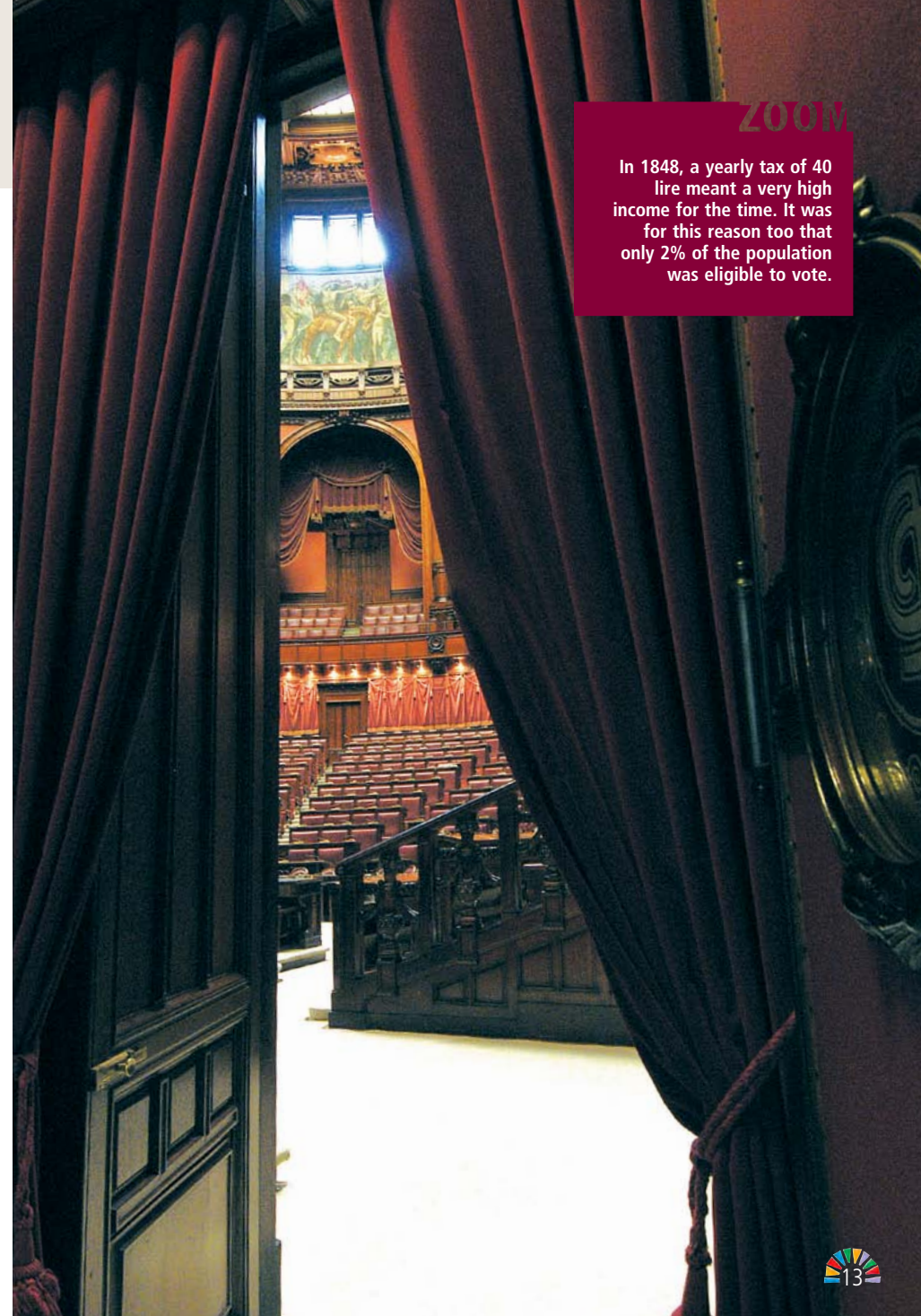
In 1912 Giovanni Giolitti’s Government further extended the right to vote. Under what was termed “universal suffrage” all males, even if illiterate (which was the case for 46% of Italians at the time), were entitled to vote as long as they were at least thirty years old.

Universal suffrage

The entitlement of women to vote is a rather recent achievement in almost every country. In Europe the first country to institute this right was Finland, in 1906. In Italy, the first time women were allowed to vote throughout the country was in 1946 in the referendum to decide between Monarchy and Republic and to elect the Constituent Assembly, twenty-one of whose members were women.

In the 17th Parliament there are 197 women MPs, accounting for 31% of the Deputies, with a marked increase on the previous Parliament (when they were only 21%).

Opposite page:
The Plenary Hall seen
from a side entrance.



ZOOM

In 1848, a yearly tax of 40 lire meant a very high income for the time. It was for this reason too that only 2% of the population was eligible to vote.

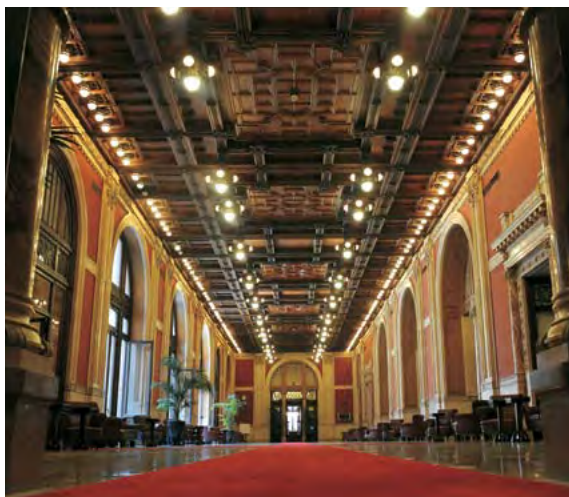
THE ITALIAN CONSTITUTION

An inspiring text

The Constitution sets out the basic rules which govern the rights and duties of citizens and the organisation of the Italian Republic. It is a text of great substance, in view of the scope and depth of the issues addressed and the civic passion which fuelled it and it concerns every citizen directly. It is extremely important to be aware of its content in order to be able to take part in social life with awareness and independently established opinions.

A handbook for citizenship

The Italian Constitution contains a total of **139 articles** plus **18 transitory** and **final provisions**. The first 12 articles lay down the **"Fundamental Principles"** which identify the basic, general ideals on which the Republic is founded. This is followed by two parts. The first of them, entitled **"Rights and Duties of Citizens"**, concerns civil rights (freedoms of citizens), ethical-social relations (family, health, education), economic relations (labour, unions, etc.) and political relations (voting, political parties, access to elected and public office, duties toward the State, etc.).



The "Transatlantico",
also called the
"Corridor of Lost Steps".

The Italian Constitution

Fundamental Principles

PART I

RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF CITIZENS

- Title I:** Civil Rights and Duties
- Title II:** Ethical and Social Rights and Duties
- Title III:** Economic Rights and Duties
- Title IV:** Political Rights and Duties

PART II

ORGANISATION OF THE REPUBLIC

- Title I:** Parliament
 - Section I:** The Houses
 - Section II:** Legislative Process
- Title II:** The President of the Republic
- Title III:** The Government
 - Section I:** The Council of Ministers
 - Section II:** Public Administration
 - Section III:** Auxiliary Bodies
- Title IV:** The Judicial Branch
 - Section I:** The Organisation of the Judiciary
 - Section II:** Rules on Jurisdiction
- Title V:** Regions, Provinces, Municipalities
- Title VI:** Constitutional Guarantees
 - Section I:** The Constitutional Court
 - Section II:** Amendments to The Constitution. Constitutional Laws

Transitory and final provisions



THE ITALIAN CONSTITUTION

The structure of the State

The second part, "**Organisation of the Republic**", defines the way the State is organised, beginning with Title I which regulates **Parliament**, the functioning of the **Houses** and the **lawmaking**.

Title II deals with the **President of the Republic**, who "is the Head of State and represents national unity" (Art. 87).

Title III deals with **Government** and has sections on the **Council of Ministers**, **Public Administration** and **auxiliary bodies** (consultative bodies for the Houses of Parliament and Government).

Title IV deals with the **Judiciary**. Its first article (Art. 101) reads: "Justice is administered in the name of the people. Judges are subject only to the law."

Title V deals with **Regions, Provinces, Municipalities** and their relative powers and functions and Title VI addresses **Constitutional Guarantees**, namely the **Constitutional Court** and the provisions governing **amendments to the Constitution** and **constitutional laws**.



Detail of the Frieze by
Giulio Aristide Sartorio.
Opposite page:
The Art Nouveau façade
of Montecitorio.



ZOOM

In 2003, Parliament approved an amendment to Article 51 of the Constitution, whereby the Republic shall adopt special measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in access to public and elective office.

THE RULES OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AND ITS INDEPENDENCE

The rules of the game

A key principle in the democratic system is the independence of the powers of the State. The independence of both Houses of Parliament is explicitly enshrined in the Constitution, which also establishes their main rules of operation. All other rules are contained in **Rules of Procedure** that are approved independently by each House of Parliament.

In the case of the Chamber of Deputies, the Rules of Procedure set out the rights and duties of Deputies, specify how the President and the other bodies are elected and define their tasks, establish how proceedings of the House are organised and how the agenda for sessions is drawn up, as well as the procedures for debating and voting on bills and other issues before the bodies of the Chamber.



A view of the Plenary Hall of the Chamber of Deputies.



The bronze statue after which the She-wolf Hall is named.

Amendments to the Rules of Procedure

In order to approve the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber, an absolute majority of votes in favour is required, which means half of the Members of the House plus one. Since it is essential for everyone to accept the same rules in a democracy, throughout the history of Parliament an attempt has been made to ensure that the Rules of Procedure and amendments thereto are approved with the **broadest support** from majority and opposition Groups.

The budget

The Chamber is also financially independent of the other State institutions. Each year it approves **its own internal budget**, which determines how the financial resources required for its functioning will be used.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER

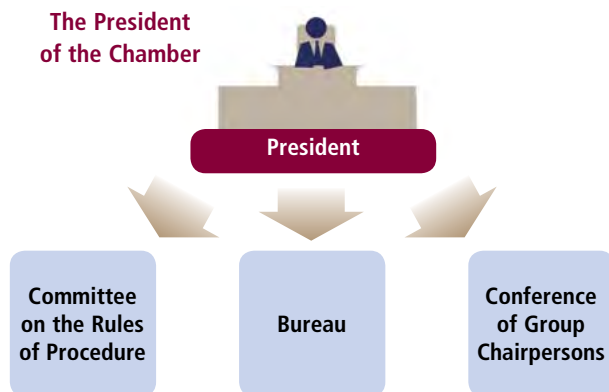
Impartiality

The President represents the Chamber and is one of the highest authorities of the State. He/She ensures that the **proceedings of the Chamber** and its **internal administration run smoothly**.

The President is “**impartial**”; he/she must therefore act in a “non-partisan” and even-handed way, ensuring that all Deputies can exercise their mandate freely within the limits established by the Rules of Procedure.

Deputies elect the President at the beginning of Parliament by secret ballot.

The President has a number of tasks: chairing debates, giving the floor to Deputies, deciding on the admissibility of bills, amendments, orders of the day, motions, questions and interpellations, establishing the voting order, clarifying the purpose of a vote and announcing its outcome, as well as keeping order.



Collective bodies

The President chairs the Plenary as well as other **collective bodies** which have an essential role:

- The **Bureau**, comprising 4 **Vice-Presidents** (who replace the President in his/her absence), 3 **Quaestors** (who oversee the expenditure of the Chamber and its Protocol Office and draw up the draft budget), at least 8 **MPs** acting as **Secretaries** (who assist the President in managing plenary sessions), performs high-level administration functions and decides on sanctions to apply against Deputies.
- The **Conference of Group Chairpersons** defines the order and programme of business.
- The **Committee on the Rules of Procedure** is responsible for interpreting the Rules of Procedure and drafting amendments thereto.

Presidents of the Chamber of Deputies from 1948 to the present

Laura Boldrini	since 2013
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

Presidents of the Constituent Assembly

Umberto Terracini	Giuseppe Saragat
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ZOOM

In order to provide the best possible guarantees for the independence of parliamentary activity in all its aspects, other bodies have also been established such as the Committee on Elections, which examines issues relating to the election of each Deputy and the Committee on Waiver of Immunity, which deals with judiciary activity concerning Deputies. Both of these bodies suggest actions which are then submitted to the Plenary Assembly for approval.



DEPUTIES

The elected

The Italian term **deputato** means “someone who has been chosen to perform a function” and, in the Italian democracy, indicates a person elected to represent the interests and opinions of citizens. The Constitution establishes that “each Member of Parliament represents the Nation” (and therefore **all** citizens and not just the people who voted for them) “and exercises his/her functions without any constraint on his/her mandate”, meaning that his/her decisions are not linked to a specific task, but are entirely free.

A fundamental guarantee for the role of the Deputy is **independence**. According to the Constitution, “Members of Parliament cannot be called upon to answer for the opinions they have expressed and the votes they have cast as part of their functions”. It is therefore essential to ensure that Deputies can speak freely and vote freely, if they are to be able to fully **represent** the needs of society in the public parliamentary debate.



The premises of the Standing Committee on Transport, Post and Telecommunications.



Detail of the Deputies' seats.

Inside and outside the building

The work of a Deputy is not limited to activities inside Parliament but also takes place externally within parties, citizens' organisations and constituencies.

Direct and ongoing contact with the social and economic situation of the country is essential in order to fuel and enrich the political action of the Chamber.

Parliamentary allowance

The Constitution establishes that Deputies shall receive an allowance so as to enable them to perform their functions with the utmost independence. Furthermore the Chamber provides them with all the tools they need in order to carry out their functions effectively.

ZOOM

The Rules of Procedure of the Chamber explicitly foresee the possibility for Deputies to take the floor to express an opinion in opposition to their own Group. In planning parliamentary business, a portion of available time is allotted to this kind of intervention.



PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS

Italy in the Plenary Hall

All Deputies are Members of the **Plenary Assembly**: each of them is called upon to speak for the needs of the country, the many different political outlooks of which are represented by the Chamber.

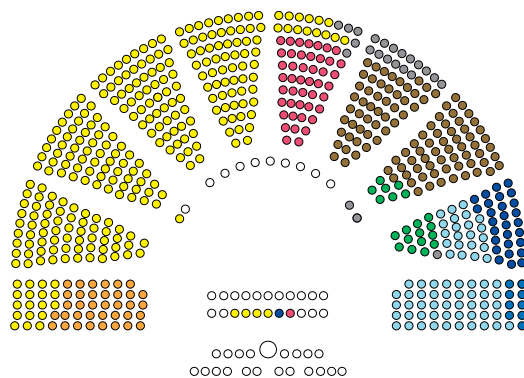
The Rules of Procedure of the Chamber require each Deputy to belong to a **Parliamentary Group**.

The Mixed Group is made up of Deputies who have not registered in any other Group. Usually Groups correspond to the parties or political movements of the country which are represented in the Chamber.

At least twenty Deputies are necessary in order to form a Group. In order to set up a Group with fewer Deputies, an authorisation from the Bureau must be obtained.

The composition of seats in the 17th Parliament

- Partito Democratico (PD)
- MoVimento 5 Stelle (M5S)
- Forza Italia – Il Popolo della Libertà – Berlusconi Presidente (FI-PdL)
- Scelta Civica per l'Italia (SCPl)
- Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà (SEL)
- Nuovo Centrodestra (NCD)
- Lega Nord e Autonomie (LNA)
- Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi)
- Misto



Parliamentary Groups

Groups take their seats inside the hemicycle of the Plenary Hall from the left, through the centre and to the right of the President. The Government has its seats facing the hemicycle and below the President, with the President of the Council in the middle of his/her Ministers and Under Secretaries.

Majority and opposition

The **majority** is made up of the Groups which have voted in favour of confidence for the Government and have thus endorsed its programme and support its action. Generally the **opposition** Groups work in contraposition to it. During parliamentary proceedings they present alternative positions and try to gain enough support to become the majority at the next elections.

An essential condition for a healthy democracy is that there be an exchange between the various Groups in Parliament, as well as a debate, even if heated, on political issues.

There is no democracy without an opposition

The opposition has a fundamental role in Italy's democratic system. Groups which find themselves in a minority following elections, do not govern but take an active part in proceedings, and have an important function of **criticism** and **scrutiny** which contributes to a more focused debate and brings objections and alternatives to Government action to the public attention. The more intense the debate and the more effectively the divisions existing in society are expressed on the Floor of the Chamber within the scope of mutually agreed rules, the stronger and more viable democratic institutions are. Of course, there are also cases where majority and opposition act in agreement, especially in situations where the vital interests of the country are at stake or the basic principles of institutional organisation are being addressed.

ZOOM

If no agreement is reached in planning the business of the Plenary Assembly and the Committees, the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber guarantee that opposition Groups are entitled to one fifth of the overall time available.

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS

A democratic workshop

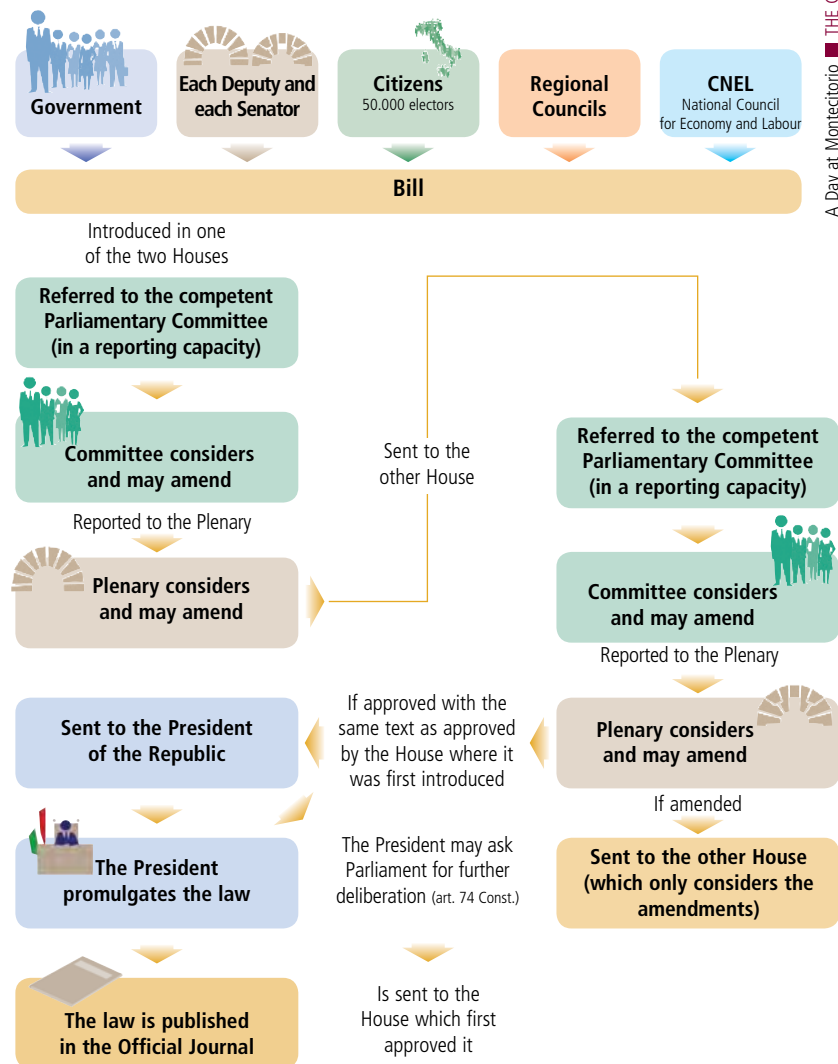
The centre of activity of the Chamber is the Floor of the House, which is where the main decisions are taken, issues placed on the agenda of a session are discussed, bills are voted, policy-setting instruments for the Government are debated and questions and interpellations are addressed. The best known stages in parliamentary activity are the consideration and voting of bills.

The path to a law

The progress of a bill from the time of its initial introduction by its originator until its entry into force involves a number of passages, which are as follows in a standard procedure:

- The **bill** is first referred to the **Parliamentary Committee** which is responsible for its subject matter. The Committee undertakes a thorough **scrutiny** of the bill and re-drafts it where necessary and then reports to the Plenary. During this phase other Committees are also called upon to contribute to the legislative process by expressing their opinions on the text of the bill.
- The Plenary holds a **general discussion**, followed by **consideration** of and a **vote** on each article of the bill, and of the proposed amendments; lastly, the Plenary votes on the bill as a whole. If it is approved it moves to the Senate, where it is also submitted to consideration and voting. Once approved with the same text by both Houses of Parliament, the law must be **promulgated** by the President of the Republic (who can, however, send it back to Parliament for renewed consideration, giving the reasons for such request). Following promulgation, the law is **published** on the Official Journal and enters **into force**, generally 15 days later.

The progress of a bill





PLENARY PROCEEDINGS

Green, red, white

Most votes on the Floor of the House are held by **roll-call vote**, using an electronic system which records the names of voters and displays the outcome of the vote in real time. In these cases, the list of Deputies voting and the vote expressed by each member are given in the verbatim report. Each seat is provided with three buttons: green for an aye vote, red for a nay vote and white for abstention. The order of business establishes which days are voting days and which days are set aside for debate without any votes being held.

The relationship of confidence

Apart from the confidence vote, the relationship of confidence which must obtain between Parliament and Government is tested during the term of a Parliament through no-confidence votes and by decisions to put the question of confidence.

A **no-confidence motion** can be brought in either House if signed by at least a tenth of the Members. Such a motion aims at securing a withdrawal of confidence in the Government. The motion is discussed and can be voted on after at least three days have elapsed from its presentation; if it is approved it leads to the resignation of the Government. A no-confidence vote can also be addressed against an individual Minister.

The Government can also put the **question of confidence** (generally on a bill or an amendment to a bill) by requesting a House to renew its confidence by approving the text the Government has endorsed without any changes. In this case, too, the Government must resign if it fails.

Opposite page: one of the entrances to the Plenary Hall of Montecitorio.





STANDING COMMITTEES

Not just a Plenary Assembly

One can say that if the Plenary Assembly is the engine of parliamentary activity, the **14 Standing Committees** of the Chamber are its fuel. For it is within them that the texts of bills to be submitted to the Plenary are discussed and re-drafted. Standing Committees – which also perform policy-setting and oversight functions with regard to the Government – are established in such a way as to reflect the proportions between Groups and specialise in given subject matters.

The 14 Standing Committees

3 Foreign and European Community Affairs

6 Finance

9 Transport, Post and Telecommunications

12 Social Affairs

1 Constitutional Affairs, Presidency of the Council of Ministers and Interior Affairs

4 Defence

7 Culture, Science and Education

10 Productive Activities, Trade and Tourism

13 Agriculture

2 Justice

5 Budget, Treasury and Planning

8 Environment, Territory and Public Works

11 Public and Private Sector Employment

14 European Union Policies

The paths to a law

When they are called upon to report to the Plenary on a bill, Committees are generally said to be acting in a **reporting capacity**; when they express an opinion on a text they meet in a consultative capacity; and if there is very broad support (meaning a request by more than four fifths of Committee members in addition to Government endorsement) the Plenary can decide to transfer final approval of the text directly to the Committee (the bill is however submitted to

the Plenary if so requested by the Government, a tenth of the membership of the House or a fifth of the Committee members). In such a case, the Committee is said to act in a **legislative capacity**.

Another procedure occurs when the Committee is specifically entrusted by the Plenary to draft the text of a bill for the Plenary, which in this case votes on the articles (and on the entire bill) without being able to amend it. In this case the Committee is said to be acting in a **drafting capacity**. The representatives of the Committee responsible for the bill being discussed sit at a semi-circular table in front of the Members' benches. With this arrangement, the Rapporteur, the Chairperson of the Committee and the Group representatives within the Committee guide the business of the Plenary from the foot of the hemicycle.

A thirst for knowledge

Standing Committees are empowered to conduct **fact-finding investigations** into issues relating to their area of competence, in order to acquire information which is of use to their business and to the Chamber in general, by hearing any person who may be qualified to provide information or opinions on such issues.

Clear and simple laws

The **Committee on Legislation** is a body comprising 10 Deputies, half of whom belong to the majority and half to the opposition. In cases foreseen by the Rules of Procedure, it is called upon to issue an opinion to Committees on the quality of the texts of their bills, in terms of their coherence, clarity and simplicity as well as their effectiveness in contributing to a simplification of existing legislation.



THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHAMBER

Managing the Chamber

The Chamber of Deputies is a complex structure, which is called upon to perform a great number of tasks every day. As a result, the **Administration** of the Chamber is particularly important since it must guarantee all the services required in order for Parliament to function properly. The head of the Administration is the **Secretary General**, who manages its departments and offices and is responsible to the President. The Administration basically comprises the following departments: the legislative departments, which organise the sittings of the various bodies and related reporting activities; the documentation departments, which conduct research and provide Members with the documentation they require, as well as making information available to the general public; the administrative and technical departments, which take care of administrative and technical matters, security and staff management.



The Mailbox Room,
taken up by the 630
MPs' mailboxes.
Opposite page:
The Truss Room
of the Library.





AN OPEN HOUSE

Publicity of proceedings

The sessions of Parliament are **public**, as is laid down in Article 64 of the Constitution. This is an application of the principle of popular sovereignty aimed at ensuring that citizens may be aware of the positions and actions of those who represent them and form their own opinion on the reasoning expounded in political debate. How is the constitutional principle of the public nature of sessions actually put into practice? First of all it is possible **to watch** the proceedings of the Plenary from the galleries above the hemicycle. It is also possible to read the **transcripts**, which are always made available on the same day as the debates on the Chamber of Deputies' website and the next day in print. Transcripts of the work conducted by Committees are also made available on the Internet and in print. Sessions are also broadcast live on the Internet, via radio and on a satellite TV channel. Particularly important debates are also broadcast on public TV networks.

The website at **www.camera.it** provides a considerable amount of parliamentary and legislative information, in addition to material on the way the Chamber of Deputies is organised, about the art and architecture of its buildings and the services provided to the public. In October 2009 the Chamber's Web TV service was also launched (webtv.camera.it). The permanent "residents" of the Chamber also include over 400 **parliamentary journalists** who daily report and analyse political events, the actions taken by the various Groups, the issues discussed by Committees, the decisions of the Plenary and party strategies.



The Globe Hall.
Opposite page:
The Green Room.





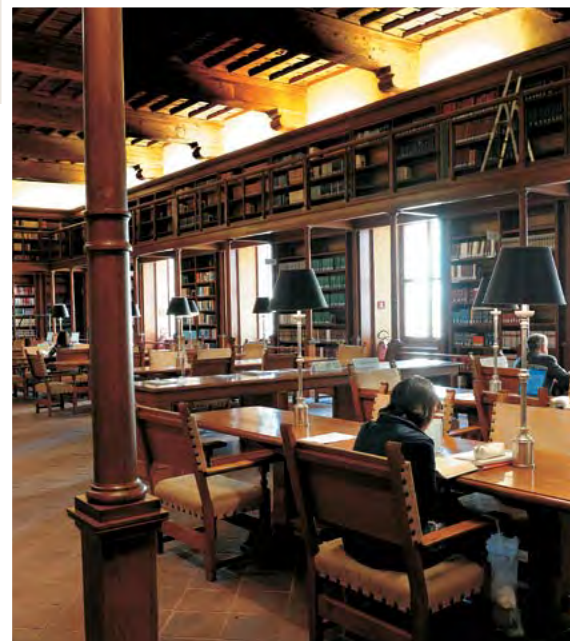
AN OPEN HOUSE

Finding out more

Alongside its specifically parliamentary activity, the Chamber of Deputies has increasingly been developing a vocation as a provider of “services to citizens” which has led to a number of activities that are by now well-tested. The Web TV (webtv.camera.it) can be accessed via the Chamber website, and a channel has also been set up on YouTube. A new website has been specially designed for younger citizens: “the Children’s Parliament” (bambini.camera.it). People wishing to visit Palazzo Montecitorio can avail themselves of the **Montecitorio a porte aperte** (Montecitorio opens its doors) initiative which, as a rule, every first Sunday of the month, provides an opportunity to be conducted around the building to discover its rooms and halls and works of art. Furthermore, it is always possible (if all the seats have not already been taken!) to watch the proceedings as they



The Queen’s Hall.



The Truss Room of the Library.

unfold inside the Plenary Hall. Every year Montecitorio and the other buildings of the Chamber of Deputies open their doors to more than three hundred thousand visitors, of whom about ninety thousand are students on school visits. In the period from October to May, school classes from the last two years of high school which have conducted research into issues related to current politics are able to spend a **day’s education inside Montecitorio**, where they can carry out research exercises, meet Members of Parliament and Committee Chairpersons and visit the main building. The **Chamber of Deputies’ Library** (which houses over a million volumes) is open to the public and together with the Senate library makes up the **Joint Parliamentary Library**. The Chamber of Deputies also organises conferences, exhibitions and book presentations.

ZOOM

Before the summer recess, the President of the Chamber meets journalists for the so-called “fan ceremony”. The press present the President with the gift of a fan according to a tradition which goes back to the end of the 19th century when parliamentary proceedings took place in the Comotto Plenary Hall, which was sweltering in summer and freezing in winter.

THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AND THE WORLD

The Chamber in all languages

Contemporary politics increasingly has an international dimension, a process which the Italian Parliament has responded to through an ongoing adaptation of its organisation and the activities of its bodies. Every year, for example, Parliament approves a European Union Act and a European Union enabling Act in order to adapt Italian legislation to the regulations issued by the European Union. Furthermore, Members of the Chamber attend and are full Members of parliamentary Assemblies such as the Council of Europe, NATO, OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe), CEI (Central European Initiative) and the PA-UfM (Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean). Committees meet regularly with their counterparts in other European Union member States. In general, contacts are very frequent with other Parliaments, both from Europe and worldwide.

Opposite page:
The Aldo Moro Hall.
Below:
The Horseman's Hall.



ZOOM

One of the international priorities of the Chamber of Deputies is the programme to assist Parliaments, to support and consolidate parliamentary Assemblies in developing countries or where institutions are not yet robust.



PALAZZO MONTECITORIO

History and architecture

The building that houses the Chamber of Deputies is a well-known image for all Italians and its elegant and restrained outline has always been associated with the country's political life. Since work was first begun on it, almost four centuries ago, Palazzo Montecitorio has seen a number of different architectural styles incorporated into it and has been used for several different purposes. In **1650**, Pope Innocent X of the Pamphili family first entrusted the Baroque master **Gian Lorenzo Bernini** with the task of building a grand mansion for his noble family. The salient feature in Bernini's plan was the convex outline of the façade, which followed the contours of the ground and the surrounding streets.



The bell tower, the turret and the clock added to the façade according to Carlo Fontana's design.



In **1694**, Pope Innocent XII Pignatelli decided to use the palazzo as the headquarters of the papal courts, entrusting **Carlo Fontana** with the task of continuing the original project. Fontana opened up the current square in front of the façade and built the bell gable with its great clock.

The third "life" of the Palazzo began when, following the transfer of the capital of Italy to Rome, it was chosen as the home of the Chamber of Deputies. Its great central courtyard afforded enough space to build a suitably large Plenary Hall, which was built by Paolo Comotto in 1871. The Plenary Hall did not last long: hot in summer, cold in winter and with awful acoustics, it made parliamentary work extremely difficult and therefore it was decided to build a new one. In **1918**, the architect **Ernesto Basile** completed the Plenary Hall, adding a new building to Bernini's original one and laying out the current Piazza del Parlamento.

Artistic heritage

Montecitorio hosts a remarkable art collection with more than a thousand works including paintings, sculptures, prints, tapestries and archaeological artefacts. The most famous piece is perhaps the great Frieze produced by Giulio Aristide Sartorio, a canvas 105 metres long and 4 metres high which provides an allegorical narration of the history of Italian civilization.

Bernini's plan for Piazza Montecitorio in a painting by Mattia De Rossi.

ZOOM

The origin of the name Montecitorio is not certain: the likeliest explanations are that it derived from "Mons Citatorius", because of the electoral assemblies held in the area during Ancient Roman times, or else from "Mons Acceptorius" or "collection hill" because this is where the debris from the drainage of the nearby Campus Martius was dumped.



VISITING MONTECITORIO



The Queen's Hall

Once reserved for the Queen of the House of Savoy, who waited here while the King delivered the Crown speech, which inaugurated a session of Parliament.



The Aldo Moro Hall

On 13 May 2008, the historic Yellow Hall was named after Aldo Moro as a tribute to the memory of the assassinated statesman and his security officers.



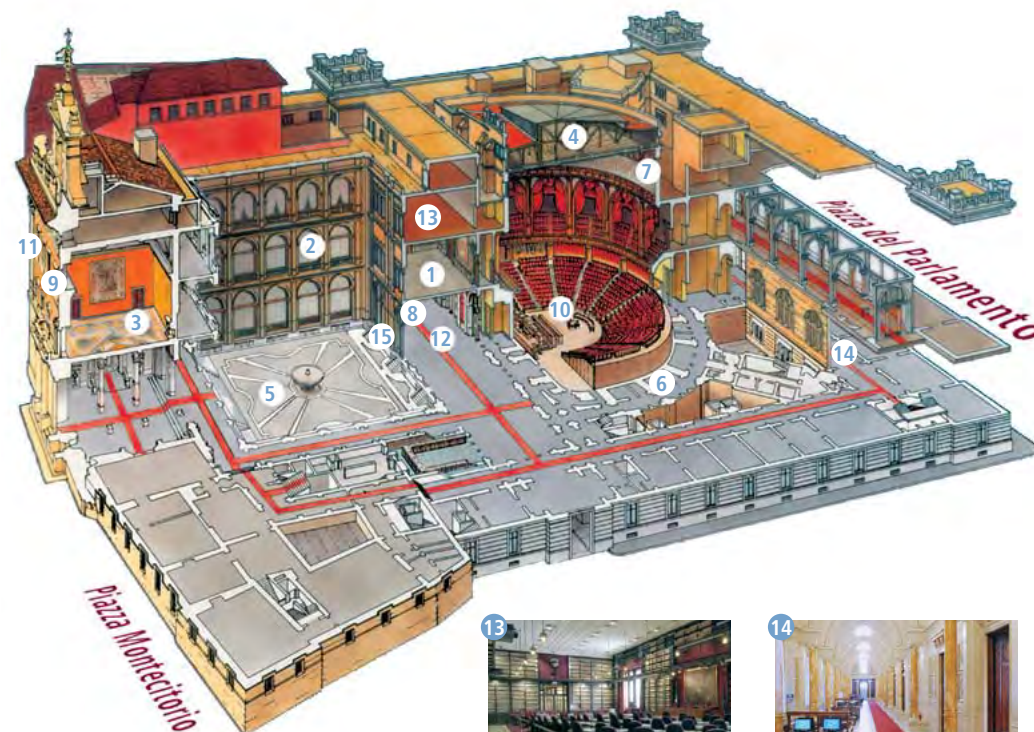
The Plenary Hall

The Plenary Hall of Montecitorio was designed by Basile in the early years of the 20th Century in Art Nouveau style. It is entirely wood-panelled and is covered by a bright glass velarium made by Giovanni Beltrami.



The Horseman's Hall

This spacious hall is used to receive foreign delegations. The room takes its name from the subject of an 18th century painting from the Modenese school.



The Corridor of Busts

Arranged in three arms around the Courtyard of Honour it displays busts of the most important figures of the Risorgimento such as Cavour, Garibaldi, Cattaneo and Mazzini.



The Hall of the She-wolf

It was inside this room, which houses a bronze copy of the Capitoline Wolf, that the outcome of the referendum which marked the birth of the Republic was proclaimed (10th June 1946).



Velarium and ceiling of the Plenary Hall



The Courtyard of Honour

Initially semi-circular, according to Carlo Fontana's design, it housed the first Plenary Hall of the Chamber in 1871. During the rebuilding carried out by Basile the shape was changed to a square.



The Legislative Archives

The place in which all the parliamentary records are brought together and distributed.



G. A. Sartorio's Frieze

An imposing work of art, exhibiting outstanding dynamism and sculptural quality in its composition.



The Mailbox Room

The walls of this room are entirely occupied by 630 pigeonholes arranged on the wooden shelving, one for each Member of Parliament.



The Globe Hall

A multimedia room which takes its name from an ancient world globe which it houses. In the past it was the Chamber's Library.



The Gallery of Presidents

Portraits of Presidents of the Chamber and of some Presidents of parliamentary assemblies of States from before the unification of Italy are displayed on the walls of this broad corridor.



The "Transatlantico"

Just outside the Plenary Hall is the area where Deputies congregate and wait between sittings (this is why it is also known as the "Corridor of Lost Steps"). The furnishing, produced in Art Nouveau style by the Ducrot company in Palermo, following Basile's design, is reminiscent of what was common on the great ocean liners of the period.



The Green Room

A fine Art Nouveau setting with green furniture and a floral-patterned skylight.



THE BUILDINGS OF THE CHAMBER

Not only Montecitorio

Alongside Palazzo Montecitorio, the Chamber of Deputies also occupies a number of other buildings of great artistic and historical value.

Some parliamentary Groups have their offices in the **Palazzo dei Gruppi** (via Uffici del Vicario), whereas the ancient **Complex of Santa Maria sopra Minerva** (via del Seminario) houses the Joint Parliamentary Committees, the Historical Archive and the Library of the Chamber of Deputies.

Inside the **Complex of Santa Maria in Campo Marzio** in **Vicolo Valdina** (piazza Campo Marzio), which has early Christian origins, exhibitions and conferences are held, while **Palazzo Theodoli-Bianchelli** (via del Parlamento) houses a number of departments of the Chamber. The **former Palazzo Banco di Napoli** (via del Parlamento) is where the Chamber's administrative offices are located, whereas the **Palazzi Marini** (via del Pozzetto, via Poli) are mainly used as offices for Deputies.



The E. Colombo Room
in the Library.
Opposite page:
The cloister in Vicolo Valdina.





A Day at Montecitorio ■ THE CHAMBER

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The Chamber of Deputies represents all the Italian citizens: *Palazzo Montecitorio* is where a part of the history of the Italian democracy has taken place, and takes place every day. It is here that the laws regulating the life of citizens are approved; it is here that the challenges posed by a changing world to the country as a whole and to the men and women living in it are debated.

This short guide is about the Chamber and the meaning of its work; it is about the role of the Deputies, the President and the other parliamentary bodies, and should be read as an invitation to enter *Palazzo Montecitorio* in order to get to know the places where debates are held and actions are taken on behalf of all citizens.

