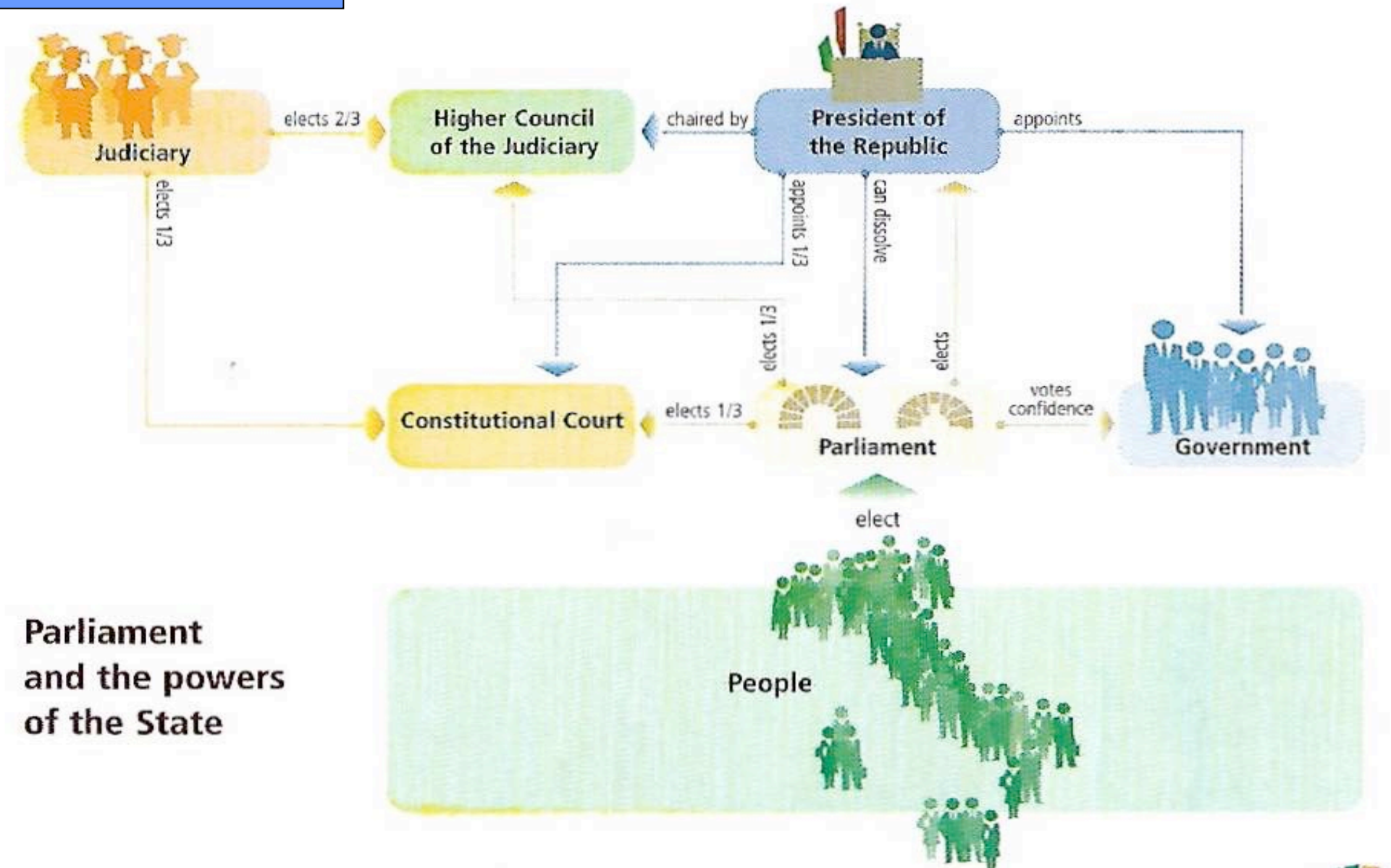




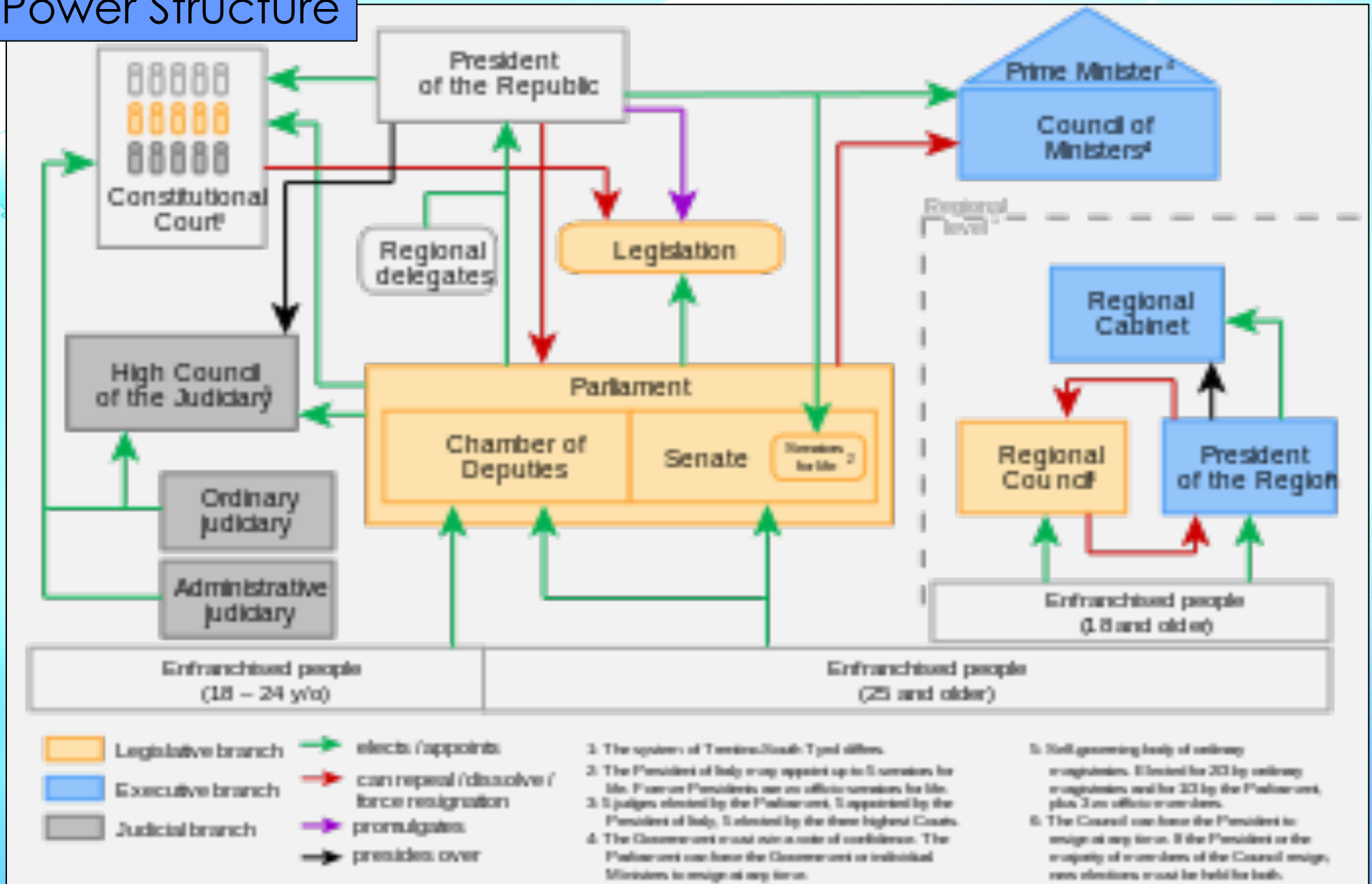
# The Italian Power System

# The Italian Power Structure



**Parliament  
and the powers  
of the State**

# The Italian Power Structure





## The President of the Republic

### Elected by:

- Parliament (Chamber and Senate)
- Delegates of Regions (3 each)
- Not elected by the people
- 7 years term

### Powers:

- Appoints the Government
- Can dissolve the Parliament
- Appoints 1/3 members of Constitutional Court
- Chairs the Higher Council of the Judiciary
- Can appoint 5 Senators for life

## The Prime Minister (Premier)

- Chosen by Parliament's political parties

(5 years term)

- Not necessarily a member of Parliament or a politician

- Not elected by the people

- Chairs the Government (the Cabinet)

- Choses Ministers and Deputy-Ministers

- The highest political authority

The Premier's Government needs the Vote of Confidence by Parliament

# The Italian Parliament

## Chamber of Deputies



- Electors 18 years of age
- Elected 25 years of age
- 5 years mandate
- 630 Deputies

*“Perfect Bicameralism”*

(equal powers and identical tasks)

## Senate



- Electors 25 years of age
- Elected 40 years of age
- 5 years mandate
- 315 Senators
- +  $n$  Senators for life
  - Former Presidents of the Republic
  - citizens of outstanding merit
  - appointed by the President of the Republic

# Parliament Activity

## 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 exterior and façade of Palazzo Montecitorio.

## 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.

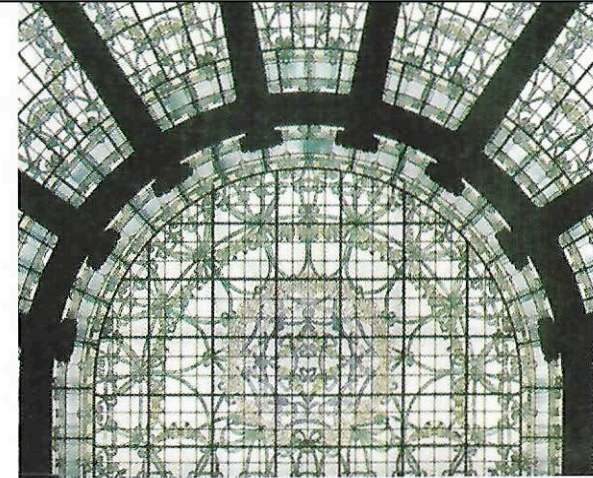
If the Houses fail to express a majority which can support a Government, the President of the Republic can **dissolve them before the end** of their term and call new elections. Deputies and Senators can at any time propose a **no-confidence vote** in the Government. The no-confidence vote must be signed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



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

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

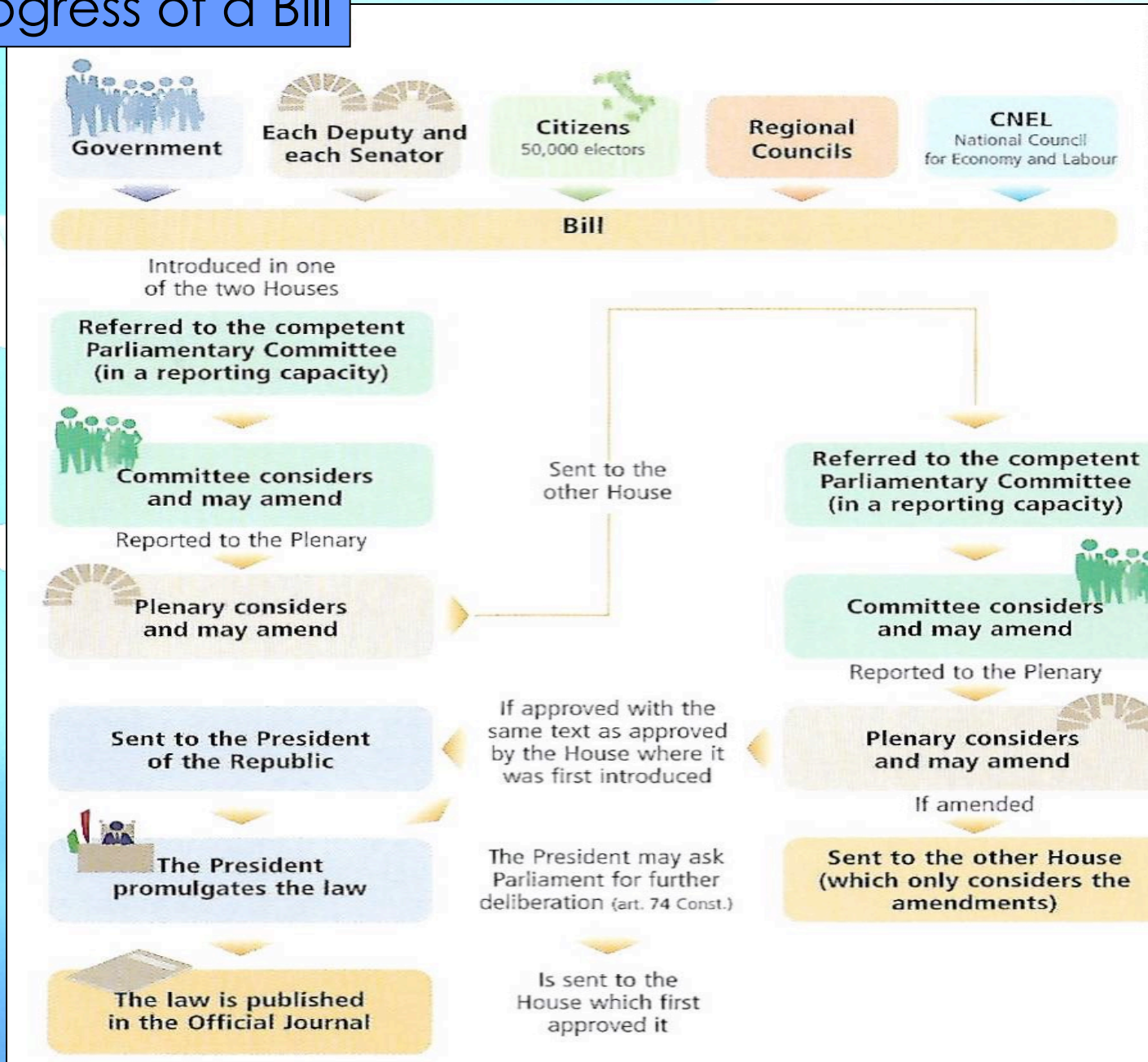
### Amendments to the Constitution

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 progress of a Bill





## The Chamber of Deputies



- Electors 18 years of age

- Elected 25 years of age

- 5 years mandate

- 630 Deputies



# 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 redrafts 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.

## 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.

# 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**.

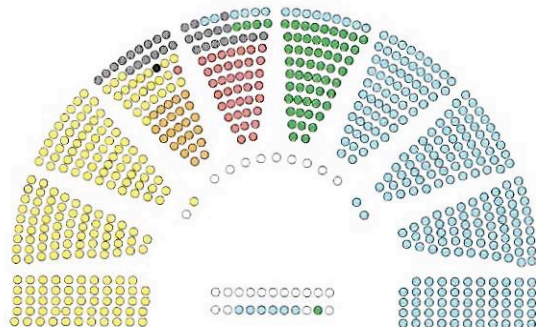
The Mixed Group is made up of Deputies who have not registered in any other Group. Usually Groups correspond to the parties or political movements of the country which are represented in the Chamber.

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.

Distribution of seats in the 16th Parliament

- The People of Freedom (Pdl)
- Democratic Party (PD)
- Northern League-Padania (LNP)
- Union of the Centre (UdC)
- Italy of Values (IdV)
- Mixed
- Non-active seats

\* White dots represent free seats, which may be occupied under special circumstances.



## Group work

Groups take their seats inside the hemicycle of the Plenary Hall from the left, through the centre and to the right of the President, according to their political position. The custom of using terms like "left", "centre" and "right" to identify a political position derives from the seating which is taken inside Plenary Halls and originated at the time of the French

Revolution. The Government has its seats facing the hemicycle and below the President, with the Prime Minister in the middle and his/her Ministers and Under Secretaries beside him/her.

## 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.

# 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

1 Constitutional Affairs, Presidency of the Council of Ministers and Interior Affairs	2 Justice
3 Foreign and European Community Affairs	4 Defence
6 Finance	5 Budget, Treasury and Planning
7 Culture, Science and Education	8 Environment, Territory and Public Works
9 Transport, Post and Telecommunications	10 Productive Activities, Trade and Tourism
11 Public and Private Sector Employment	12 Social Affairs
13 Agriculture	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 sub-

mitted 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 President of the Chamber

## Impartiality

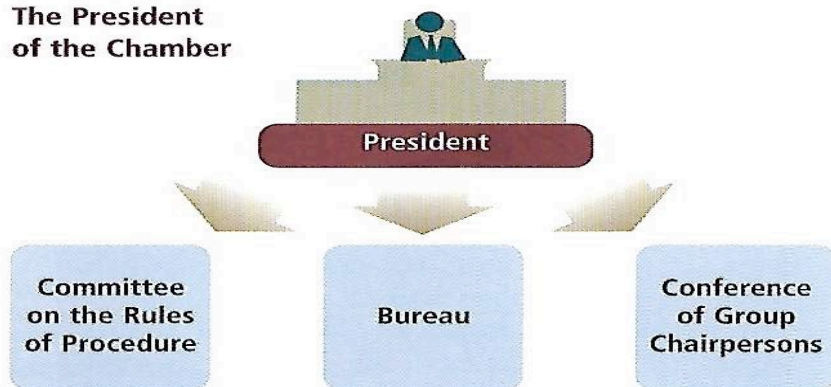
The President represents the Chamber and is one of the highest authorities of the State. He/She ensures that the **proceedings of the Chamber** and its **internal administration run smoothly**.

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.

## The President of the Chamber



## Collective bodies

The President chairs the Plenary as well as other **collective bodies** which have an essential role in organising the work of the Chamber:

- 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

Gianfranco Fini	since 2008
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.

# The Rules of the Chamber

## THE CHAMBER

### 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.



### 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.

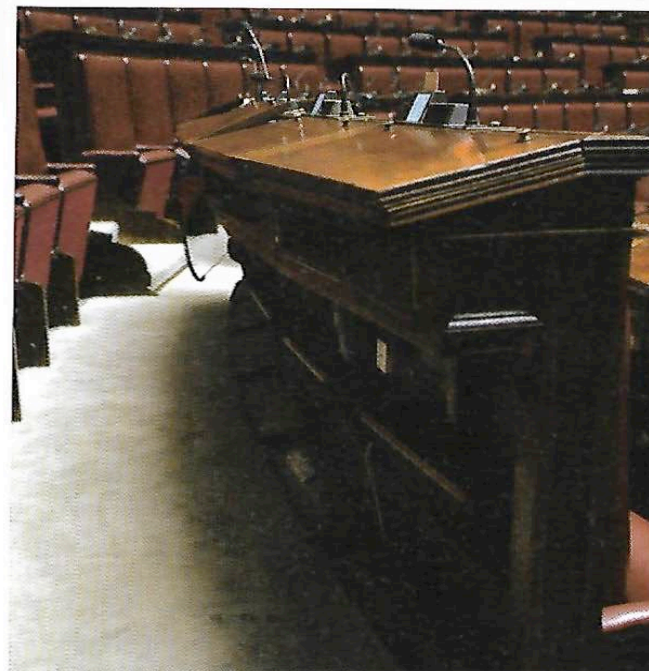
# Deputies

## 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 Justice Committee Meeting Room.



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.

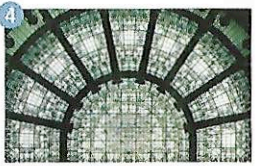
# The Chamber's Building



**2 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.



**3 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.



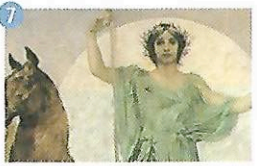
**4 Velarium and ceiling of the Plenary Hall**



**5 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).



**6 The Legislative Archive**  
Containing the entire collection of parliamentary records.



**7 G. A. Sartorio's Frieze**  
An imposing work of art, exhibiting outstanding dynamism and sculptural quality in its composition.



**8 The Mailbox Room**  
A room whose walls are entirely covered by 630 mailboxes, one for each Deputy, which have been carved out of wooden shelves.



**1 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.



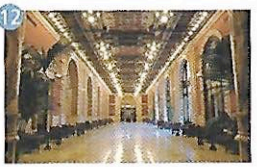
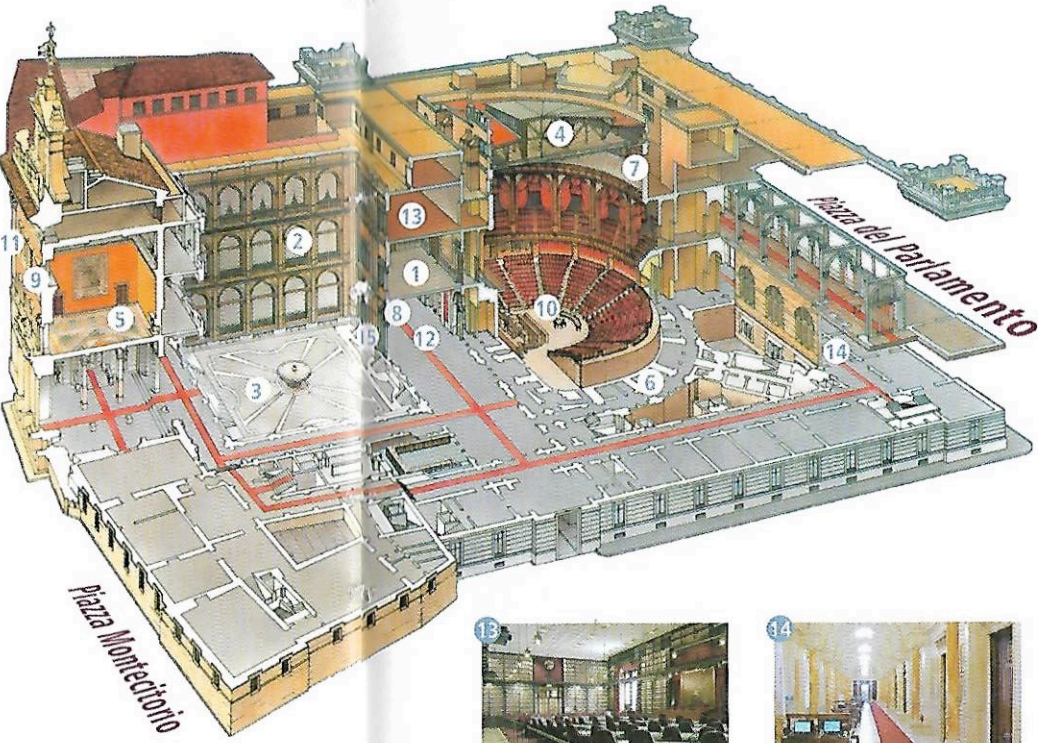
**9 The Aldo Moro Hall**  
On 13 May 2008, the historic Yellow Hall was named after Aldo Moro as a tribute to the memory of the assassinated statesman and his security officers.



**10 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.



**11 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.



**12 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.



**13 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.



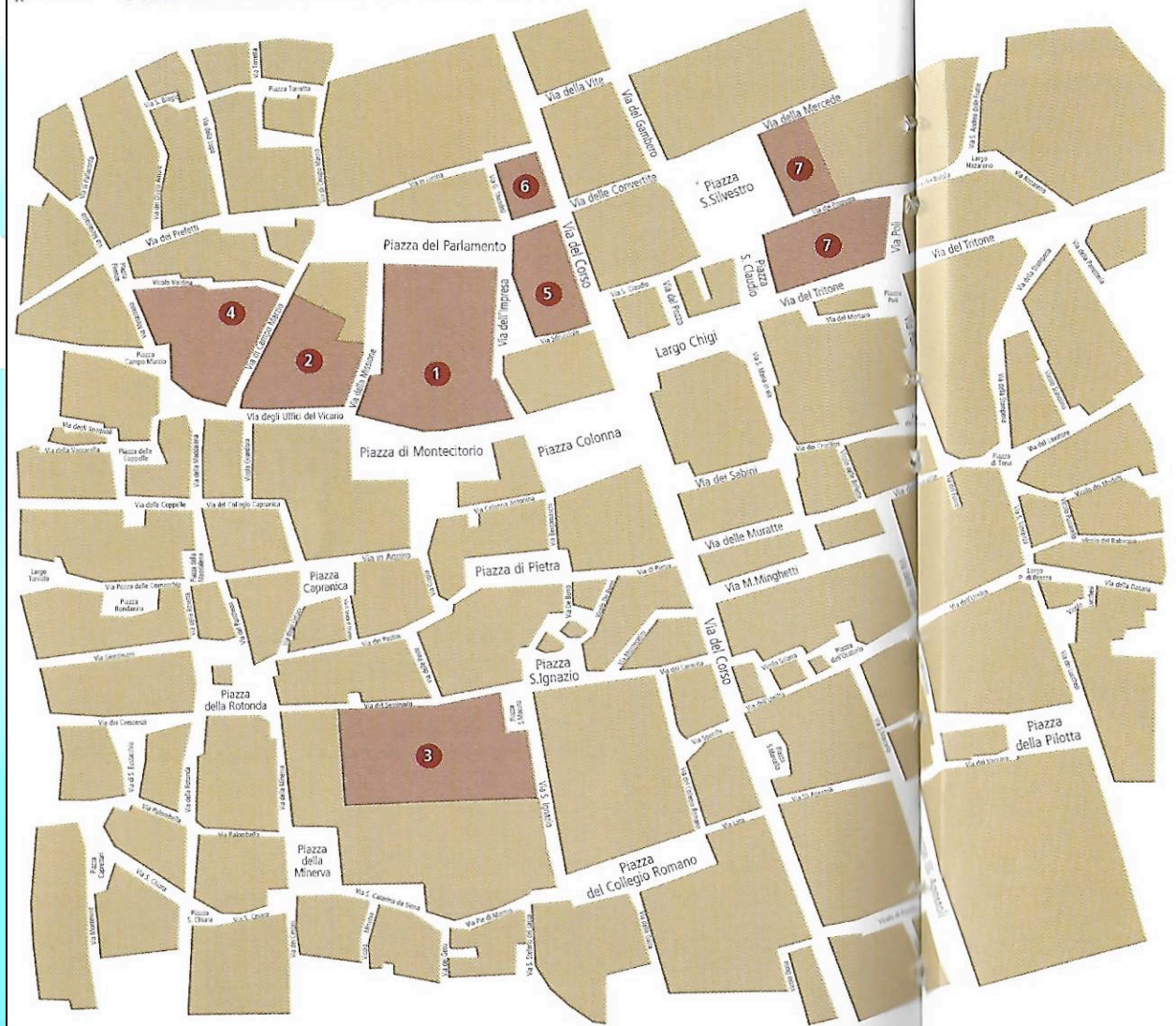
**14 The Gallery of Presidents**  
Portraits of Presidents of the Chamber and of some Presidents of parliamentary assemblies of States from before the unification of Italy are displayed on the walls of this broad corridor.



**15 The Green Room**  
A fine Art Nouveau setting with green furniture and a floral-patterned skylight. It is used by Deputies, waiting for business to begin in the Plenary Hall, to read newspapers.



# The Buildings of the Chamber



Palazzo Montecitorio



Palazzo dei Gruppi



The complex of Santa Maria sopra Minerva (housing the Library of the Chamber)



The complex of Santa Maria in Campo Marzio



Palazzo Theodoli-Bianchelli



Former Palazzo Banco di Napoli



Palazzi Marini

## The Senate



- Electors 25 years of age

- Elected 40 years of age

- 5 years term

- 315 Senators

+ *n* Senators for life

- Former Presidents of the Republic
- citizens of outstanding merit
- appointed by the President of the Republic



