

THE ESSENTIALS

WELCOME TO THE SENATE



Introduction

You are in the Luxembourg Palace, the seat of the Senate.
The Senate is one of the two chambers of the French Parliament.

This building, whose foundations were laid by Marie de Medicis in 1615, was first a royal residence, then a revolutionary prison. Following the French Revolution, it was briefly the seat of the executive branch and has been home to the Senate of the Republic since 1879.

We hope you will enjoy your visit. →



Access the Senate website by scanning
the QR code or by following this link:
<https://www.senat.fr/lng/en>



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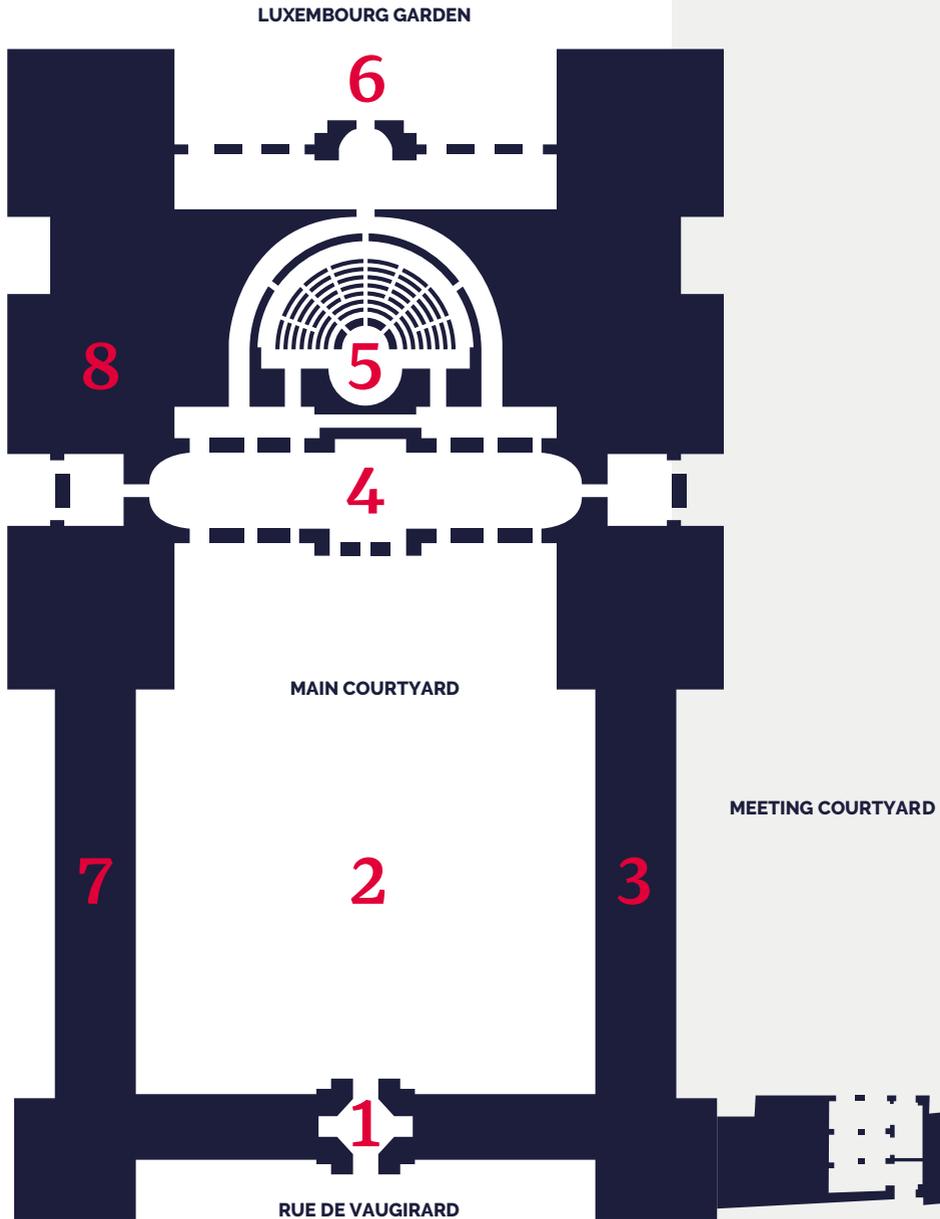
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The Luxembourg Palace



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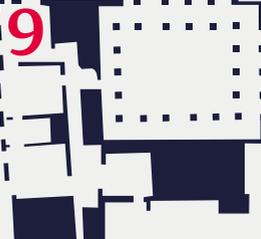
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PRESIDENTIAL COURTYARD

9



What is the role of the Senate?

Senators review bills that are submitted by the Government or by a member of Parliament.

Senators also scrutinize the action of the Government and ensure that enacted laws are implemented accordingly. Senators also can create temporary ad hoc information and consultation bodies (a fact-finding mission, a commission of inquiry...) to study a particular issue and to propose reforms.

The Senate is a guarantee of institutional stability: unlike the National Assembly, it cannot be dissolved. Additionally, the President, or Speaker, of the Senate takes over as Acting President of the Republic in the event of vacancy or incapacity.



348 senators sit
in the Senate

Under Article 24 paragraph 6 of the Constitution, the Senate « shall ensure the representation of the territorial communities of the Republic ».



How are the Senators elected?

The Senate represents the authorities of mainland France and its overseas territories as well as French citizens living abroad.

The 348 Senators are elected through indirect and universal suffrage by 162,000 officials, among which municipal, departmental and regional delegates. A Senator is elected for a term of 6 years.

The number of Senators elected for each constituency is in proportion to the population: for example, 1 Senator for the *département* of Lozère, 5 for the *département* of Bas-Rhin and 12 for Paris.

Every three years, half the seats are submitted to election. Therefore, the seats are divided into two series. 170 seats in series 1 were renewed in elections of September 2023. The 178 seats in series 2 should be renewed in September 2026.

Voting method

Depending on the number of seats to be filled, Senators are elected by a two-round first-past-the-post system (constituencies designating 1 or 2 Senators) or by proportional representation lists (constituencies designating no fewer than 3 Senators or more).

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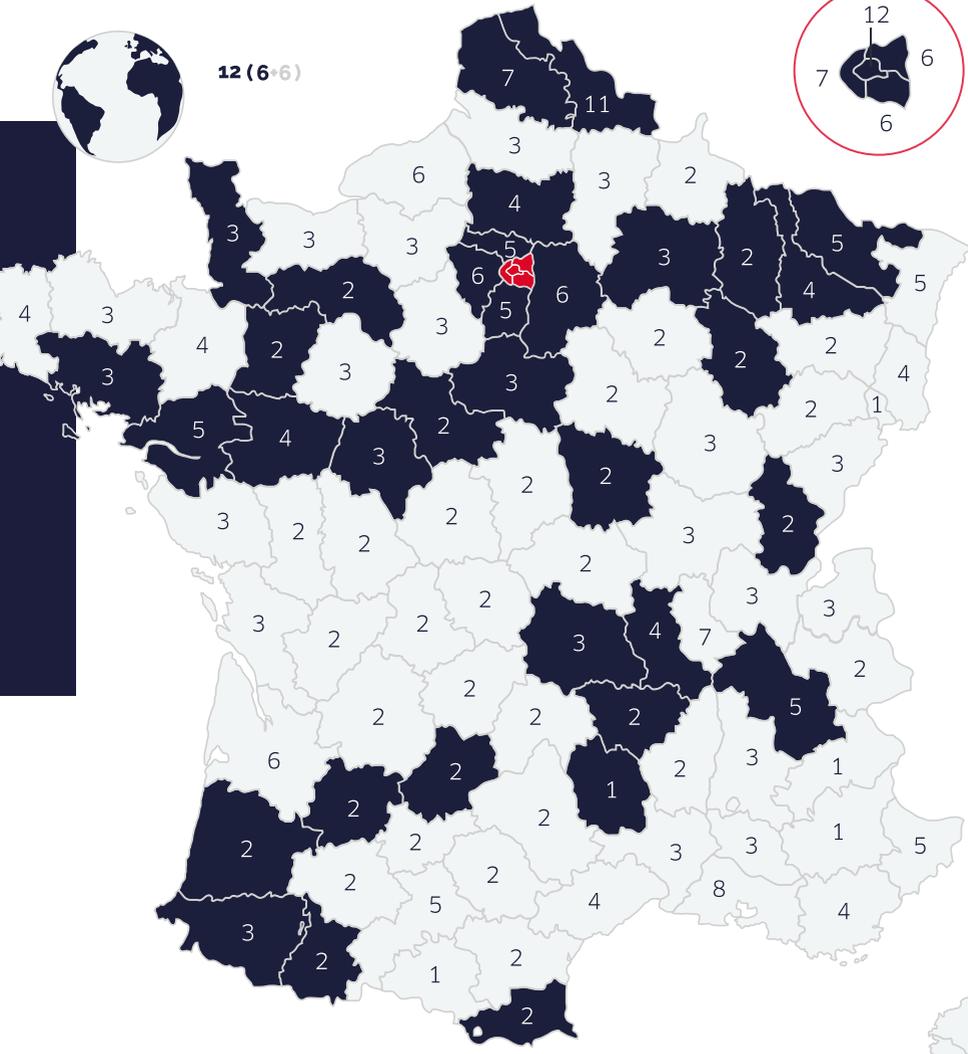
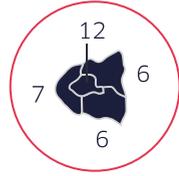
The minimum age to run in Senatorial elections is 24

6

Senators are elected for a term of office of 6 years. Half of the Senate is renewed every 3 years.



12 (6•6)



Authorities, overseas départements and New Caledonia



- Serie 1 - 170 seats
- Serie 2 - 178 seats

Number of Senators per constituency

French citizens living abroad

Who are the Senators ?

PROPORTION OF SENATORS BY:
SEX AND SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY
(AS OF OCTOBER 2, 2023)

Women
36 %

Men
64 %

59
Average age
of Senators

29
Age of the
youngest
woman Senator



Employees
25,3 %

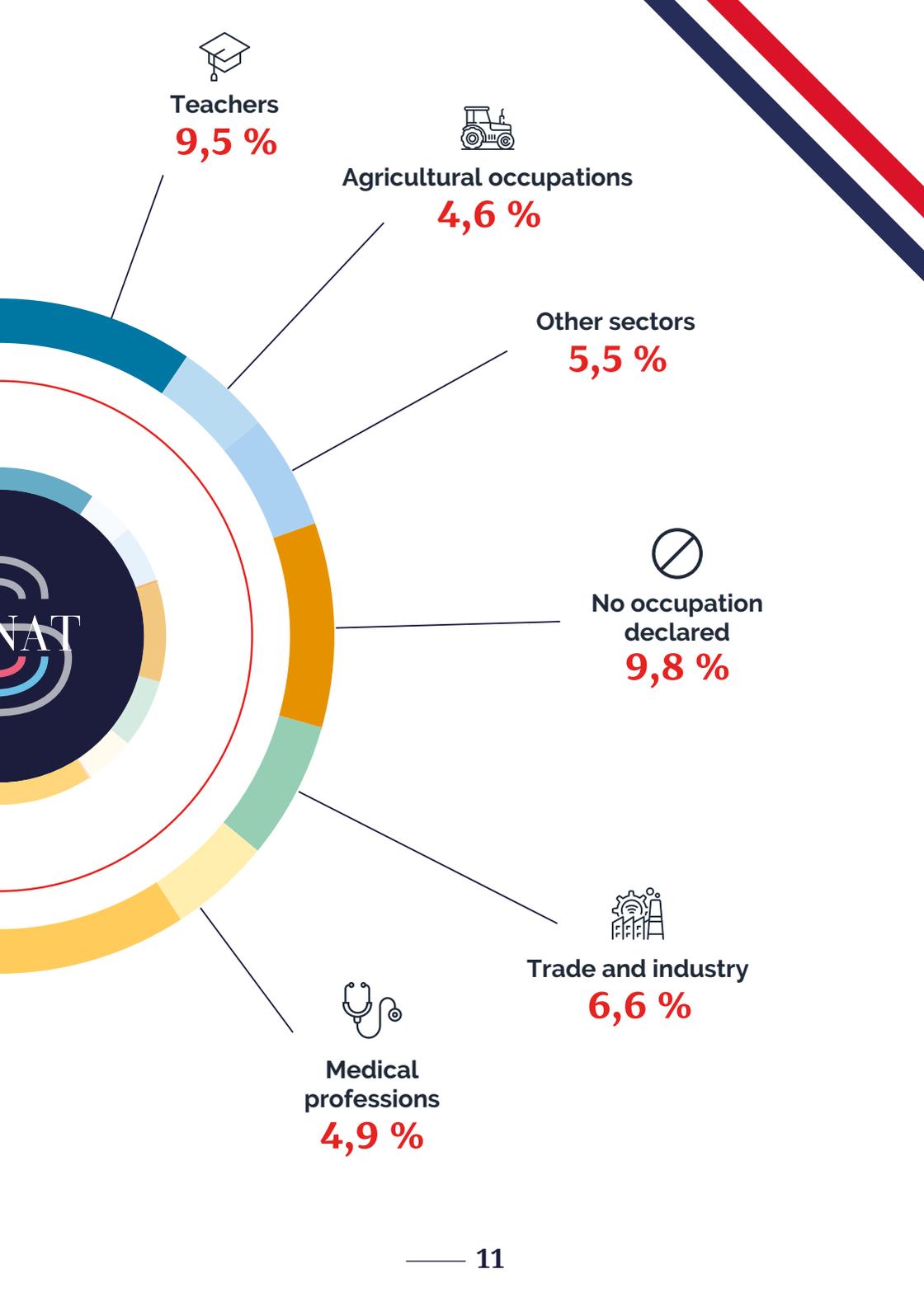


Civil servants
(excl. teachers)
13,5 %



Legal and liberal
professions
20,4 %





Teachers
9,5 %



Agricultural occupations
4,6 %

Other sectors
5,5 %



No occupation
declared
9,8 %



Trade and industry
6,6 %



Medical
professions
4,9 %

What are their means of action?

Means of action

Each Senator has an office in the premises of the Luxembourg Palace or nearby. Almost 1,200 civil servants and contracted employees assist the Senators to carry out their office.

Senators may hire up to 5 staff, whose combined gross monthly salaries cannot exceed €8,827.40 (as of July 1st, 2023).

Whether elected in mainland France, overseas or representing French citizens living abroad, Senators using public transportation have their travel expenses covered for trips between Paris and their department. They indeed have a constituency office in their electoral district.

5€

**Cost of the Senate per year
and per French citizen**

**In order to properly perform their duties,
Senators are provided with different means
of action.**



Are the Senate's accounts audited?
Is the Senate useless?
Visit our website Senate Fact Check "Infox Senat" ! :
<https://infox.senat.fr>



Financial holdback

Since October 1st, 2015, a financial deduction has been applied towards Senators who fall below the attendance time thresholds introduced by the Standing Orders of the Senate (article 23 bis).

Allowances

As of 1st January 2023, a Senator receives a gross monthly Parliamentary allowance of €5,907.34 and a residential allowance of €177.22*. He also receives a service allowance of €1,521.14.

The total amount of parliamentary allowances and other elective offices allowances cannot exceed once a half the amount of the basic parliamentary allowance.

Since January 1st, 2018**, the payment of senators' expenses has been based on a dual system that distinguishes between direct expenses (transport costs, postage, Paris cabs, telephony) and expenses covered by advances paid to senators (€5,900 per month for the general advance). All expenses must be justified and reconciled with the amount of the advances paid. The balance is repaid to the Senate. This reconciliation and repayment takes place at the end of each year.

* Under the amended finance law for 1992, the basic parliamentary allowance and the residential allowance are subject to personal income tax.

** Under the Law n°2017-1339 of September 15th, 2017, Senators must justify their mandate fees.

The President of the Senate plays a fundamental role in the life of this institution

He chairs two key bodies: **the Bureau of the Senate (the Board*)** and **the Chairperson's Conference**. He has important constitutional prerogatives. He is entitled to appoint members of the Constitutional Council and may refer to it if provisions of enacted laws or treaties appear to be contrary to the Constitution.

He can temporarily exercise the functions of President of the Republic in the event of vacancy or incapacity of office. Thus, the Presidency of the Senate is considered as the second highest office of the Republic.

* See glossary page 28





Gérard Larcher, Senator for Yvelines, was re-elected President of the French Senate in October 2023.

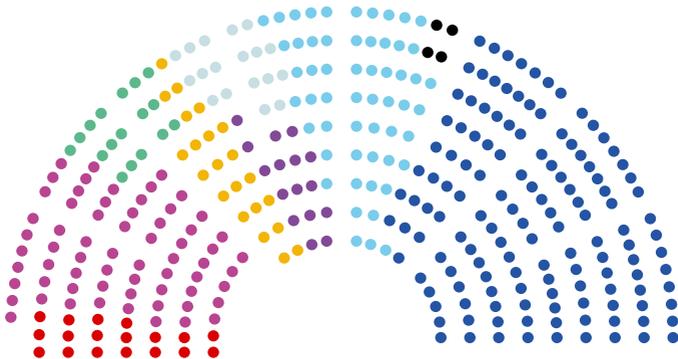
In plenary session, in the chamber, Senators debate, vote and control the Government

Senators decide on the guidelines of the bill and then examine it in detail, article by article. They modify it by tabling amendments.*

Ministers must answer the questions asked by Senators during specific sessions.

Breakdown of political groups in the chamber

(by number of seats - October 2023)



- The Republicans (133 seats)
- Socialist, Ecologist & Republican Group (64 seats)
- Centrist Union Group (56 seats)
- Gathering of Democrats, Progressives and Independents (22 seats)
- Communist, Republican, Citizen and Ecologist Group - Kanaky (18 seats)
- The Independents - Republic and Territories Group (18 seats)
- Ecologist - Solidarity & Territories (17 seats)
- Democratic, Social and European Rally Group (16 seats)
- Senators not appearing on the list of any group (4 seats)



Averages over
Parliamentary year
2022 - 2023

44

bills passed (not including
international conventions)

93 %

of bills passed upon agreement
through both chambers

22 189

amendments tabled

3 648

amendments adopted
in committee and in session

A plenary sitting in the Chamber

The President of the session

The Speaker of the Senate, or one of the 8 Deputy Speakers, leads the debates.



The Government

Is represented by the Minister in charge for the matter.



A man in a suit stands at a podium on a raised platform (the rostrum) in a grand, ornate hall. He is speaking into a microphone. The background features a large clock and classical sculptures.

The orator

talks from the rostrum. He may also use the microphones in the rows.

A large group of people, mostly men in suits, are seated in a semi-circular arrangement in a grand, ornate hall. They are looking towards the front of the room. The room has high ceilings, marble walls, and a large clock.

The Senators

are placed in the Chamber by political group.

A large screen displays a legislative agenda. The text on the screen includes the date '15 h 25' and 'mardi 18 octobre 2022'. The main heading is 'Projet de loi Orientation et programmation du ministère de l'Intérieur'. Below this, it says 'Explications de vote puis scrutin public solennel' and 'Président de séance - M. Gérard LARCHER, Président'. There are two sections: 'Explications de vote' with two items: 'R. M. Guy BENAÏROCHE (GEST)' with a '7' and 'R. M. Alain RICHARD (MDV)' with a '7'. The second section is 'Scrutin public solennel' with one item: 'M. Gérard DARMANIN, ministre de l'intérieur et des outre-mer' with a '7'.

15 h 25	mardi 18 octobre 2022
Projet de loi	
Orientation et programmation du ministère de l'Intérieur	
Explications de vote puis scrutin public solennel	
Président de séance - M. Gérard LARCHER, Président	
Explications de vote	
R. M. Guy BENAÏROCHE (GEST)	7
R. M. Alain RICHARD (MDV)	7
Scrutin public solennel	
M. Gérard DARMANIN, ministre de l'intérieur et des outre-mer	7

A man in a suit stands at a podium on a raised platform (the rostrum) in a grand, ornate hall. He is speaking into a microphone. The background features a large clock and classical sculptures.

The Committee

A Rapporteur, appointed among its members, is tasked with defending the Committee's position to his or her colleagues.

Each Senator is member of one of the 7 Standing Committees.

Before the plenary sitting, bills are first considered by the relevant Committee on the subject.

Members of the Committee appoint a Rapporteur for the bill, who analyzes the draft and proposes amendments: for example, delete, add or modify an article.

The Committees regularly hold hearings of Ministers, public officials, ambassadors, foreign ministers, European Commissioners and representatives of civil society or of the private sector.

In addition, the European Affairs Committee is in charge of informing the members about EU issues and checking the activities of the European Union.

THE 8 COMMITTEES

(including 7 standing Committees)



Economic Affairs



Foreign Affairs, Defense and
Armed Force



Social Affairs



Constitutional Laws,
Legislation, Universal
Suffrage, Standing Orders
and General Administration



Culture, Education and
Communication



Country Planning and
Sustainable Development

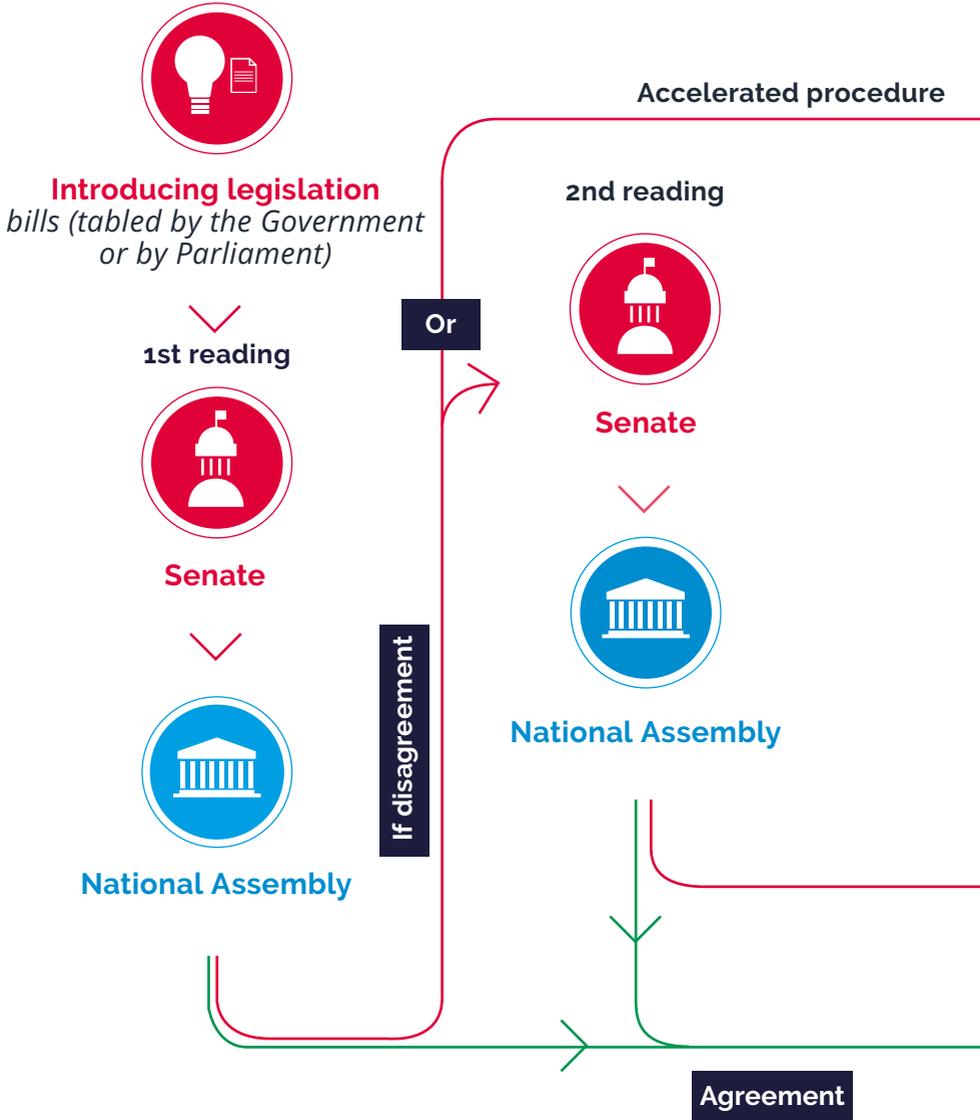


Finance

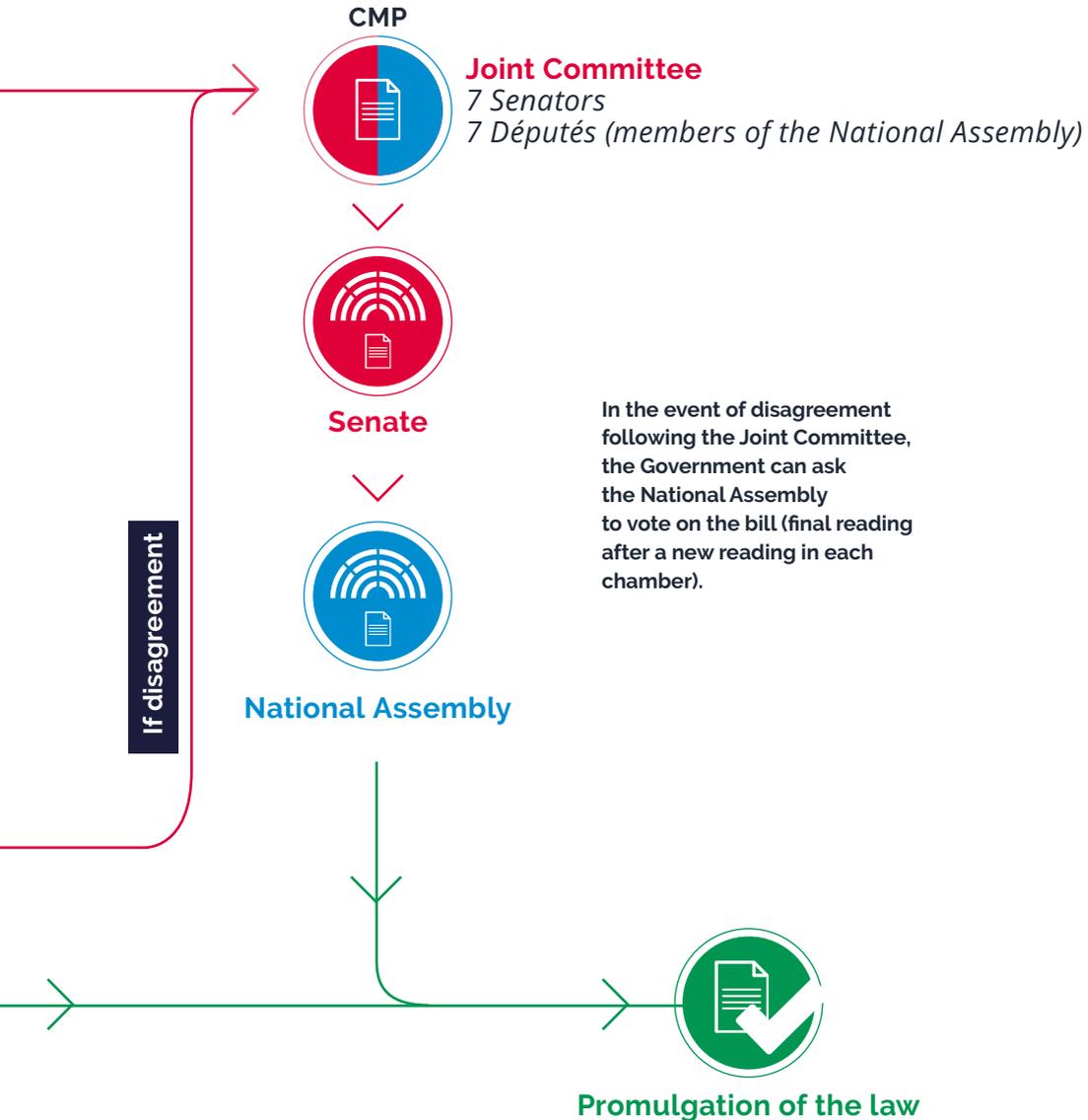


European Affairs

Brief overview of the legislative process



A bill is considered several times by Members of Parliament before becoming law: find out about the legislative process.





The Senate examines the work of the Government through debates in plenary sessions and, permanently, through the work of Committees and delegations.

The principal methods are questioning ministers, Committees of investigation, fact-finding missions, hearings and debates.

Averages over
Parliamentary year
2022 - 2023

141
information or inquiry
reports

187
hours dedicated
to oversight during
sessions

Supervisory tools

Government question time

The Senate's agenda includes, once a week (on Wednesday), questions to the Government related to current events. Each Senator speaking is allotted a speaking time set by the Presidents' Conference, which includes any potential reply to the Government.

Oral questions

Regular oral question times take place in plenary sitting on Tuesday mornings, usually once a month.

Written questions

A Senator may address such questions to ministers whose answers must be made within two months.

Committees of inquiry and joint fact-finding missions

Specific subjects are scrutinized and considered in depth, providing reforms proposals.

Budgetary control

Members of the Finance Committee and the Social Affairs Committee can travel in order to carry out document-based, on-the-spot checks.

This prerogative may be granted to other Senators by decision of the Senate.

Delegations and duty

6 delegations oversees the activity of a specific area : regional authorities ; women's rights ; companies ; overseas ; prospective ; intelligence. The bicameral Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Options (OPECST), provides expertise and information.

4 957

written questions tabled

34

Government Question Time sessions

The Senate through History



The Costume of a peer of France

1795 / 1799

The Council of Ancients of the Constitution of 1795

1799/1814

The Senate of the Consulate and the Empire

1814/1830

The Chamber of Peers of the Restoration

1830/1848

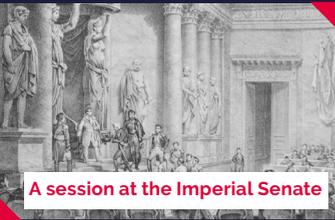
The Chamber of Peers of the July Monarchy

1852/1870

The Senate of the Second Empire

1795

The beginnings of bicameralism in France: the Council of Ancients sits at the Tuileries



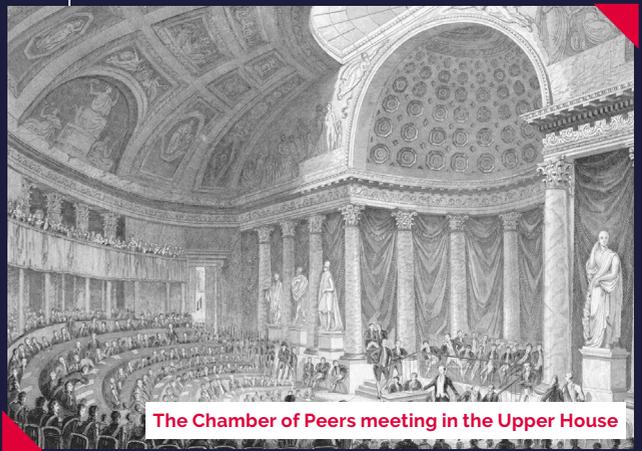
A session at the Imperial Senate

1836/1841

Construction of the current Chamber

1848

The Second Republic is unicameral



The Chamber of Peers meeting in the Upper House



1879 - The Senate returns to Paris

2003

Senators' term of office is reduced to six years

1875

The Senate in Versailles

1944/1945

The Provisional Consultative Assembly

1870
The
Second Empire

1875/1940

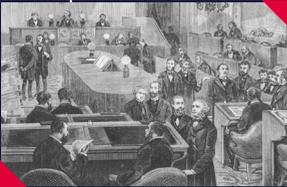
The Senate of the Third Republic

1946/1958

The Council of the Republic

Since 1958

The Senate of the Republic



Paris City Council sits at the Luxembourg Palace

1940

The Senate is adjourned to Vichy

1959

The first elections of the Senate of the Fifth Republic

1946

The failure of the referendum on the draft Constitution of 19 April 1946 proposing a unicameral regime

1969

The failure of a referendum intending to reform the Senate



1859 - A fire in the Chamber

1948

The councillors of the Republic take back the title of «Senators»

Senate-related terminology

Amendment

Modification of a bill.

Bicameralism

Organization of Parliament in two separate chambers.

Bureau of the Senate (Board)

It heads the Senate and includes the Speaker, the 8 Deputy Speakers who conduct the debates, the 3 Questeurs who manage the finances and the 14 Secretaries who ensure fairness in voting.

Chairpersons' Conference

Composed of the Speaker, the Deputy Speakers, the chairpersons of the political groups, the Presidents of the committees and the 2 General Rapporteurs.

This conference, attended by the Minister of Relations with Parliament, sets the agenda of plenary sessions.

Ethics Committee

Advisory body placed under the aegis of the Bureau of the Senate (executive committee) and the President of the Senate, the Ethics Committee is qualified to provide advice on ethical issues regarding the conditions governing the

exercise of the parliamentary mandate of the Senators and the functioning of the Senate. The Ethics Committee may be sent the declarations of activities and interests as well as the interest arising from the acceptance of gifts, donations, services, advantages and other favours.

Formal Ballot

When voting on a bill, the Conference of Presidents may decide to organize a solemn public ballot in the Conference Room.

General Rapporteur

The General Rapporteurs of the Finance Committee and of the Social Affairs Committee have extensive powers to control the Government and public administrations.

Joint Committee (CMP)

Composed of 7 Senators and 7 *Députés* (Members of the National Assembly), its mission is to reach agreement of both assemblies on a bill.

Political groups

Senators are divided by political affinities into groups which must include at least 10 members. A Senator may be a member of a group, be related to it, or simply be attached to it administratively.

Parliamentary immunity

To protect their independence, Senators have parliamentary immunity allowing them to express themselves with complete freedom in the course of the performance of their official duties and shall not be subjected to arrest or any other privative or restrictive measures without the prior approval of the Bureau of the Senate.

Parliamentary shuttle

This is the process through which each government or parliamentary bill is examined successively by the National

Assembly and the Senate in order to reach an agreement on each article (article 45-1 of the Constitution).

Questeurs

The 3 Questeurs are the Senators in charge of the administration and finances of the Senate.



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videos.senat.fr

Attend sessions in the Chamber

Senate debates, which are usually held from Tuesday to Thursday, are open to the public.

Anyone wishing to attend must obtain an invitation from a Senator (www.senat.fr/elus.html). With this invitation ticket and an identity card, they must then go to the Senate reception desk at 15, rue de Vaugirard in Paris. Access to the session is subject to availability.

Visit the Luxembourg Palace

At the request of Senators, group tours of the Luxembourg Palace may be organised for groups of up to forty people. Tours are conducted free of charge by staff from the Reception and Security Department.

You can also visit us during the European Heritage Days.

Instagram 

[senat_fr](#)

TikTok 

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**PUBLIC
SÉNAT**

Parliamentary and political channel

www.publicsenat.fr



200 000
visitors in 2023

The Senate

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