

The House of Representatives

The President

General

The President represents the House of Representatives as an institution. He manages and coordinates the work of the House in consultation with the presidents of the political groups. He has wide competences for this purpose, which are set out in the Rules of Procedure. The President of the House of Representatives is chosen from among the politicians who have considerable experience in the political arena. He must be able to get groups working together even if they have divergent points of view.

Election of the President and the Bureau

The first session of the House of Representatives after the elections is chaired by the outgoing President or, for lack of him, the member with the greatest length of service in the House. The youngest two representatives assist him in this task.

After verification of the credentials (during which the House checks the regularity of the elections), the House of Representatives then elects a “Definitive Bureau”.

The Definitive Bureau consists of:

- a President
- three vice-presidents
- members of the Bureau

The presidents of the recognized political groups also form part of the Bureau. The political groups which are not providing the President, a vice-president or a member of the Bureau can appoint an associate member.

The President is elected by the plenary assembly. The vice-presidents as well as the members of the Bureau are appointed by the House of Representatives, based on a proposal by the political groups.

It is the tradition for the President of the House of Representatives to come from one of the parties forming the government coalition. On three occasions only in the history of the House has a member of the opposition been the President⁽¹⁾.

The Bureau is elected for the duration of a session (which starts on the second Tuesday of October and ends on the second Tuesday of October of the following year). In practice the composition of the Bureau remains the same for the entire duration of the parliamentary term (five years, except in the event of the House of Representatives being dissolved early).

Resignation of the President

It is extremely rare for a President to resign during a parliamentary term. It did however happen on some occasions in the nineteenth century⁽²⁾.

Competences of the President

- The role of the President is to maintain order during the plenary session and to have the Rules of Procedure observed. He ensures for example that the speakers observe the speaking time allowed to them.
- The President may call a deputy to order. If a deputy is subject to a second call to order, he may not speak for the rest of the session. The President may also propose that a deputy is expelled. The assembly decides on this expulsion by standing and sitting⁽³⁾.
- He assesses the admissibility of the texts, motions and other proposals.
- The President asks questions and submits them to the vote. The President may only speak in a debate to present the state of affairs of an issue. If he wants to participate in the debate, he must leave the presidential seat and take his own seat in the House. The President does however participate in the vote.
- He announces the results of the votes and the decisions of the House.

2 After very serious incidents in the House, Presidents Guillery (in 1881) and de Lant-sheere (in 1895) resigned.

3 The first deputy to be expelled was a deputy from Liège, excluded on 21 January 1898. On 26 November 1959, the head of the socialists, Van Eynde, was also expelled.

1 E. Brunet in 1921; F. Van Cauwelaert in 1946; A. Van Acker in 1966.

- He is the spokesman of the House of Representatives.
- The President may request the advice of the Council of State, legislation section, on all Bills and Private Member's Bills, as well as on the amendments.
- The President manages a certain number of committees, such as the committee on bookkeeping.

When the President is absent, he is replaced by one of the vice-presidents.

The current President of the House is Peter De Roover. He belongs to the N-VA political group.

Presidents of the House since 1831

E.C. de Gerlache	10.09.1831	18.07.1832	E. Tibbaut	16.08.1928	05.09.1930
J. Raikem	10.11.1832	24.05.1839	J. Poncelet	11.11.1930	13.04.1936
J. Fallon	18.11.1839	10.09.1842	C. Huysmans	23.06.1936	06.03.1939
J. Raikem	09.10.1842	06.04.1843	F. Van Cauwelaert	21.04.1939	12.03.1954
C. Liedts	17.11.1843	20.05.1848	C. Huysmans	27.04.1954	11.11.1958
P.T. Verhaegen	28.06.1848	03.04.1852	P. Kronacker	11.11.1958	17.04.1961
N.J.A. Delfosse	26.10.1852	24.04.1855	A. Van Acker	18.04.1961	30.04.1974
J. De Lehay	25.04.1855	13.06.1857	A. Dequae	30.04.1974	07.06.1977
P.T. Verhaegen	17.12.1857	30.05.1859	E. Leburton	07.06.1977	03.04.1979
A.E.P. Orts	19.07.1859	18.07.1860	Ch.F. Nothomb	03.04.1979	18.05.1980
D. Vervoort	23.11.1860	27.05.1863	J. Defraigne	20.05.1980	24.10.1980
E. Vanden Peereboom	15.12.1863	23.08.1867	J. Michel	24.10.1980	18.12.1981
H. Dolez	23.10.1867	20.05.1870	J. Defraigne	18.12.1981	19.01.1988
Vicomte Ch. Vilain XIII	11.08.1870	26.07.1871	E. Vankeirsbilck	19.01.1988	10.05.1988
X. Thibaut	15.11.1871	29.05.1878	Ch.F. Nothomb	10.05.1988	21.05.1995
Ch. Rogier	01.08.1878	26.08.1878	J. Dupré	08.06.1995	28.06.1995
J. Guillery	13.11.1878	10.03.1881	R. Langendries	28.06.1995	01.07.1999
J. Descamps	22.03.1881	17.05.1884	H. De Croo	01.07.1999	12.07.2007
X. Thibaut	23.07.1884	02.09.1884	H. Van Rompuy	12.07.2007	30.12.2008
T. de Lantsheere	12.11.1884	25.01.1895	P. Dewael	31.12.2008	20.07.2010
A. Beernaert	30.01.1895	07.05.1900	A. Flahaut	20.07.2010	30.06.2014
L. de Sadeleer	18.07.1900	08.11.1901	P. Dewael	30.06.2014	14.10.2014
F. Schollaert	12.11.1901	09.01.1908	S. Bracke	14.10.2014	26.05.2019
G. Cooreman	16.01.1908	08.08.1912	P. Dewael	20.06.2019	13.10.2020
F. Schollaert	12.11.1912	29.06.1917	E. Tillieux	13.10.2020	27.05.2024
P. Poulet	28.11.1918	13.10.1919	P. De Roover	10.07.2024	
E. Brunet	10.12.1919	06.08.1928			