

The House of Representatives

Workings

Parliamentary term

The period for which the deputies are elected is called the “Parliamentary term” (in principle five years, unless the House is dissolved early).

» Start

In general, the newly elected House gathers the third or fourth week after the elections.

The first session of deputies after the elections is chaired by the outgoing President of the House or, for lack of him, the member with the greatest length of service in the House, who is assisted by the two youngest deputies. Their first task at the start of the new parliamentary term is to verify the credentials which means checking the eligibility of these members and verifying the validity of their election. All the members can take part in this verification. Following this, the deputies take the constitutional oath in a plenary session open to the public.

One of the first tasks of the deputies consists of appointing the President and the members of the Bureau, forming the committees, the presidency, etc. All the political groups may claim a certain number of appointments on the basis of their numerical size in the plenary assembly.

» End

Often, the parliamentary term comes to an end before the normal end of the term after a declaration of revision of the Constitution has been adopted. In that case, elections are organized within forty days and the new chambers (House and Senate) meet within three months (art.46 of the Constitution). (See illustration)

Session

» Ordinary session

An ordinary session is the period of one year during which the House of Representatives meets by right. It goes from the second Tuesday of October until the day before the second Tuesday of October in the following year (art. 44 Constitution). Each parliamentary term in principle consists of five ordinary sessions.

» Extraordinary session

It is an extraordinary session when the House of Representatives is dissolved early (before the normal end of the parliamentary term) and elections are held. The newly elected House is then convoked by the King (= government) in extraordinary session, which lasts until the day before the beginning of the next ordinary session.

» Start of the session: opening of the parliamentary year

The Constitution stipulates that Parliament meets by right on the second Tuesday of October (art. 44 Constitution). “By right” means that the ordinary session is opened automatically without being convened by the King (= the federal government).

» Duration of the session

The Constitution stipulates that Parliament must meet each year for at least 40 days (art. 44 Constitution).

» End of session

The parliamentary session is closed by the King (= the federal government) by Royal Decree. In reality it is done on the day before the next session is opened, so that the Parliament remains in session throughout the year.

Parliamentary week

The House draws up its own agenda according to political events. The weekly schedule below gives an idea of the organisation of a parliamentary week. In practice the House agenda often departs from this schedule.

» Monday

In principle, the management bodies of the political parties (the party bureaus) meet on Monday. In general the parliamentarians are represented within the bureau (the practical composition of which differs from one party to the next). During these meetings the parties set out their positions concerning the government decisions or political problems. The position of a party constitutes an important signal, both for the government, the parliamentary groups, the members of the party and for the citizen.

The committees of enquiry and other special committees also meet regularly on Monday.

» Tuesday

The parliamentary standing committees meet on Tuesday. They discuss Bills and Private Member's Bills and interpellate or question ministers.

If the agenda so requires, the House of Representatives meets in plenary session on this day, but it is fairly rare.

» Wednesday

On Wednesday the Conference of presidents meets. This consists of the President and vice-presidents of the House of Representatives, former presidents who are still deputies, the president and a member of each political group, and a government representative. The Conference sets the agenda for the plenary session. The plenary assembly then approves it. Like on Tuesday, committees also meet on Wednesday. If the agenda so requires, the House of Representatives meets in plenary session on Wednesday.

» Thursday

The political groups meet on Thursday morning. They establish their positions on political problems and the parliamentary work.

The afternoon is reserved for the plenary session.

Question time starts at 2.15 pm. The deputies may then put questions to ministers on topical subjects.

After that, Bills and Private Member's Bills are discussed. Subsequently, newly submitted texts are taken into consideration and finally follow the motivations of the votes by the political groups and the votes themselves on the Bills, Private Member's Bills, resolutions and motions.

» Friday

On Friday there are generally no parliamentary activities in order to allow deputies to devote their time to local matters. It can be seen, however, that the committees of enquiry and the special committees meet on Fridays.

SERVICE PUBLIC FEDERAL CHANCELLERIE DU PREMIER MINISTRE ET SERVICE PUBLIC FEDERAL INTERIEUR

[C – 2024/005134]

18 MAI 2024. — Arrêté royal portant convocation des collèges électoraux pour l'élection de la Chambre des représentants, ainsi que convocation des nouvelles Chambres

PHILIPPE, Roi des Belges,
A tous, présents et à venir, Salut.

Vu l'article 195, alinéas 1^{er}, 2 et 3, et l'article 46, alinéa 5, de la Constitution;

Vu l'article 105, alinéa 3, du Code électoral, inséré par la loi du 19 avril 2018, l'article 106, alinéa 1^{er}, du même Code, modifié en dernier lieu par la loi du 6 janvier 2014, et l'article 142, alinéa 1^{er}, du même Code, modifié en dernier lieu par la loi du 6 janvier 2014;

Vu la loi du 7 février 2014 organisant le vote électronique avec preuve papier, notamment l'article 15, alinéa 1^{er}, 3^e;

Vu l'arrêté royal du 9 juillet 2023 fixant la date de l'élection du Parlement européen ;

Vu l'arrêté royal du 18 février 2024 réglant certaines opérations en vue des élections simultanées pour le Parlement européen, la Chambre des représentants et les Parlements de Région et de Communauté du 9 juin 2024 ;

Vu la déclaration du pouvoir législatif fédéral du 17 mai 2024 portant qu'il y a lieu à révision des dispositions constitutionnelles qu'il y désigne;

Vu l'avis de l'Inspection des Finances, donné le 26 avril 2024;

Vu l'accord de Notre Secrétaire d'Etat du Budget, donné le 8 mai 2024 ;

Vu l'article 8, § 1^{er}, 3^e et 4^e de la loi du 15 décembre 2013 portant des dispositions diverses en matière de simplification administrative ;

Sur la proposition de Notre Premier Ministre et de Notre Ministre de l'Intérieur, des Réformes institutionnelles et du Renouveau démocratique, et de l'avis de Nos Ministres qui en ont délibéré en Conseil,

Nous avons arrêté et arrêtons :

Article 1^{er}. Les collèges électoraux de toutes les circonscriptions électorales du Royaume sont convoqués le dimanche 9 juin 2024 entre 8 et 14 heures dans les cantons électoraux et communes où le vote s'exprime au moyen de bulletins en papier, et entre 8 et 16 heures dans les cantons électoraux et communes où le vote est électronique, à l'effet d'élire le nombre requis de membres de la Chambre des représentants.

Art. 2. La nouvelle Chambre des Représentants est convoquée le jeudi 4 juillet 2024.

Le nouveau Sénat est convoqué le jeudi 18 juillet 2024.

Art. 3. Le présent arrêté entre en vigueur le jour de sa publication au *Moniteur belge*.

Art. 4. Notre Premier Ministre et Notre Ministre de l'Intérieur, des Réformes institutionnelles et du Renouveau démocratique sont chargés de l'exécution du présent arrêté.

Donné à Bruxelles, le 18 mai 2024.

PHILIPPE

Par le Roi :

Le Premier Ministre,
A. DE CROO

La Ministre de l'Intérieur, des Réformes institutionnelles
et du Renouveau démocratique,
A. VERLINDEN