

A Parliament for everyone

A practical guide to the Parliament of Catalonia





A Parliament for everyone

- 3 What is the Parliament of Catalonia?
- 4 The deputies of the Parliament
- 5 The electoral system
- 6 The bodies of the Parliament
- 7 The functions of the Parliament
- 8 The legislative function
- 9 The function of creation, control and promotion of political and government action
- 10 The budgetary function and the elective function
- 11 The working and decision-making system
- 12 The open Parliament
- 13 The history of the Parliament
- 14 The history of the Palace
- 15 Other institutions of the Generalitat

What is the Parliament?

1. The Parliament represents all the people of Catalonia.

“Parliament represents the people of Catalonia”

(Article 55.1 of the Statute of Autonomy)

The Parliament represents all citizens regardless of their vote.



2. Why do we need representatives?

7,500,000
Catalans



speaking for

1
minute

=

once every

14
years

If each of the seven million citizens of Catalonia had to speak to the Parliament assuming it was always open, each one would only be given one minute every 14 years.

3. The Parliament today.

Who can vote?

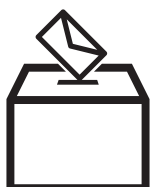
Citizens aged

18
or over



with the political status of Catalans*

Spanish citizens registered in a town in Catalonia, and Catalans residing temporarily or permanently abroad.



Voting is universal, free, equal, direct, secret and proportional.*



Candidates: closed electoral lists of a political party or an electoral coalition.

Length of legislative term:
4 years at most.*

YEAR	YEAR
1	3
YEAR	YEAR
2	4

Parliament may be dissolved before 4 years have elapsed if the President of the Generalitat so decides or if the investiture cannot be carried out within the established period.

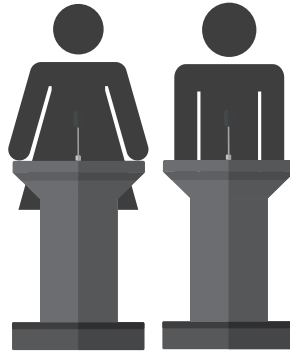
* According to the Statute of Autonomy

The deputies of the Parliament

Those who are elected in elections are the representatives of all citizens, and from the moment they are elected they become members of the Parliament or deputies. The deputies have the following rights and duties:

Duties

- To comply with the rules on incompatibilities.
- To submit declarations on their assets and activities other than those of a member of the Parliament.
- To attend debates and votes of the Plenary Assembly and the committees of which they are member, and carry out their functions.
- To be members of at least one committee.
- To act in accordance with the principles of ethics established by the Code of Conduct for the members of the Parliament.

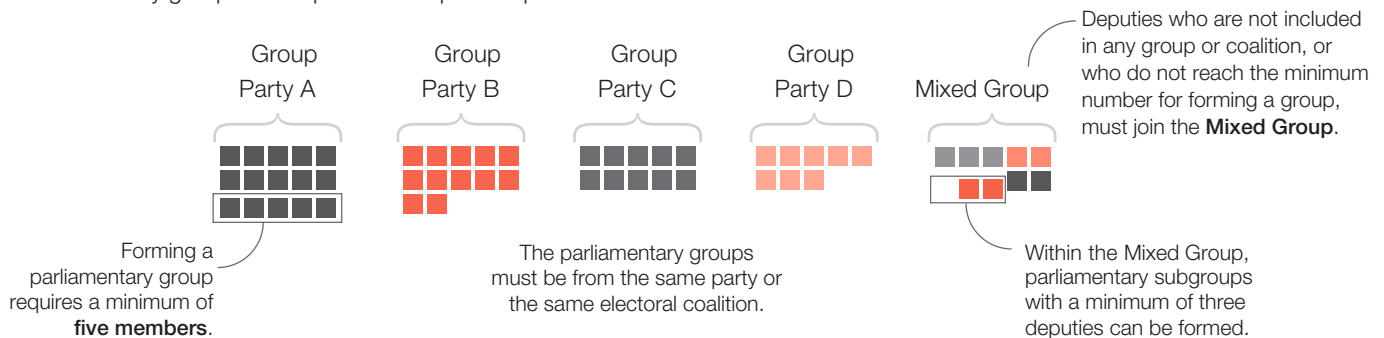


Rights

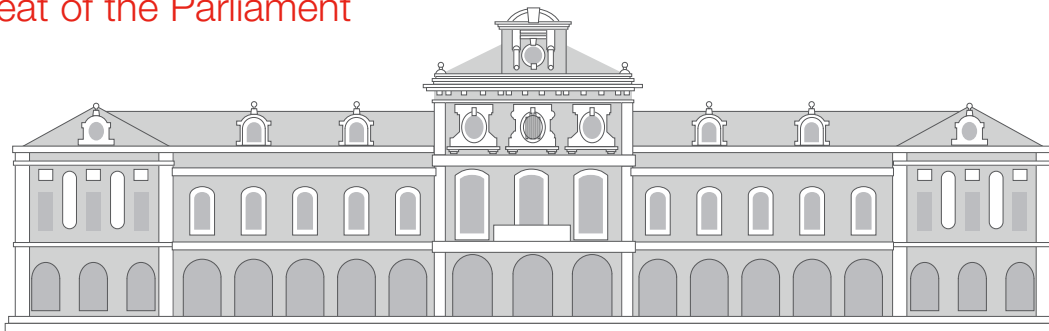
- To attend all parliamentary sessions.
- To participate in the debates and votes of the Plenary Assembly and the bodies of which they are members.
- To present amendments to any proposal on which the Parliament has to make a decision.
- To form part of the parliamentary committees.
- To access all the information available to the Government and the Administrations.

The parliamentary groups

Parliamentary groups correspond to the political parties and coalitions in the Parliament.

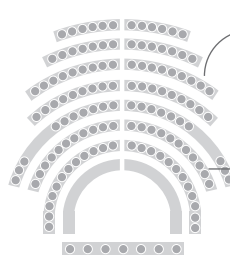


The seat of the Parliament



The seat of the Parliament is the **Palace of Parliament**, in the city of Barcelona. The Plenary Assembly and the committees may also meet in other parts of Catalonia.

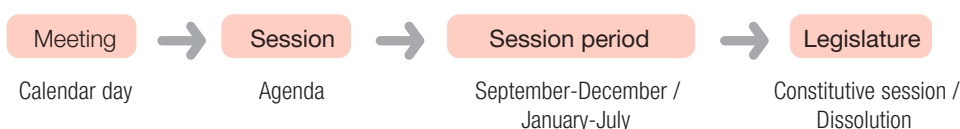
The **Assembly Hall** is the place where the Plenary Assembly of the Parliament is normally held.



It is called a hemicycle because it is semi-circular, with an aisle in the middle.

Each deputy has a **seat**.

The parliamentary work



The electoral system

Catalonia is the only autonomous region of the Spanish State that has no electoral law of his own.
The regulations applicable in elections to the Parliament of Catalonia are as follows:

Organic Law
5/1985, on the general
electoral system



Statute
of Autonomy of
Catalonia

The law regulates the following:

- The right of suffrage.
- The Electoral Administration.
- The electoral roll.
- The requirements for calling elections.
- The procedure for presenting candidatures (closed list).
- The electoral campaign and advertising.
- Electoral expenditure and subsidies.
- Electoral crimes and offences.

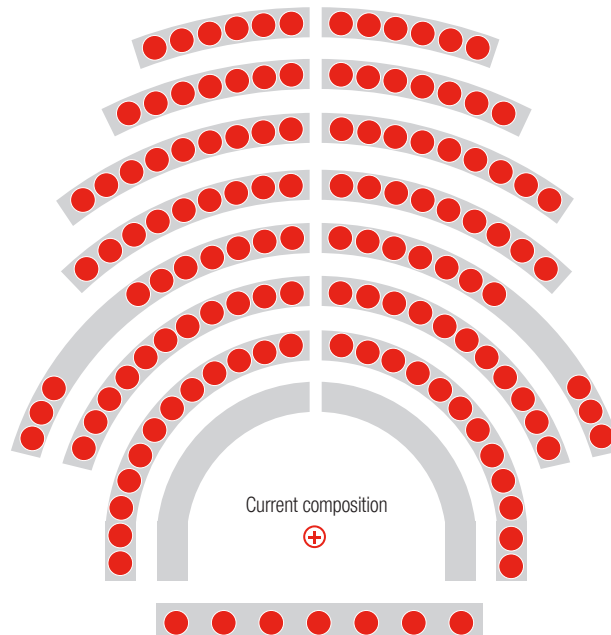
The fourth transitional provision of the Statute of Autonomy of 1979, which remains in force, **establishes the regulations for elections to the Parliament** in the absence of a law of Catalonia that regulates the procedure.

The Parliament is composed of

135
deputies

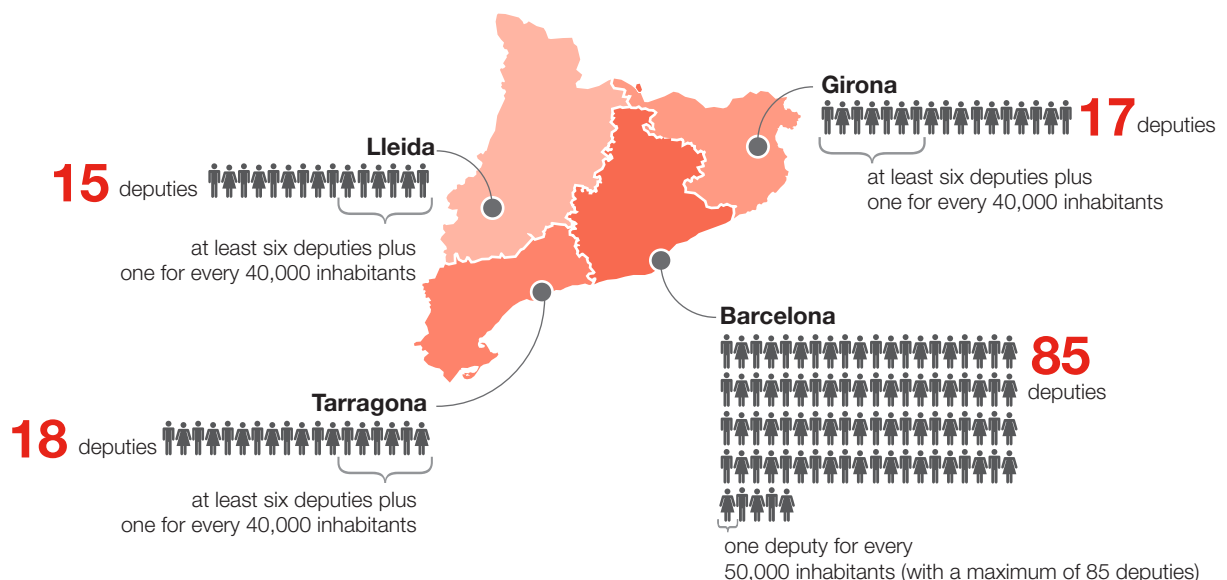


- Closed lists: citizens vote for a list of party or coalition rather than individual candidates.



- The deputies are elected by universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage by citizens aged 18 or over.
- The voting system is proportional.

The **135 deputies** are elected by four constituencies: **the four provinces.**



The bodies of the Parliament

For its functioning, the Parliament is divided into bodies, which are specific groups of deputies with specific attributions and functions.

Bodies of Parliament

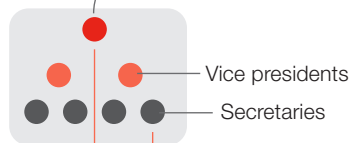
- Presidency and Board
- Board of Spokepersons
- Committees
- Plenary Assembly
- Standing Committee

Presidency and Board

The Presiding Board of the Parliament is composed by 7 members (1 president, 2 vice presidents and 4 secretaries), all elected by the Plenary Assembly.

The President of the Parliament represents the whole of Parliament (135 deputies). He or she establishes and maintains the order of the discussions and directs the debates.

The Presiding Board directs, orders and qualifies the work of the Parliament and its services.



RULES

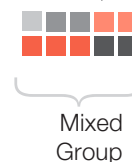
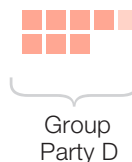
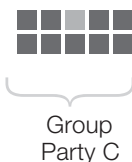
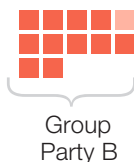
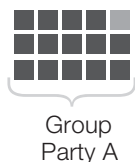
The Rules of Procedure of the Parliament are the regulations that establish its bodies and functioning in all its spheres. **The Presiding Board is responsible** for applying them and interpreting them.



Board of Spokepersons

Each parliamentary group chooses among its members a spokesperson to represent it.

The **Board of Spokepersons** is formed by the spokespersons of each parliamentary group, the President of the Parliament and one of the secretaries.



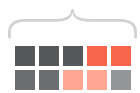
Parliamentary subgroups comprising at least three members of the same party or coalitions may be formed. If all members of the Mixed Group are assigned to parliamentary subgroups, a representative from each subgroup may attend the meetings of the Board of Spokepersons.

The plenary session is only part of all the parliamentary work. Before the Plenary Assembly, the deputies have already worked in the committees on the proposals that will be debated and approved or rejected in the Plenary Assembly.

Committees

The committees are essential for the parliamentary work.

Committee

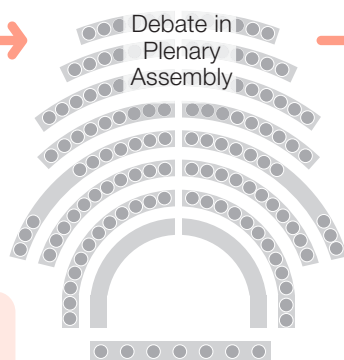


These are small groups of deputies from all parliamentary groups, in the same proposition as in the Plenary Assembly, which specialize by subjects.

Proposal legislative or specific

Plenary Assembly

This is the meeting of all the deputies in the Assembly hall when they are summoned by the President of Parliament to discuss and debate on the issues that are within the powers of the Parliament of Catalonia according to the Statute.

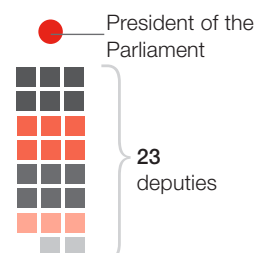


Composed of 135 deputies.

Approval or rejection by the Assembly

Standing Committee

When the Plenary Assembly does not meet because it has been dissolved, or in the periods between sessions, its duties are fulfilled by the Standing Committee.



This body is chaired by the President of the Parliament and is composed of 23 members appointed by the parliamentary groups.

It is accountable to the Plenary Assembly for the decisions it takes.

There are two types of committees:

Legislative

These draw up laws, according to their specialization. They work on bills that will become laws if approved by the Plenary Assembly.

Specific

They have a specific function or interact with certain institutions or public bodies. They include those regulated by the Rules of Procedure, those created by the law, and those of investigation.

The functions of the Parliament

The Parliament of Catalonia has the following functions: the legislative function; the budgetary function; the function of creation, control and promotion of political and government action; and the elective function.

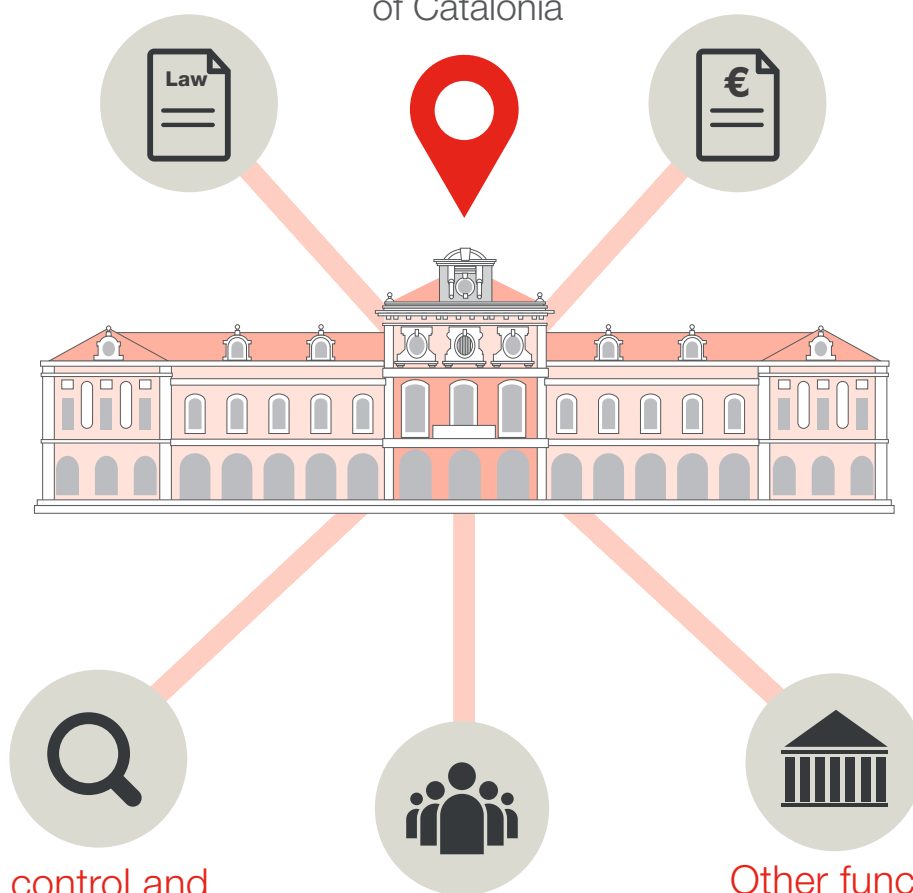
Legislative function

The Parliament has the capacity to draft and pass laws on matters that the Statute of Autonomy, in accordance with the Constitution, stipulates as exclusive to the Generalitat, and also on matters shared with the Spanish State.

Budgetary function

Each year the Parliament approves the budget: it debates and agrees on how the public money raised through taxes is to be distributed in order to deal with public needs and policies. The budget debate is one of the most important each year because it involves specifying and implementing the government programme for the following year.

Parliament of Catalonia



Creation, control and promotion of political and government action

The Parliament creates and maintains the Government; it elects from among the deputies the person who is to occupy the Presidency of the Generalitat, which also involves the approval of the government programme that he or she presents. This function of creation becomes a function of control, because the President and the Government are politically accountable to Parliament. In both cases the Parliament fosters and promotes political and government action guiding and stimulating the Government and its ministries and charging them to carry out actions.

Elective function

The Parliament elects the President of the Generalitat. It also elects the senators who represent the Generalitat in the *Cortes Generales* and all or part of the members of the institutions of the Generalitat (the Council for the Statutory Guarantees, the Audit Office, the *Síndic de Greuges* (Ombudsperson) and the Audiovisual Council of Catalonia) and other agencies, particularly when they have to reflect social and political pluralism (the Board of Directors of the Catalan Broadcasting Corporation, the board of trustees of universities etc.).

Other functions

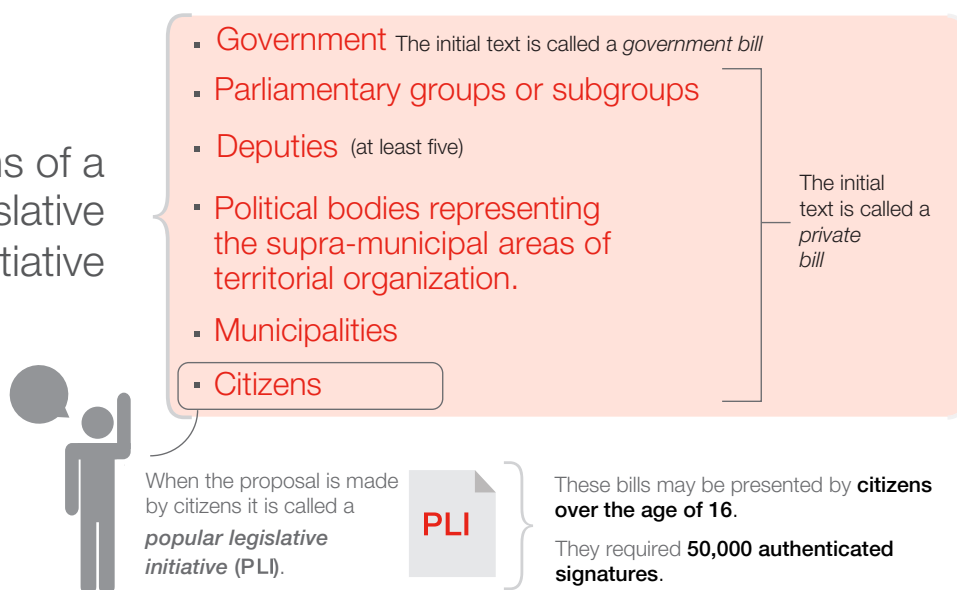
The Parliament also participates in the activity of the central bodies of the Spanish State. The Parliament appoints the senators who represent the Generalitat in the Spanish State Senate, which the Spanish Constitution establishes as a chamber representing the nationalities and the regions of the Spanish State. The Parliament has the right to present legislative initiatives to the Congress of Deputies: it can present bills that become laws.

The legislative function

One of the main powers of the Parliament is to draft and approve laws.

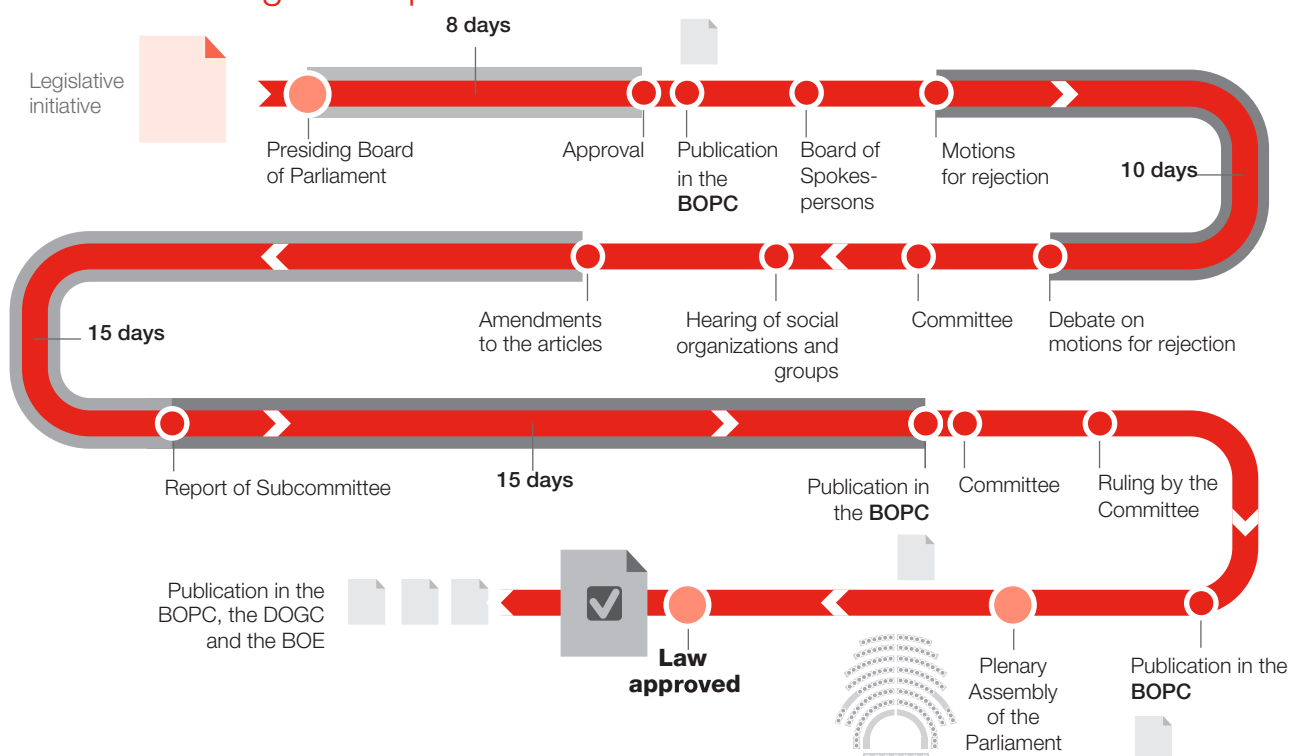
The legislative procedure is the whole trajectory followed by the text, from when it is only a proposal until it becomes law. Legislative proposal may be *government bills* (if initiated by the Government) or *private bills* (if initiated by the parliament, municipalities, counties or citizens).

Origins of a legislative initiative



The Rules of Procedure establish two types of legislative procedure: the **common or ordinary** and the **special** type.

The common legislative procedure



Special legislative procedure

- **Laws of basic implementation of the Statute**
- **Budget Laws**
- **Reform of the Statute**
- Approval of the laws in committee: committees acting as the **seat of legislation**
- **Single reading:** adoption of the law in a single vote without presentation of amendments

BOE: *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (official gazette of the Spanish Government).

BOPC: *Butlletí Oficial del Parlament de Catalunya* (official gazette of the Parliament of Catalonia).

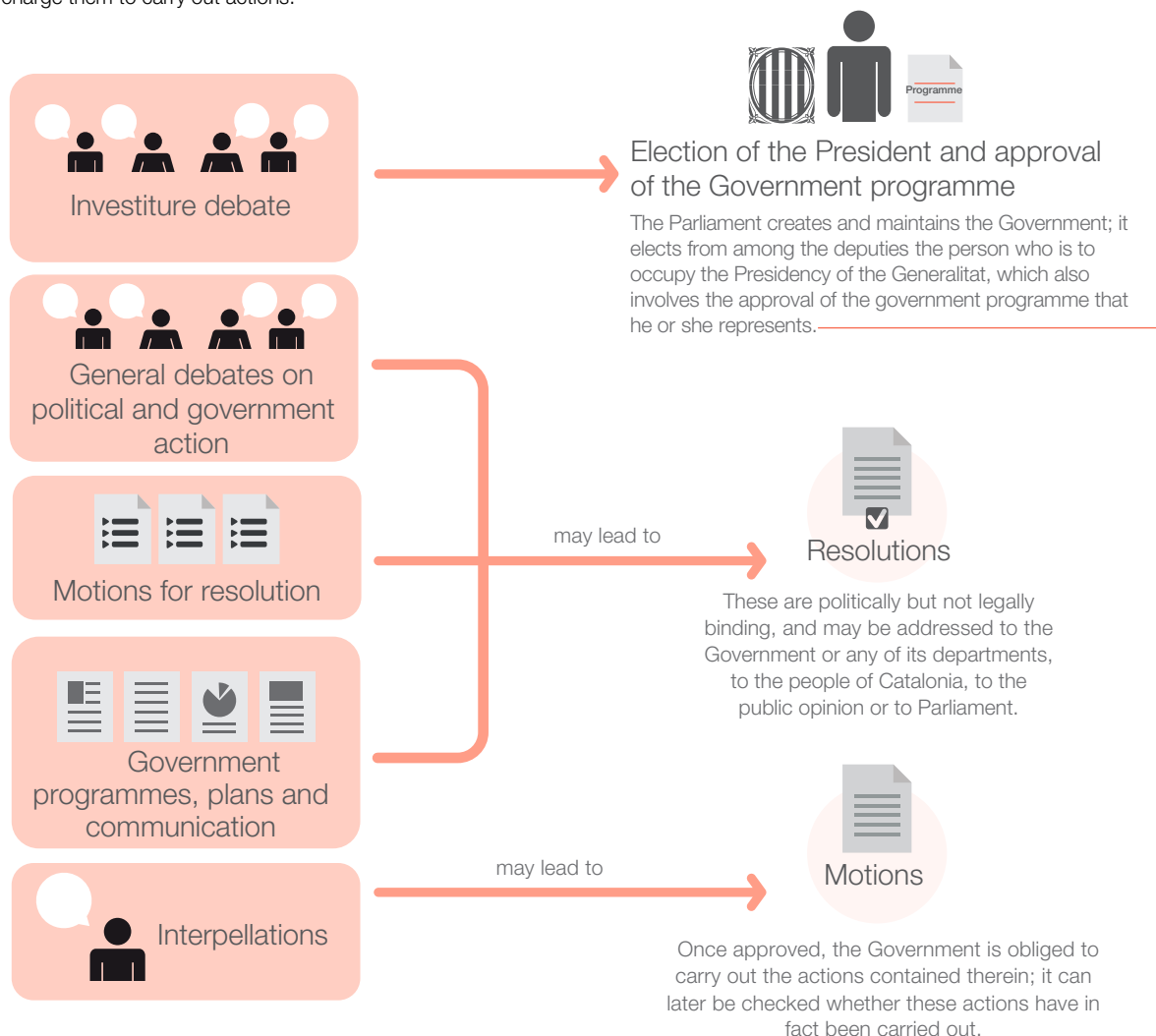
DOGC: *Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya* (official journal of the Generalitat of Catalonia).

(*) It has been agreed that the committee is to process the government or private bill acting as a full seat of legislation, the procedure ends here and the bill is neither debated nor voted on by the Plenary Assembly.

The function of creation, control and promotion of political and government action

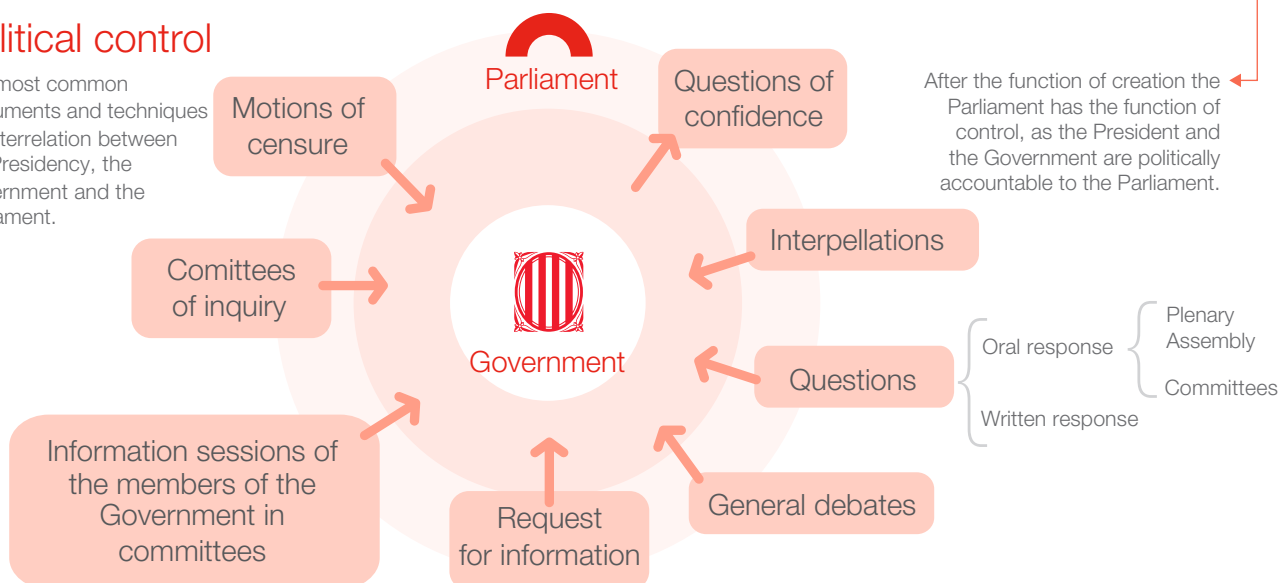
The Parliament of Catalonia, representing the people, guarantees the good governance of the nation. This entails the power to create and bring down the Government, and to criticize, control and guide its political and administrative action.

There are also parliamentary procedures to foster and promote political and government action and to guide and stimulate the Government and its ministries and charge them to carry out actions.



Political control

The most common instruments and techniques for interrelation between the Presidency, the Government and the Parliament.



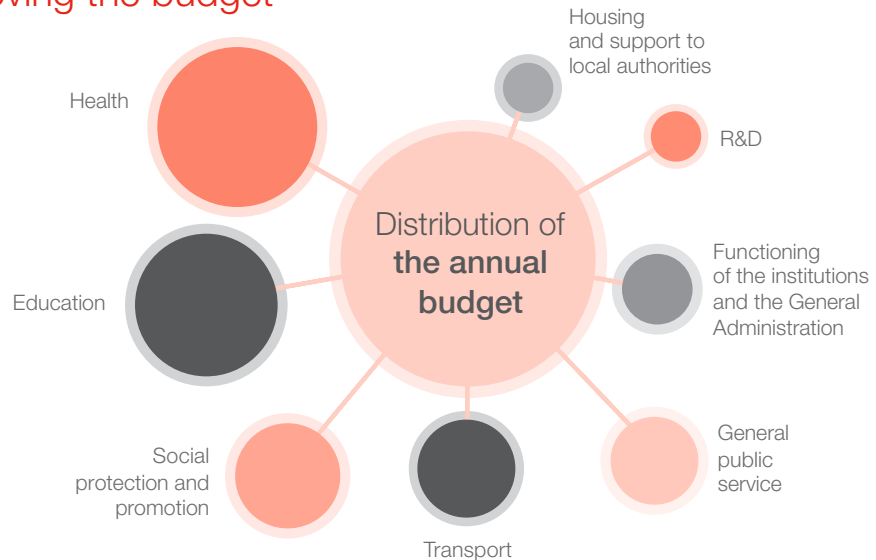
The budgetary function and the elective function

Each year Parliament approves the budget, i.e. it debates on and agrees how to distribute the public money collected through taxes in order to meet the diverse public needs and policies.

The function of approving the budget

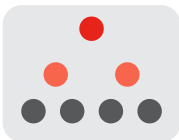


The budget debate is one of the most important every year because it involves specifying and implementing the government programme for the following year, within the terms agreed when the Parliament elected the President.



The elective function

The Parliament has wide elective powers. It elects:



The Presiding Board of Parliament and the board of the committees



The President of the Generalitat



The senators who represent the Generalitat in the *Cortes Generales*

It also elects or appoints:



The Síndic de Greuges (Ombudsperson).



The members of the Parliament who must defend in the Congress the bills presented to it by the Parliament of Catalonia.



All or some of the members of the most important institutions of the Generalitat: the Catalan Council for Statutory Guarantees, the Audit Office and other bodies such as the Board of Directors of the Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation, the Audiovisual Council of Catalonia and the boards of trustees of universities.

Other functions

The Parliament exercises other functions. The most important are related to participation in the activity of the central bodies of the Spanish State.



Cortes Generales

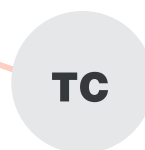
It elects the senators who represent the Generalitat. It presents bills to the Presiding Board of the Spanish Congress and appoints deputies charged with defending them.

Relationship of the Parliament with the bodies of the Spanish State



Spanish Government

It calls on the Spanish Government to adopt bills.



Constitutional Court

It lodges appeals of unconstitutionality and defends the constitutionality of the laws of the Parliament. It appears in conflicts of competence or summons the Government of the Generalitat to appear there.

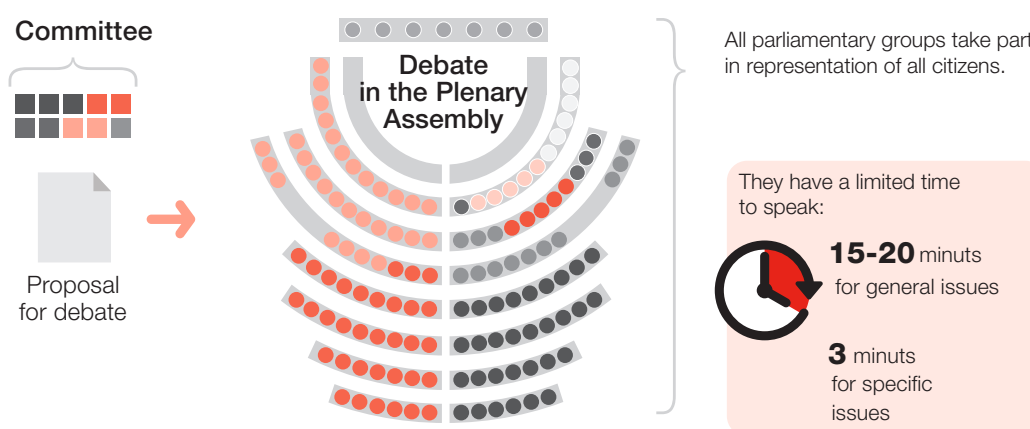
The working and decision-making system

The Parliament of Catalonia takes decisions following a series of debates. On matters of special importance, all parliamentary groups can establish their position or explain their vote.

The debate



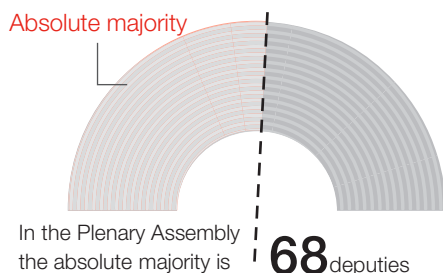
The members of the Parliament debate on issues in committees and together in the Plenary Assembly.



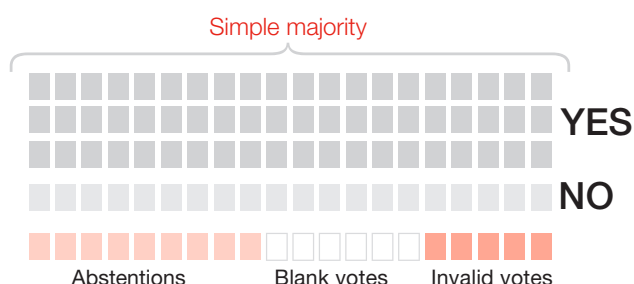
Decision-making systems: voting

Requirements for the Parliament to take a decision

- 1 There must be **majority of members** (more than half).



- 2 The **ordinary quorum for decisions making is a simple majority** in the voting the positive votes outweigh the negative ones, excluding abstentions, blank votes and invalid votes.



Type of vote

The voting procedures of the Parliament of Catalonia are the following:



Vote by assent, when no members of the Parliament object to the proposal of the Presidency.



Ordinary vote, which is done electronically: each deputy presses the button corresponding to their vote and the electronic system computes the votes cast and expresses the results on two screens located in the view of all participants in the session.



Public vote, which is a procedure used for solemn or important decisions. The name of the deputy who will be called first is drawn by lot, and the others are called in alphabetical order following the first name; the person called answers "yes" or "no" or states that they abstain.



Secret ballot, which can be done by paper ballot or an electronic system for the election of persons, or by ball ballot for voting on the behaviour of persons: the white ball means approval, the black ball means rejection.

The open Parliament

The recent reform of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Catalonia is an important step forward in the consideration of citizens as active subjects in parliamentary life.

Traditional forms of participation

Popular legislative initiative (PLI)



These may be presented by **citizens aged 16 or over**.

50,000 authenticated signatures are required.

Petitions Committee



This committee processes petitions that citizens make to Parliament by exercising the right of individual or collective petition, as recognized by the Statute.

The petitions must meet certain conditions:

- They must propose an action by the Parliament.
- They may not affect judicial or administrative powers.
- They may not consist of a complaint against an action or a grievance of an administration or private individual.

Special value is given to petitions of collective interest and those calling for legislative reform.

Audiences and hearings of organizations, social groups and experts



The aim is to offer a framework for participation in the parliamentary procedure to the groups most directly affected by the adoption of a specific law, so that they can express their views.

New forms of public participation

The web environment

The website



www.parlament.cat

This offers detailed information on the functioning and activities of the Parliament of Catalonia. It includes several spaces for public participation.

Escó 136



esco136.cat

A website for participation where citizens can make contributions, comments or suggestions on the bills going through the parliamentary procedure.

Educational projects



parlament.cat/aulaparlament

The **Aula Parlament**, platform organizes educational projects and activities of participation by schools and universities.

The Transparency Portal

parlament.cat/web/transparencia

It includes



Regulations



Institutional information



Organization of the Parliamentary Administration



Activity of the Parliament



Participation and relations with citizens



Budgetary and economic transparency

Social networks



@parlament_cat



facebook.com/parlament.cat



ParlamentCatalunya



@parlament_cat

Parliament Channel



canalparlament.cat

Broadcasts the plenary sessions live online and on television.



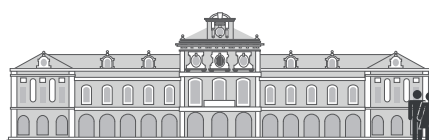
Canal 3/24 of Televisió de Catalunya



Through the internet you can watch live and recorded versions of the committee sessions, press conferences and most institutional events taking place in the Parliament.

Visits to the Palace of Parliament

www.parlament.cat/acces/visites/info/en/index.html



- Individual visits
- School groups
- University groups
- Social groups



The visits are free of charge



They last for **45 minutes**

The history of the Parliament

The antecedents of the parliamentary institution in Catalonia are to be found in the Middle Ages, in meetings called *assemblees de pau i treva* (assemblies of peace and truce), and in the *Cort Comtal* (Count's Parliament) of the eleventh century. Originally, the peace of God was the right of refuge of people and the protected land within thirty feet around the church, which was called *sagrera* (sanctuary). The truce was the suspension of wars and violent conflicts in certain periods.

■ Corts ■ Generalitat ■ Black Biennial ■ Franco Regime

Origins of the Parliament of Catalonia: *assemblees de pau i treva* and the *Cort Comtal*.



Miniature depicting the King Alfons I (1154-1196) chairing an assembly of peace and truce (codex of the *Usatges*).

11th c.

12th c.

The Corts were composed of three branches: the **military** branch, representing the nobility; the **ecclesiastical** branch, representing the religious hierarchy; and the **royal** branch, representing the cities and towns within the domain of the monarch.

Corts de Barcelona 1283:
Constitution
"We want, we establish"
Peter II, the Great.

The first **Corts Generals de Catalunya**
(1213-1276)
James I, the Conqueror.

14th c.

13th c.

15th c.

16th c.

Diputació del General or **Generalitat** (the Corts were called Generals de Catalunya), 1336-1387. Peter III, the Ceremonious.

Nova Planta (New Plan) Decree (16 January 1716)
Philip V. Abolition of the law and institutions of Catalonia.

War of Succession
(1702-1714)
11 September 1714: fall of Barcelona.

18th c.

17th c.

19th c.

20th c.

216 years without Corts Catalanes

1914

1923

Commonwealth of Catalonia:
an attempt to recover the Catalan institutions.
Abolition by the dictator Primo de Rivera.

Second Spanish Republic:
restoration of the Generalitat

1932

Franco Regime

1939

1.10.1938

5.4.1938

1936

1934-1936

Franco Regime: repeal of the Statute and all institutions stemming from it. Parliament closed and converted into barracks. Repression and clandestine struggles to ensure restoration of democracy and recognition of the identity of Catalonia (Assembly of Catalonia).

End of war

Last meeting of Parliament.

Law of repeal of the Statute by General Franco.

Black Biennial
Abolition of the Generalitat and Parliament by the Spanish Government. Proclamation of the Catalan State.

Civil War
The Generalitat continues to exist despite the difficulties of the war.

Transition

1975

Death of the dictator

1977

Restoration of the Generalitat

1978

Spanish Constitution

1979

Statute of Autonomy

1980

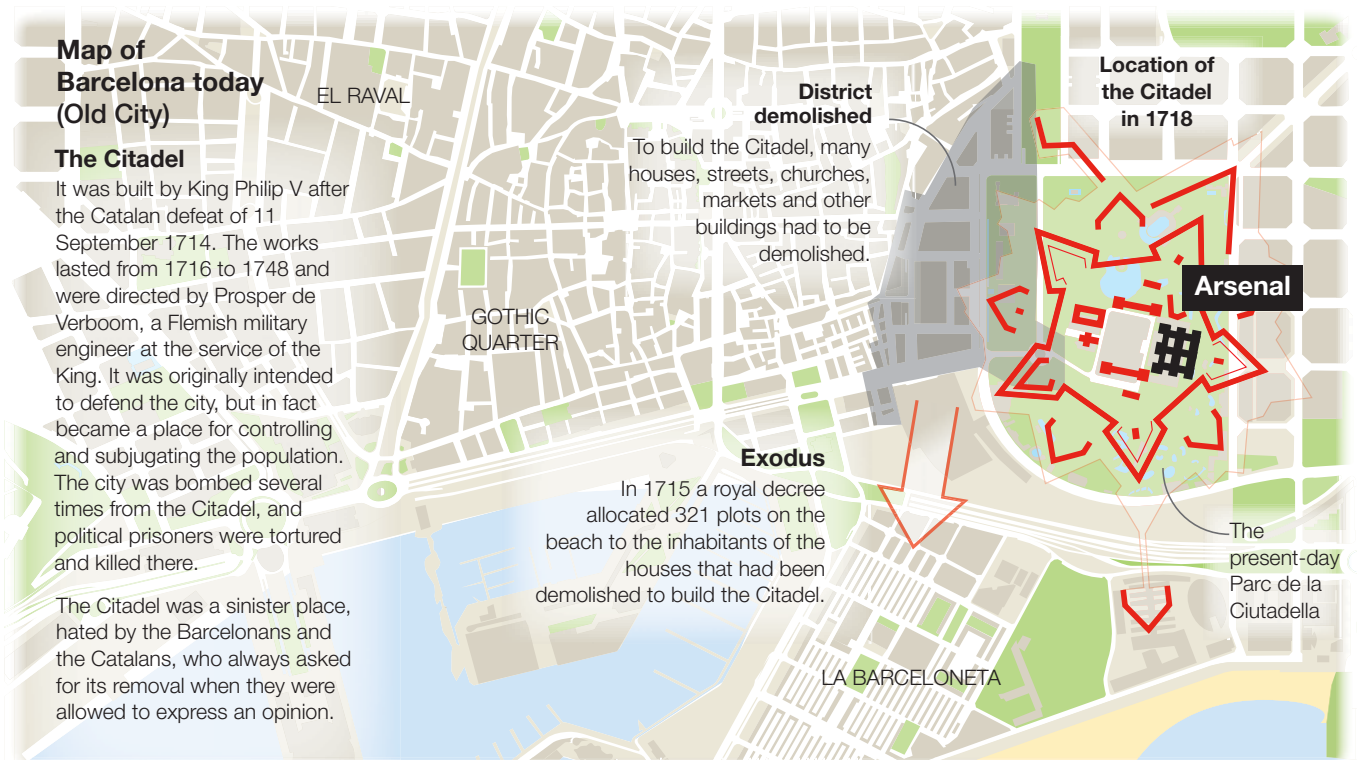
Restoration of the Parliament of the Generalitat:
elections (20 March 1980) and first session (10 April 1980). President: Josep Tarradellas.

21st c.



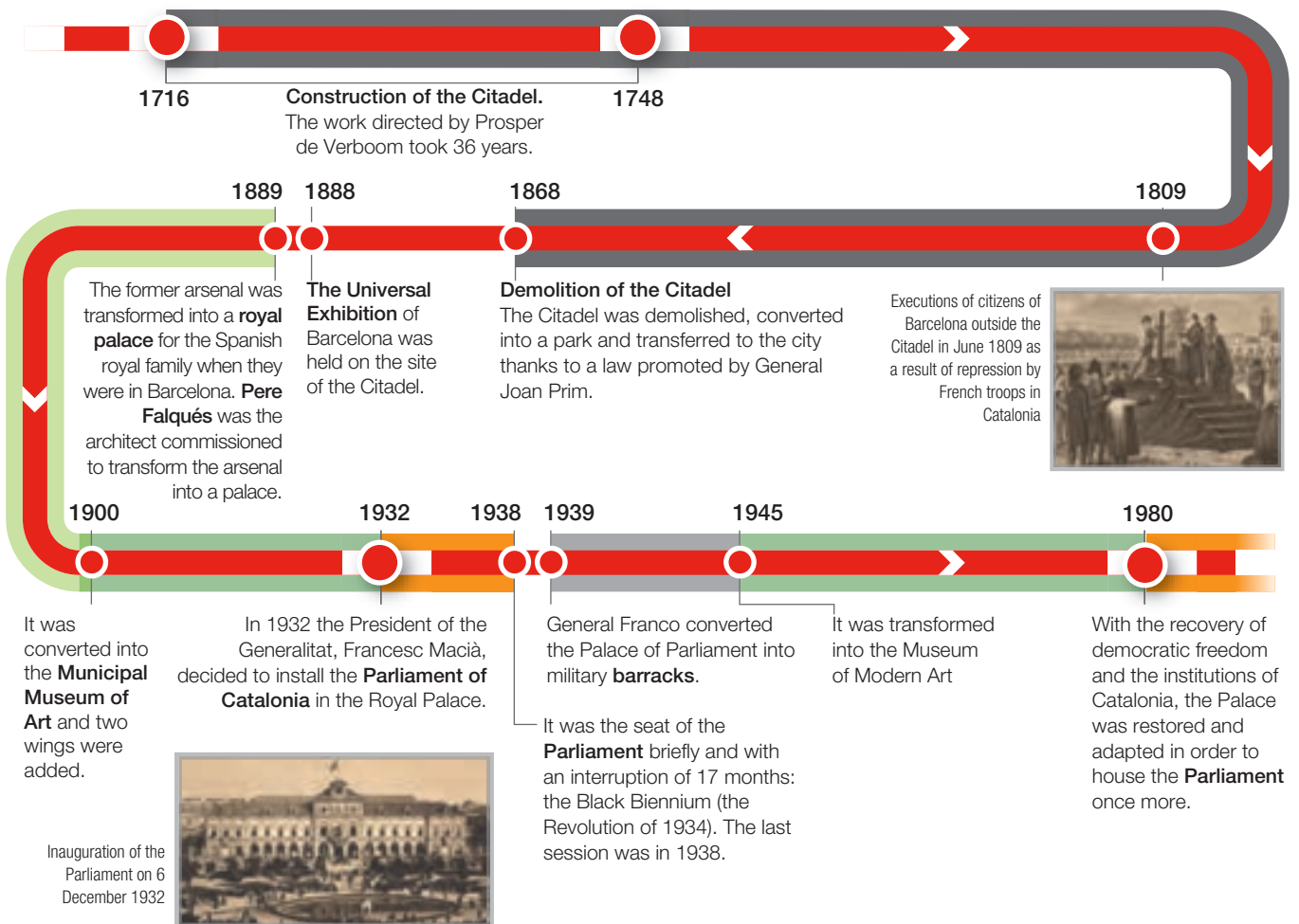
The history of the Palace

The Parliament of Catalonia has its official seat in the Palace of Parliament, located in the Parc de la Ciutadella in Barcelona. The building of the Palace of Parliament was originally the arsenal of the Citadel that King Philip V had built in Barcelona after the defeat of the Catalans in the War of Succession. Since then it has undergone many changes.



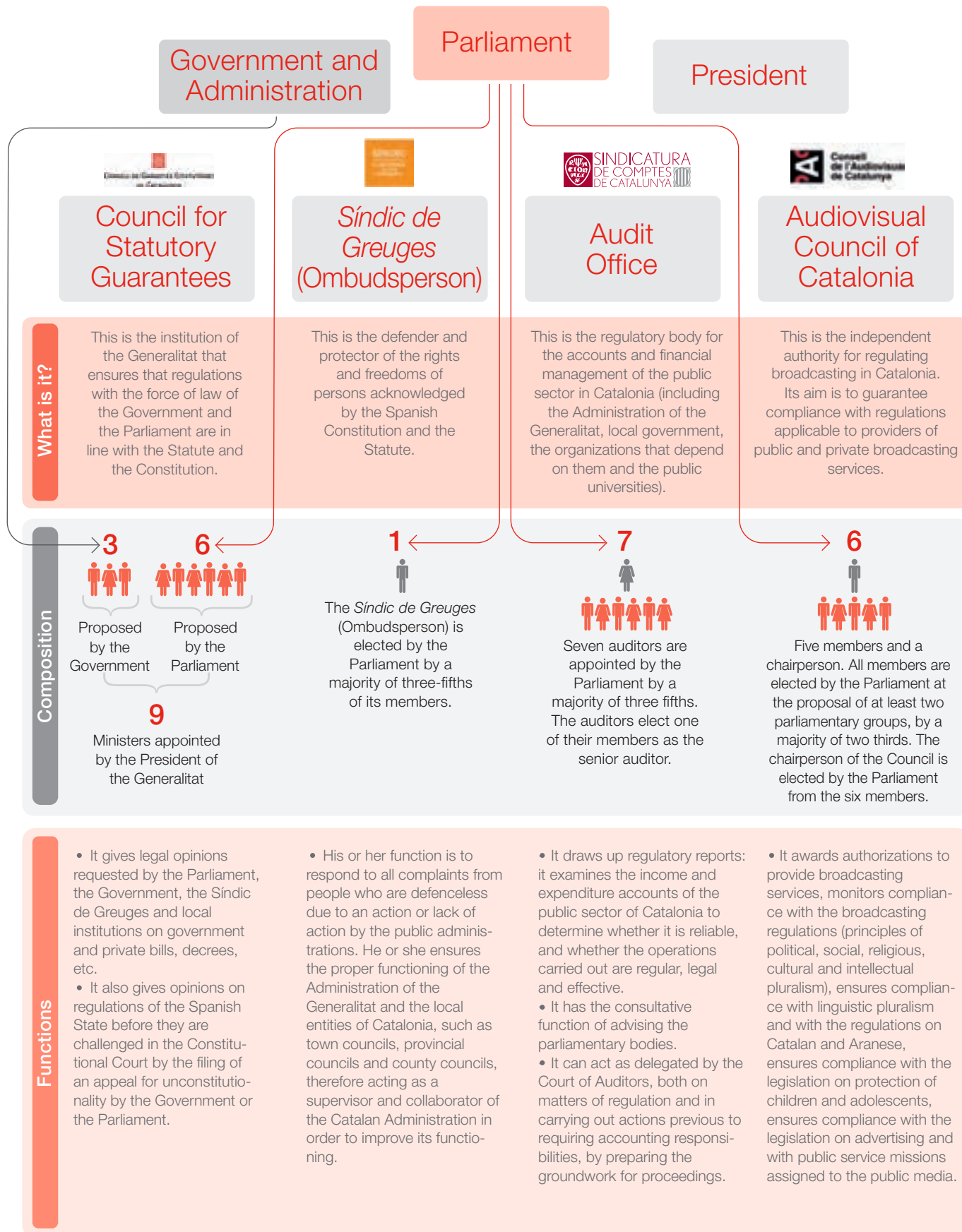
Chronology of the Palace of Parliament

Arsenal Barracks Royal Palace Museum Parliament



Other institutions of the Generalitat

Chapter V of Title II of the Statute of Autonomy states that, apart from the Parliament of Catalonia, the President of the Generalitat, the Government and the Administration of the Generalitat, the Generalitat has four other institutions: the Council for Statutory Guarantees, the Síndic de Greuges, the Audit Office and the Audiovisual Council of Catalonia.





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08003 Barcelona
Tel. 933 046 500
www.parlament.cat

Departament de Relacions Institucionals
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