



The Assembly

welcomes you to the very heart of democracy



Francois de Rugy
President of the French National Assembly

Since the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, passed by the National Assembly on August 26, 1789, the Assembly has always been committed to protecting fundamental freedoms and to maintaining the social contract. At the same time it is aware of the need to adapt



■ The Tennis Court Oath

to changing times as well as keeping pace with developments in society. Such were the purposes of the great founding laws of the Republic, those on freedom of the press (1881), on free and compulsory schooling (1881-1882) or freedom of association (1901)

that have been regularly reviewed and supplemented.

The National Assembly is the place where democracy truly lives. It is a place where reflection, debate, scrutinizing Government action, taking into account the aspirations of citizens, must all contribute to securing the notion of the interest of the public good in an increasingly complex and demanding society.

Since 1789 the National Assembly has undergone a variety of name changes ranging from the *Legislative Corps* to the *Chamber of Deputies* before taking on its current title in 1946. Nonetheless, despite such changes in name, the Assembly has always had the same mission: the passing of laws and thus the setting down of the rights and duties of every citizen as well as the rules which govern society.



M.P.s' first task is to represent the people of France in all their political diversity and to ensure that free democratic debate takes place.

To Represent

the people of France is the first task of an M.P.

The M.P. is a Spokesperson for his/her Fellow Citizens

Contrary to the generally accepted idea, an M.P. does not only represent his/her constituency but in fact all of France. He/she possesses a "national mandate" and thus must take into account the interests of all French people, wherever they may live (including those who reside abroad), when taking decisions and in particular when passing laws. Nonetheless, it is only natural that each M.P. forms a close bond with the constituency in which he/she is elected thus defending its interests in Paris in the field of employment or amenities for example. As each M.P. is in regular contact with his/her electorate, he/she can create the link between the everyday reality of French people and the great national centres of decision-making.



Being an M.P. is a Daily Political Commitment

Each M.P. may become a member of, or aligned to, a political group. He/she may thus carry out his/her job more easily: tabling Bills, amending Bills under discussion, scrutinizing and questioning Government. By choosing to support the Government within the ruling majority, or, on the contrary, by opting to defend the positions of the opposition and by leading political debate in his/her constituency, M.P.s help keep our democracy alive every day.



■ The President



■ The Questeurs

How does the National Assembly work ?

The **President**, who is elected by his/her peers, represents the National Assembly and chairs its debates. He/she is ranked fourth in the order of national political protocol and is provided with significant institutional powers such as the right to appoint three of the nine members of the Constitutional Council. He/she presides over the main internal bodies of the Assembly such as the *Bureau*, whose task it is to take the major decisions concerning the running of the Assembly and which, in addition to the President, is made up of six Vice Presidents, the *Questeurs* and the Secretaries. The President also chairs **The Conference of Presidents** which brings together the Vice Presidents, the chairs of political groups, the chairs of committees as well as the General *Rapporteur* of the Finance Committee. Each week, the Conference of Presidents, together with the Minister in Charge of Relations with Parliament, draws up the agenda of the Assembly.

The *Questeurs*, of whom there are three, are elected by all the M.P.s to deal, along with the President, with all financial and logistical matters concerning the Assembly: staff, premises, transport etc. Tradition has it that two of the *Questeurs* should be from the ruling majority and the third from the opposition.



The most well-known task of the National Assembly is to make laws. For a Bill to become the law of the Republic, it must go through four main stages.

To Make Legislation

Debating and Passing the Laws of the Republic

1. The Drawing-up of Government and Members' Bills

Bills considered by the Assembly are originally sponsored either by Government (Government Bills) or by a parliamentarian i.e. an M.P. or Senator (Members' Bills).

2. Examination in Committee

Before being considered in 'plenary sitting' in the Chamber, Bills are examined in committee. The Assembly has eight standing committees each of which specializes in a specific field: Cultural Affairs, Economic Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Defence, Sustainable Development, Finance and Legal Affairs. In order that the consideration of each Bill be as thorough as possible, the relevant committee appoints a "rapporteur" for that Bill. This "rapporteur" is an M.P. with the task of examining the strengths and weaknesses of the Bill as well as ways in which it may be improved.

3. Consideration in Plenary Sitting

In the Chamber, the Bill as amended by the committee is first debated upon in a general discussion. Then each article is discussed and amendments, i.e. changes or additions to the Bill under discussion, are considered. MPs then proceed to vote on the entire Bill. The voting procedure is normally by show of hands or, in the case of doubt, by sitting and standing. For the most important votes, a public ballot may be held. Each M.P.'s seat is equipped with an electronic voting device to be used in such cases.

4. The "Shuttle" with the Senate

In order to become law, a Bill must also be debated and passed in exactly the same terms by the other House of Parliament, the Senate. The to-and-fro journey of the Bill between the Senate and the National Assembly is called the "shuttle". If the two assemblies do not reach agreement, the Government may decide to give the "final say" to the National Assembly whose version of the Bill thus takes precedence. The Act is promulgated by the President of the Republic and is published in the *Journal Officiel* (official publication of the Republic).



■ A vote by show of hands



The third important task of the Assembly is to scrutinize Government action. The main aim of this monitoring is to guarantee the freedom of citizens.

To Scrutinize

in order to better protect citizens

Questions to the Government

Every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon, M.P.s have one hour during which they may question ministers and the Prime Minister concerning their decisions and their policies. Half of such questions are asked by members of the opposition. M.P.s may also ask oral or written questions to the members of the Government on very precise points.

Censure Motions and Confidence Motions

If the majority of M.P.s disagree with Government policy then the National Assembly may force the latter to resign. For this to happen a motion of censure must be passed by more than one out of two M.P.s (i.e. at least 289 out of 577). On the other hand, the Prime Minister can ensure that he/she has the support of the Assembly by making the Government's programme or a statement of general policy an issue of confidence in the Government.

Committees of Inquiry

The Assembly may decide to set up a committee of inquiry on any important question which it considers to be of public interest. This may concern Government policy but also all public bodies dealing with the rights, freedom or health of citizens. Thus, in recent years, the Assembly has set up committees of inquiry on the cost of nuclear energy or on the means of combating terrorism.



■ A hearing at the Finance Committee



■ A Government Question sitting

These committees have special investigative powers as well as the possibility of interviewing anyone who might help in having the truth brought to light.

Being better informed leads to a better assessment of public policies

Fact-finding missions, the monitoring of the enforcement of laws, the extensive work undertaken by the Commission for Assessment and Monitoring of Public Policies, by the Parliamentary Office for Scientific and Technological Assessment, by the Parliamentary Delegation for the Rights of Women are all ways for the Assembly to review the action taken by the state in a particular area and, more importantly, to suggest measures for improvement.



Facilities

For Visitors to the National Assembly

La Boutique (Gift shop)

7 rue Aristide Briand, 75007 Paris.
Souvenirs, gifts, bookshop.
Tel.: 0140630033

On-line gift shop:
<http://boutique.assemblee-nationale.fr>

www.assemblee-nationale.fr

All the proceedings and publications on-line.

Info Assemblée
Tel.: 0140636969

LCP-Assemblée nationale
The parliamentary television channel of the National Assembly is broadcast free on TNT, by satellite, by cable, by broadband and on internet (www.lcpan.fr).



GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, COMMUNICATION AND MULTIMEDIA DEPARTMENT, 126 rue de l'Université, 75007 Paris
Tel.: 0140636000

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Access

- **Metro:** line 12 (station: *Assemblée nationale*), lines 13 and 8 (station: *Invalides*).
- **RER:** line C (station: *Invalides*), lines 24, 63, 73, 83, 84, 94 (stop: *Assemblée nationale*), ligne 93 (stop : *Esplanade des Invalides*).
- **Bus:** *Invalides* car-park.

Plenary Sitings and Visits of the Palais Bourbon

In accordance with Republican tradition, the laws are debated and passed before the Nation. Access to the plenary sitting is possible for the first ten people in line before the beginning of a sitting (except for Government Question Time sittings on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 3pm) and for anyone possessing an invitation from an M.P., subject to availability of space.

Free guided tours are organized for groups of 50 maximum upon invitation by an M.P.
For information : www.assemblee-nationale/infos/visiter.asp

Entrance by 33, quai d'Orsay. Please bring ID or Passport. Proper dress required.

Rotonde Alechinsky (Alechinsky Rotunda)

The rotunda, located between the *Hôtel de Lassay*, the *Galerie des Fêtes* and the *Palais Bourbon* was decorated by Pierre Alechinsky in 1992 and illustrates an inscription by poet Jean Tardieu.



Galerie des Fêtes (Ballroom)

The *Galerie des Fêtes*, which was opened in 1848, is decorated with paintings by François-Joseph Heim. Upon leaving the *Cabinet du Départ*, the President walks through this gallery on his way to the Chamber.



Grande Rotonde (Great Rotunda)

From this rotunda, journalists can access the press gallery and their work rooms by taking the staircases or lift.



Salle des Pas Perdus (Room of Lost Footsteps)

The ceilings of this room, which is also known as the Salon de la Paix (the Peace Room), are the work of the painter Horace Vernet. The President of the National Assembly crosses this room on his way to chair the sittings in the Chamber.

Salle des Quatre Colonnes (Room of the Four Columns)

The Salle des Quatre Colonnes takes its name from the main features of its architecture and leads to the garden of the same name. This is where M.P.s and journalists meet.



Jardin des Quatre Colonnes (Garden of the Four Columns)

From this garden, the last vestige of the original garden "à la française", we can see the *Hôtel de Lassay*. Built between 1722 and 1728, at the same time as the *Palais Bourbon*, it has been the seat of the Presidency of the National Assembly since 1832.



Cour d'Honneur (Main Courtyard)

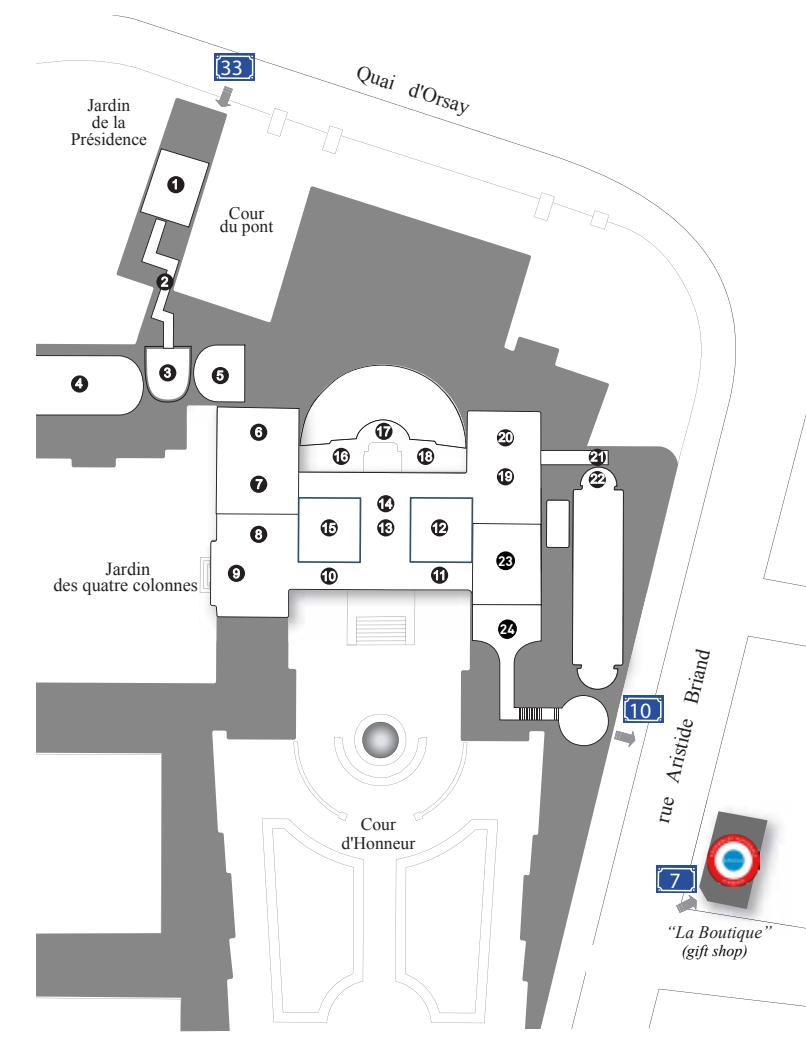
The main courtyard has kept its original proportions dating from the time of the Duchess of Bourbon. Since 1989, it has featured in its centre the Sphere of Human Rights, a piece by the artist Walter de Maria. This sphere has a semi-circular backdrop where the 17 articles of the Declaration of Human Rights and its preamble are engraved.



Hôtel de Lassay

The Palais Bourbon

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Public Reception | 9 Garden and Hôtel de Lassay | 19-20 Conference Room |
| 3 Alechinsky Rotunda | 11 Main Courtyard | 21-22 Library |
| 4 Ballroom | 12 Pujol Room | 23 Room of the Mariannes |
| 5 Great Rotunda | 13-14 Casimir-Perier Room | 24 Post Office |
| 6-7 Room of Lost Footsteps | 15 Delacroix Room | |
| 8 Room of the Four Columns | 16-17-18 The Debating Chamber | |



Salon Pujol (Pujol Room)

This room was decorated in trompe-l'oeil by Abel de Pujol. On account of its position in relation to the Chamber, M.P.s of the political right wing tend to meet there.



Salon Casimir-Perier (Casimir-Perier Room)

This room, which is decorated with an 1889 bas-relief by the sculptor Dalou depicting the sitting of June 23, 1789 of the original National Assembly, is crossed by ministers on their way to the Chamber.



Salon Delacroix (Delacroix Room)

This room was designed by Jules de Joly and is decorated with works painted by Eugène Delacroix and commissioned by Adolphe Thiers. Nowadays it is the meeting place for members from the political left wing.



Hémicycle (the Debating Chamber)

The present Chamber, which was built between 1829 and 1832 by Jules de Joly, replaced the original chamber designed for the Council of Five Hundred. The President's chair, decorated by Lemot and Michallon, dates from this earlier period.

Salle des Conférences (Conference Room)

This room, built by Jules de Joly, was decorated in 1839 by François-Joseph Heim. Nowadays, it is used as a reading room and meeting place by M.P.s.



Bibliothèque (Library)

The Library, which was also designed by Jules de Joly and contains over 700,000 volumes, is famed for its ceilings painted by Eugène Delacroix between 1838 and 1847.



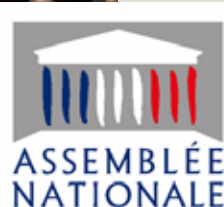
Salon des Mariannes (Room of the Mariannes)

This room, which is the anti-chamber to the library, is directly symmetrical to the Salle des Quatre Colonnes. It houses a collection of "Mariannes", the personification of the Republic, as well as thirty-two terracotta busts by Honoré Daumier.



Bibliothèque (Library)

Welcome to the French National Assembly



www.assemblee-nationale.fr