

# The Brussels Parliament



## GENERAL

- Country: Belgium (10.9 million residents (2010), 30,326 km<sup>2</sup> • )
- Region: Brussels-Capital, 1.089.598 inhabitants (2011), 161,78 km<sup>2</sup>
- The Brussels Parliament is the parliament of the Belgian federated entity of the Region of Brussels-capital. It is competent for regional and community matters
- Headquarters: Brussels ( Rue du Lombard 69, 1005 Brussels)
- Language: French - Dutch
- The Parliament was founded by the law of 12 January 1989 creating the Region of Brussels-Capital
- Budget of the Region of Brussels-Capital: 3.389.170.000 euros(2012)
- Website: [www.parlbruparl.irisnet.be](http://www.parlbruparl.irisnet.be)

## BRUSSELS PARLIAMENT MISSION STATEMENT

The Brussels Parliament is the legislative and democratic mainstay of the Region of Brussels-Capital. It is responsible for the creation of Brussels Parliament Acts and for approving the budget of the Region of Brussels-Capital. The Brussels Parliament appoints the Government of the Region of Brussels-Capital and ensures that the Government of the Region of Brussels-Capital implements Brussels Parliament Acts.

The Brussels Parliament aims to be the centre of democratic Brussels and to closely involve citizens with political decision-making. To this end, it strives for maximum transparency and optimal communication.

By projecting and encouraging a sense of public responsibility, the Brussels Parliament aims to raise democratic support within society and profile Brussels as a modern, pioneering, tolerant and caring European region.

## **MEMBERS OF The Brussels PARLIAMENT**

The Brussels Parliament has 89 members.

- 72 members of Parliament are elected on French speaking lists
- 17 members of Parliament are elected on Dutch speaking lists.

- 48 members of parliament are male and 41 are female.
- Their average age is 49.

The seats are proportionately divided among the parties according to the D'Hondt system. There is an electoral threshold of 5% in.

The Brussels Parliament is a legislature parliament. The members are elected for a 5-year term. The regional elections are organized together with elections for the European Parliament.

Voting conditions:

- Belgian nationality
- aged 18 or older
- living in Brussels (compulsory voting !)

Conditions for eligibility:

- Belgian nationality
- aged 18 or older
- living in Brussels
- having all civil and political rights
- no involvement in cases of exclusion or suspension as defined in the Electoral Laws



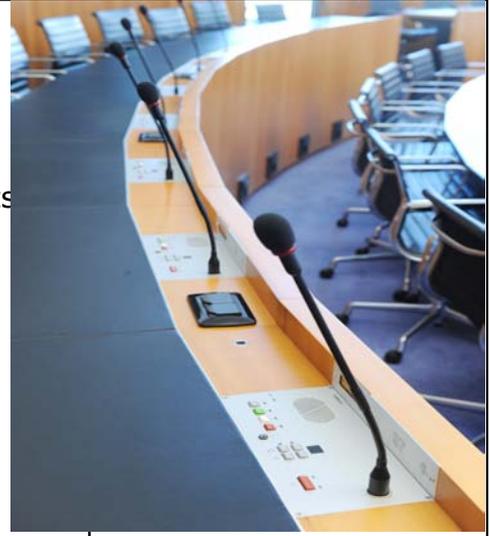
## **COMPOSITION AS A RESULT OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 7 JUNE 2009**

### **French speaking group**

- PS (socialists) : 21 seats
- Ecolo (ecologists) : 16 seats
- MR (liberal democrats) :13 seats
- FDF (French speaking Front) : 11 seats
- cdH (French speaking christian democrats) 10 seats
- independent : 1 seat

### **Dutch Speaking group**

- CD&V (Flemish christian democrats): 3 seats
- Open Vld (liberal democrats): 4 seats
- Vlaams Belang (Flemish nationalists): 1 seat
- sp.a (socialists): 4 seats
- N-VA (New Flemish Alliance [nationalists]): 1 seat
- Groen (ecologists): 2 seats
- independents : 2 seats



**POLITICAL FRACTIONS IN THE BRUSSELS PARLIAMENT  
(01.06.2012)**

If a party has ten per cent or more members of its linguistic group- that is 7 for the French speaking(72) and 1 for the Dutch speaking group (17), it can form a political group. Each political group chooses a chairman. A recognised political group is granted resources to set up a secretariat with the required personnel.

**PS political group**

- socialists
- Chairman: Rudi Vervoort
- Members: 21
- Contact : [svanommelaeghe@parlbru.irisnet.be](mailto:svanommelaeghe@parlbru.irisnet.be)  
+32 (0)2 549 69 78



**Ecolo political group**

- Ecologists
- Chairman : Yaron Pesztat
- Members : 16
- Contact : [twyngaard@parlbru.irisnet.be](mailto:twyngaard@parlbru.irisnet.be)  
+32 (0)2 549 69 18



**MR political group**

- Liberals
- Chairman: Vincent Dewolf
- Members: 13
- Contact : [bdhondt@parlbru.irisnet.be](mailto:bdhondt@parlbru.irisnet.be)  
+32 (0)2 549 65 71



**FDf political group**

- Frenchspeaking Federalists and Democrats
- Chairman : Didier Gosuin
- Members : 11
- Contact : [mloewenstein@parlbru.irisnet.be](mailto:mloewenstein@parlbru.irisnet.be)  
+32 (0)2 546 66 30



**cdH political group**

- Christian democrats
- Chairman : Céline Frémault
- Members : 10
- contact : [lhacken@parlbru.irisnet.be](mailto:lhacken@parlbru.irisnet.be)  
+32 (0) 2 549 68 87



<p><b>sp.a political group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Socialists</li> <li>- Chairman: Elke Roex</li> <li>- Members: 4</li> <li>- Contact : <a href="mailto:pvandamme@bruparl.irisnet.be">pvandamme@bruparl.irisnet.be</a> +32 (0)2 549 64 67</li> </ul>	
<p><b>N-VA political group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nationalists</li> <li>- Chairman : Paul De Ridder</li> <li>- Members: 1</li> <li>- Contact : <a href="mailto:iderouck@bruparl.irisnet.be">iderouck@bruparl.irisnet.be</a> +32 (0)2 549 65 98</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Open VLD political group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Liberals</li> <li>- Chairman : Els Ampe</li> <li>- Members: 4</li> <li>- Contact : <a href="mailto:jbasiliades@bruparl.irisnet.be">jbasiliades@bruparl.irisnet.be</a> +32 (0) 2 549 65 30</li> </ul>	
<p><b>CD&amp;V political group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian democrats</li> <li>- Chairman : Brigitte De Pauw</li> <li>- Members : 3</li> <li>- Contact : <a href="mailto:idepoorter@bruparl.irisnet.be">idepoorter@bruparl.irisnet.be</a> +32 (0) 2 549 64 86</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Groen! political group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ecologists</li> <li>- Chairman: Annemie Maes</li> <li>- Members: 3</li> <li>- Contact : <a href="mailto:ndeswaef@bruparl.irisnet.be">ndeswaef@bruparl.irisnet.be</a> +32 (0)2 549 63 15</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Vlaams Belang</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nationalists</li> <li>- Chairman : Dominiek Lootens-Stael</li> <li>- Members : 1</li> <li>- Contact : <a href="mailto:shiers@bruparl.irisnet.be">shiers@bruparl.irisnet.be</a> +32 (0)2 549 64 53</li> </ul>	

## **THE COMPETENCES OF THE BRUSSELS PARLIAMENT**

### **Regional Competences**

- urban and regional planning, renovation, protection of monuments and historical sites;
- housing;
- public works, including roads, waterways, ports and ancillary facilities ;
- public transport;
- economic policy and external trade;
- regional aspects of employment policy with relocation of workers and programmes
- environmental protection from aggression and pollution, noise abatement, waste disposal policy, policing establishments which could be dangerous or unsanitary or create a public nuisance, production and distribution of water including waste water treatment and quality control;
- nature conservation and protection, green zone, parks, woodlands, hunting and fishing, rivers, streams and canals;
- regional aspects of energy, including local distribution of gas and electricity, new sources and recycling of energy, the rational use of energy;
- organization of the regulations governing local powers (borough, inter-borough etc...), the financing and control of these powers;
- agricultural policy;
- scientific research related to regional affairs;
- international affairs concerning any of the above-mentioned activities.

The MP's for the Region of Brussels-Capital also deal with issues which were the responsibility of the old Brussels district : fire-fighting, urgent medical aid, garbage collection and processing, taxi transport.

### **Community competences**

#### **Joint Community matters**

The 89 members of Parliament are also called upon to deliberate on other than strictly regional issues. This is because the special law of 12 January 1989 relating to the Brussels institutions stipulates that members of the two linguistic groups, i.e. the 89 MP's shall together make up the United Assembly of the Joint Commission for Community matters.

Subject to some occasionally important exceptions, the United Assembly exercises legislative power both with respect to institutions not belonging exclusively to one of the two linguistic Communities (dual Community institutions) and to people in the following matters:

- health policy (the policy of providing care in and outside the institutions concerned, health education, preventive medicine),
- public assistance (family policy, social policy, handicapped persons, senior citizens, youth, immigrants, social assistance for detainees, etc).

### **Dual Community matters**

As indicated above, the 89 members of the Parliament consist of a French-speaking group, representing a total of 72, and a Dutch-speaking group representing a total of 17 members

These groups meet separately to exercise certain specific powers under the name Brussels French-speaking Parliament and Assembly of the Flemish Community Commission respectively. In conjunction with their corresponding executive body, i.e. their college, they make up the French Community Commission ( more information on [www.pfb.irisnet.be](http://www.pfb.irisnet.be)) and the Flemish Community Commission (more information on [www.rvg.irisnet.be](http://www.rvg.irisnet.be))



## **THE BRUSSELS GOVERNMENT**

The Government of Brussels-Capital, which needs a majority in the Brussels Parliament, is formed on the basis of the election results. It is accountable to Parliament. The current government, which comprises the Minister-President and 4 ministers, is a coalition between PS(socialists) cdH (Christian Democrats) and Ecolo (Greens) on French-speaking side and Cd&V(Christian Democrats) open Vld (Liberals) and Groen!(Greens) on Dutch-speaking side. More information on [www.bruxelles.irisnet.be](http://www.bruxelles.irisnet.be)

## **THE GOVERNING BODIES OF THE BRUSSELS PARLIAMENT**

### **Speaker**

The Brussels Parliament is chaired by the Speaker, who is appointed every year during the opening of the Parliamentary term. The Speaker is traditionally a member of the majority, but this is not necessarily the case.

The Speaker chairs the plenary sessions and ensures that the meetings are held in an orderly manner. The Speaker also heads up meetings of the Bureau and the Extended Bureau and is responsible for the implementation of decisions taken by the Bureau and during plenary sessions. In this context, he/she is supported by the Secretary-General (Clerk) and the General Secretariat of the Brussels Parliament. The Speaker does not take an active part in discussions. He/she sits, as it were, above the political groups. The Speaker represents Parliament to the outside world and also functions as a spokesperson for Parliament. This does not detract from the fact that the different Speakers are able to push their particular issues to the fore.

**Portrait of the Speaker, Françoise Dupuis (PS)**



Françoise Dupuis was born on 18 July 1949 in Uccle, where she is municipal councillor for urban renewal and housing.

A graduate in German philology, qualified teacher in upper secondary education and Master of Arts, she began her career in teaching (1971 to 1984), after which she became Policy Officer for the implementation of European directives on the mutual recognition of diplomas from 1988 to 1994. During the same period she was municipal councillor for social affairs in Uccle and was also the last president of the Brabant Provincial Council (1991-1994).

Outside of politics, she is a headmaster in the city of Brussels, a position from which she is currently taking a political sabbatical. From May 1995 to July 1999, she sat in the Brussels Assembly where she was chairwoman of the socialist group from April 1997 to June 1999.

In this position, she was author or co-author of a series of proposals for ordinances, notably that regulating the public distribution of gas by network in the Brussels Region (1998) and the proposal for an ordinance on the tax rates and tax exemptions applicable to estate and property transfer duties on death applicable to legal cohabitants (1998).

Françoise Dupuis has also held numerous executive political positions at the highest level (links to portrait of Françoise Dupuis) including that of Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research of the French-speaking Community from 1999 to 2004, Secretary of State for Housing and Town Planning, and Minister, member of the College of the Commission of the French-speaking Community (COCOF), responsible for vocational training, culture, international relations and transport for schools from June 2004 to July 2009.



**Portrait of the First Vice-President, Walter Vandebossche (CD&V)**

Walter Vandebossche was born in Anderlecht in 1953. He is a CD&V member of the municipal council.

From the year 2000 until 2006, he was also municipal councillor for the self-employed and tradespeople, youth, culture, Dutch-speaking education and crèches and social cohesion.

Having studied law, he was a lawyer at the Bar in Brussels until 1995. He has been a member of the Parliament of the Brussels Capital Region without interruption since 1989.

From 1999 to 2004, he was vice-president of the assembly of the Commission of the Flemish Community and has also sat in the Flemish parliament.

Walter Vandebossche is behind the 'open dialogue' initiative that produced the CD&V@Work Intercultureel network, which makes contacts on the ground with the immigrant population on topics relating to youth, education and housing.

He is the author or co-author of a series of proposals for ordinance, notably the proposal for an ordinance amending the municipal electoral law fighting against racism and xenophobia (2006), the proposal for an ordinance on the environment against the possible harmful effects and pollution caused by ionising radiation (2006) and the proposal for an ordinance on funerals and graves for the remains of fetuses born without life (2005), as well, earlier on, as the proposal for an ordinance aimed at guaranteeing gas supplies for household use during the winter period (1998).

### **The Permanent Bureau of the Brussels Parliament**

Day-to-day management of Parliament is carried out by the Permanent Bureau. The Permanent Bureau is elected by the Brussels Parliament during the opening of each term. It comprises the chairman, one first deputy chairman, three deputy chairmen and ten secretaries. The Permanent Bureau meets every two weeks. It makes all of the decisions that are required to manage the Brussels Parliament. The Permanent Bureau is especially responsible for finances, infrastructure and personnel policy for the Parliament and all aspects that correspond to these matters. A number of the Permanent Bureau's tasks have been delegated to the Secretary-General, the most senior Civil Servant in the General Secretariat and the deputy Secretary-general. The Management Board, which accounts for the various tasks of the civil servant organisation, prepares decisions for the Permanent Bureau. The general principle is that the policy priorities are established by the Permanent Bureau and that the Management Board takes on responsibility for implementing them. Meetings of the Permanent Bureau are attended by the Secretary-General/Clerk on behalf of the General Secretariat.

### **The Extended Bureau of the Brussels Parliament**

The Extended Bureau coordinates the political functions of the Brussels Parliament. The Extended Bureau includes the Permanent Bureau and the chairmen from the recognised political groups. The Extended Bureau meets every two weeks on Wednesday. The Extended Bureau sets the agenda for the plenary session, among other things, and regulates the Brussels Parliament's political functions. In the context of this task, it also determines the admissibility of interpellations. These are either referred to the competent committee or the plenary session. Interpellation requests that are assessed by the Extended Bureau as not of a general nature are rejected and can then be converted by the submitting party into verbal or written questions. The Extended Bureau also coordinates the functions of the committees. Meetings of the Extended Bureau are attended by the Secretary-General on behalf of the General Secretariat, and the director of the legislative service.

### **The plenary session of the Brussels Parliament**

The plenary session is the Brussels Parliament's highest body. It incorporates the 89 members of parliament and meets every two Friday's in the hemicycle of the Brussels Parliament building. The members of the Government of Brussels-Capital also take part in the plenary session but do not have voting rights. The plenary session can insist on their attendance.

The plenary session is called and chaired by the Speaker of the Brussels Parliament. The agenda is prepared by the Extended Bureau. Every member of Parliament can use a point of order to add to the agenda, adjourn a point, amend the order of tasks, refer a point to the committee and so on. Such points of order must first be approved by the plenary session.

The members of parliament have regulated, set discussion times for dealing with the items on the agenda. Within the available time, the Speaker gives each MP an opportunity to contribute. The ministers have an absolute right to speak: they must be given an opportunity to speak if they have requested this. After the debates, the plenary session votes the laws. Minutes are taken of every

plenary session; these must be signed by the Speaker, a secretary and the Secretary-General and retained in the Brussels Parliament's archives. Reports are drawn up for the public and the media; these provide an edited report of what has been said during the session.

In principle, the plenary session is public and can thus be attended by both the public and media.

### **The committees of the Brussels Parliament**

- The committees of the Brussels Parliament comprise 15 permanent members and 15 deputies. The committee members are appointed by the political groups (proportionately according to strength of political group in parliament). The committees autonomously determine their agenda and tasks. Each committee holds a chairman, a deputy chairman and a secretary. The committee meetings are open to the public and reports are made of every meeting.
- The committee's most important task is preparing the Parliament's work in terms of issuing laws. Proposals and topics for Brussels Parliament Acts are first extensively debated in committee. The text of the documents can be amended if the majority of the members agree. A committee can also organise hearings in order to gain further information on all aspects of a proposal or topic. The committee appoints a reporter who issues a report of the committee's deliberations to the plenary session. Policy memoranda, policy letters, cooperation agreements, resolution proposals and so on are all initially dealt with in some depth by the committee.
- Each committee also checks the Government of Brussels 'policy. They have a number of control options. A member of Parliament can ask a minister a question about current and specific issues. A member of parliament who would like to debate a more comprehensive problem of general interest can also hold an interpellation. Interpellations can give rise to the submission of a motion of no-confidence or a motion with justification that will be voted on during the plenary session. The annual budget debates also form an important moment of political control.

The specialised committees of the Brussels Parliament

- see the web site committees : [www.parlbruparl.irisnet.be](http://www.parlbruparl.irisnet.be)

### **ADMINISTRATION – GENERAL SECRETARIAT**

#### **General**

Personnel: Level A : 46  
Level B1 : 20  
level B2 : 6  
Level C : 55

#### **Mission statement**

The administration provides support to the day-to-day functioning of the Brussels Parliament and faithfully work on the implementation of specific policy objectives from the Parliament.

#### **The Secretary-General/Clerk**

The General Secretariat is headed by a clerk with the rank of Secretary-General. The Secretary-General is appointed by the plenary session after an objective

selection procedure.

The Secretary-General functions, on the one hand, as the official secretary to the Brussels Parliament and, on the other, is also responsible for the general management of the Brussels Parliament.

As official secretary, the Secretary-General attends the meetings of the Brussels Parliament and signs off all of the Brussels Parliament's decisions along with the Speaker. The Secretary-General also attends the meetings of Brussels Parliament's executive bodies : the Bureau and Extended Bureau.

In his/her capacity for the general management of the Brussels Parliament, the Secretary-General is responsible for preparing and implementing the decisions of the Bureau and the Extended Bureau. The Secretary-General is also responsible for service provision to the Brussels members of Parliament and for contact between the Brussels Parliament and citizens. On behalf of the Bureau, he/she supervises the personnel and services for the Brussels Parliament.

In the task of principal Civil Servant of the Brussels Parliament, the Secretary-General is supported by the Management Board which he/she chairs.

The current Secretary-General is **Mr Serge Govaert**  
([greffe@parlbru.irisnet.be](mailto:greffe@parlbru.irisnet.be) Tel. +32 (0)2 549 62 97)

### **The Secretariat-General (6,8 FTE)**

The Secretary-General is supported in her tasks by the Secretariat-General. The Secretariat-General comprises the Secretary-General, a deputy Secretary-general and 3 administrative employees.

### **The Management Board**

The Management Board is made up of the Secretary-General, the deputy Secretary-general and the 4 directors . The Management Board is chaired by the Secretary-General. The Management Board prepares and implements decisions for the Permanent Bureau and the Extended Bureau. It manages administration for the Brussels Parliament and is responsible for day-to-day management. The Management Board meets every two weeks.

### **Directorate Legislation**

The Directorate Legislation is tasked with providing intrinsic and administrative support in relation to the daily political functioning of the Brussels Parliament.

In reality, this includes the following tasks:

- providing professional support for the plenary sessions and committee meetings;
- administrative processing of interpellations, requests for explanation and written questions;
- drawing up documents for the Extended Bureau meetings;
- providing professional support and drawing up legislative advice about proposals for Brussels Parliament Acts and amendments;
- language advice for parliamentary initiatives and the provision of a language advice in general;
- translation of any document ( French/ Dutch or Dutch/French );
- managing the parliamentary database;
- European affairs : relations with the CALRE and the European Institutions;
- archives and biographical Service: access to the administrative and historical/scientific archive, digital archive, management of the biographical dossiers for the members of parliament;

- website : management of the website by the webmaster; the website is sustained by all services.

The Directorate Legislation is led by **Mr Patrick Vanleemputten**  
([pvanleemputten@parlbru.irisnet.be](mailto:pvanleemputten@parlbru.irisnet.be) Tel. +32 (0)2 549 62 82)

## **Information & External Relations**

The Information and External Relations Directorate comprises the following services:

- Parliamentary Information Centre: Information on the Brussels Parliament's areas of competence and the provision of information on community and regional matters;
- International Relations: Information, visits of foreign delegations and missions of the Bureau ;
- External Communication: external communication: press, website, intranet, publications, brochures, annual reports and campaigns.
- External Relations: Events and protocol
- Managing and programming Welcome and information Center
- Educational service ; visits of schools and associations, youth parliaments ...

The Information and External Relations is led by **Mrs Dominique Desprechins**, under the direct control of the Secretary general [d-desprechins@parlbru.irisnet.be](mailto:d-desprechins@parlbru.irisnet.be)  
Tel. +32 (0)2 549 62 06)

## **Directorate Record**

The task of this Directorate is to draw up the complete account of the debates in plenary sessions and in committee meetings during which interpellations and oral questions are examined. Besides the Directorate is also in charge of the translations in short of the interventions, the layout of the accounts and their publication on the Parliament website.

The Directorate Record is led by **Mrs Anne Van Asbroeck**  
([avanasbroeck@bruparl.irisnet.be](mailto:avanasbroeck@bruparl.irisnet.be) Tel. +32 (0)2 549 68 02)

## **Directorate Personnel, finances and informatics**

The Directorate for personnel and finances encompasses three important areas: accounting, human resources and Informatics for the Brussels Parliament.

- accounting includes bookkeeping, the budget and general affairs;
- HR is responsible for the full package of personnel policy and management, including the contacts for the members of parliament and their employees;
- the management of retirement funds for the retired MP's;
- Informatics : in terms of the Brussels Parliament, 'IT' includes bureaucratic applications, the comprehensive parliamentary database, the mail environment and the website.
- The Directorate personnel ,finances and informatics (temporarily) is led by

**Mr Dirk Lichtert**  
([dlichtert@bruparl.irisnet.be](mailto:dlichtert@bruparl.irisnet.be) Tel. +32 (0)2 549 62 01)

## **Directorate Infrastructure and Logistics**

The task of this Directorate is to support the various sections of the Brussels Parliament within the areas, purchasing, printing and expedition and building Management, reception service and technical service; this includes ad hoc tasks as well as structural solutions and reception services .

The purchasing service is responsible for purchasing for all Directorates, MP's offices and political groups.

The expedition service is responsible for expedition intern and extern and takes care of some printing and layout work is also included within their range of tasks.

The Building management is also responsible for the managing of the rooms, maintaining and modifying buildings and implementing technical and building-related projects, and the surveillance of the building projects.

Practical support is provided by the reception service (counters, post distribution, logistical support for all meetings and events in parliament), drivers and the catering service. The technical service cares for technical installations such as the voting system, cameras, sound recording equipment and similar as well as maintaining all technical systems in the Brussels Parliament buildings.

The Directorate is led by **Mrs Joëlle Rosenoër**  
([jrosenoër@parlbru.irisnet.be](mailto:jrosenoër@parlbru.irisnet.be) Tel. +32 02 549 62 39)

### **THE Brussels PARLIAMENT'S BUDGET**

Total: 44.3million€ (draft budget 2012)

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### **CONTACT**

International Relations & CALRE

Mr Laurent Blasson

Brussels Parliament Office

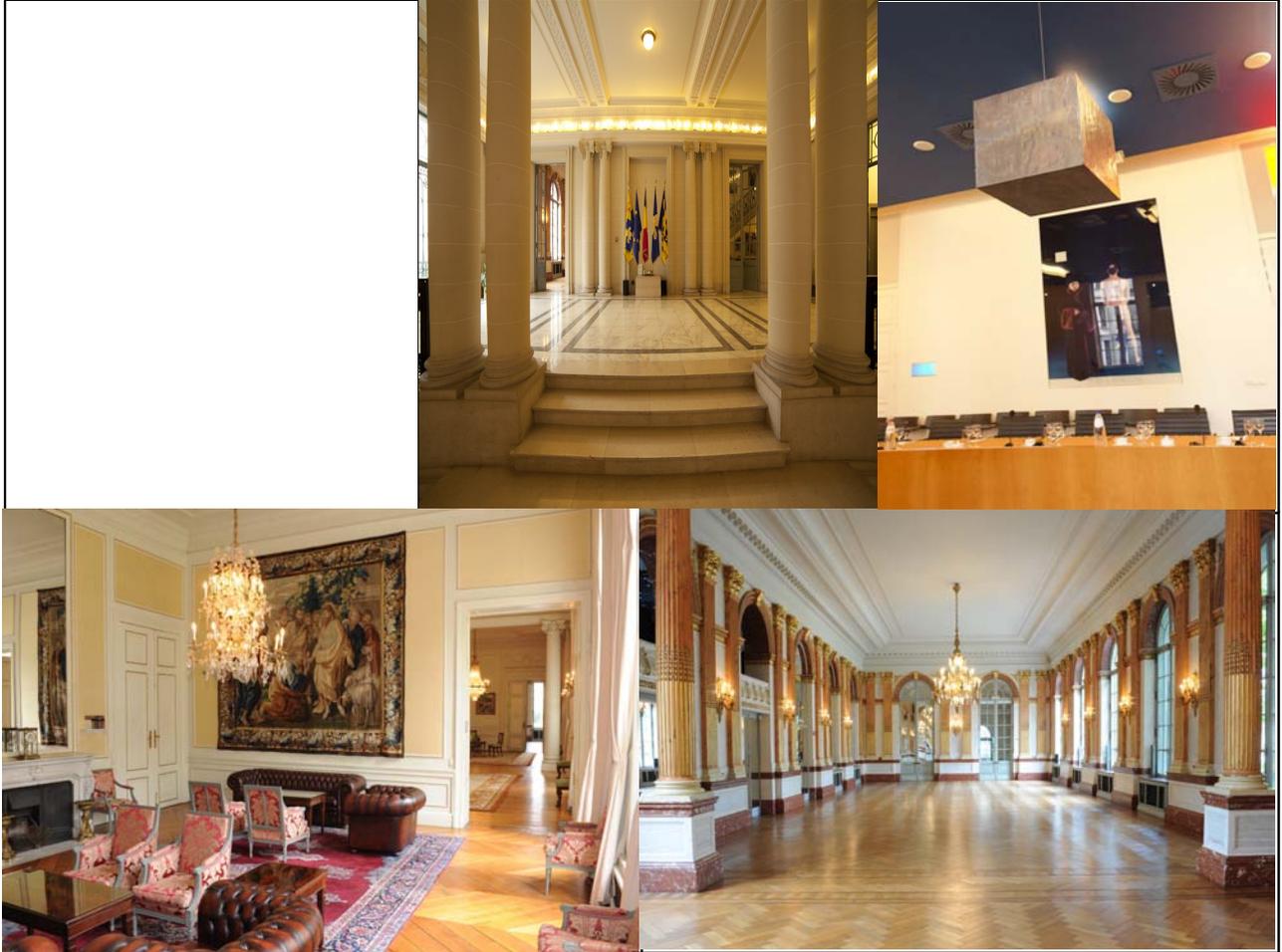
1005 Brussels

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### **LOGO**



## The Brussels PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, Rue du Lombard 69 - 1005 Brussels



Those entering the premises of the Brussels Parliament by way of the rue du Lombard find themselves in a neoclassical building dating from the beginning of the 20th century, the different storeys of which have been converted into committee rooms, and on its roof a new hemicycle has been constructed.

At the rear, however, there are still several wings the origins of which go back to the end of the 17th century - a rarity in the Brussels of to-day. Until then, in fact, a vast mansion belonging to members of the Maes family stood on the rue du Chêne.

### **The Limminghe mansion**

In 1695, the centre of the city was destroyed as a result of bombardment by the French troops of Louis XIV. The land and ruins of the Maes mansion were purchased immediately after by Charles Vanden Berghe, Count of Limminghe, who occupied various administrative positions in the city and was notably twice burgomaster of Brussels. In 1696 he erected a vast, prestigious mansion on two

floors, at the end of an entirely enclosed courtyard with a large garden at the rear which could be entered from place Saint-Jean. The mansion was subsequently bought and sold on various occasions and served as a residence for the Apostolic Nuncio and the English ambassador.

### **Offices of provincial institutions**

Brabant Province and the Dutch State acquired the mansion in 1823 and converted the buildings to house the Brabant provincial government and form the governor's residence. After independence, the situation remained unchanged, but as the provincial institution developed, so the premises became too cramped and dilapidated and at the end of the 1860s various remedial proposals were made.

First, some very small-scale transformations were effected. However, conversion works on a much larger scale were required to adapt the buildings to the needs of the provincial government. These reconstruction works fundamentally restyled the overall aspect.

They explain its present state, in which the varying styles from one building to another mark the successive periods of construction work, even though an obvious concern for overall harmony is discernible.

Some of the rooms in the governor's residence were modified around 1885, as can be seen from the door lintels which are decorated with the Leopold II cipher. In 1907 came the turn of the office wing. The architect of the Ministry for Public Works, Georges Hano, built in its place a wing higher than the original with direct access to the rue du Chêne for employees of the administration. The architect interlinked the different buildings and unified all the façades overlooking the State courtyard. He added a storey on to the governor's residence, on the courtyard side, and increased the height of the building surmounting the porch reconstructed by Hansotte.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the city completed the project to open up the rue du Lombard which had first been envisaged around 1840. A part of the garden of the governor's residence lay in its route and was incorporated. To mark the presence of the province in this new, wide and very busy arterial road, in 1908 Georges Hano planned the construction of a new building on the rue du Lombard side. Works began in 1913 but were only finally completed in 1930.

This neo-Louis-XVI-style building opens on to rue du Lombard through a majestic portal. From the ceremonial entrance hall, the steps of a double stairway lead up to a sumptuous ceremonial room. This room, decorated with mirrors, has windows overlooking the garden and gives access to the rooms of the old mansion. The other floors of the building house vast meeting rooms and offices.

### **The Brussels Parliament building**

When the scission of Brabant Province was ratified in January 1995, the "Provincial Palace" was transferred from the Federal State to the Region of Brussels-Capital, which in turn assigned it to the Brussels Regional Parliament, itself being in search of permanent premises.

It very rapidly became apparent that these premises were unsuitable for their new role. So also in 1995, the Office of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region contacted 25 architectural offices and 18 project management offices with the aim of soliciting candidatures.

As a result of the selection process, the architectural office A2RC and the Berenschot-Osborne project management office came first in their respective categories.

Two major modifications were required: rationalisation of circulation areas and enlargement of the hemicycle.

The A2RC office project contained a proposal to increase the height of the building wing overlooking the rue du Lombard in order to erect the new hemicycle there and this proposal was finally accepted by the Parliament Office after consultation with experts from the Royal Commission for monuments and sites.

The 20th century contribution to this building which has covered three centuries of history is a success. As the new construction is slightly set back from the street front the old parts of the building can still be clearly distinguished but a better view of the contemporary architecture is also offered. A large zinc roof crowns the plenary session chamber, the presence of which is further emphasized by the great curved wall in wood which encircles it. In the hemicycle there is an overhanging mezzanine floor from which the press, political groups and the general public can follow the debates under ideal conditions.

In this same neoclassical wing three large committee rooms plus two smaller rooms in the adjacent wing have been renovated and provided with the latest technical equipment. In each room there is an area reserved for the public and the press, as and when this is considered necessary.

All the elements of this new infrastructure are used for all parliamentary meetings of the Brussels institutions, including meetings of Commission Assemblies of both the Flemish and the French-speaking Communities.

The dimensions of the old provincial council chamber have been retained; on two different levels the chamber now houses a cafeteria and a reading room for the members of parliament.

The four wings at the rear will retain their administrative function. It is here that the President's and the first Vice-president's offices will be located together with Parliament departments: the offices and secretarial services of the registrar and the assistant registrar, general secretarial services, legal departments, general departments, and reporting.

At garden and courtyard level, the mirror room, the state room, the dining room and other rooms dating back to the old 18th century Limminghe mansion which were refurbished in the 19th and 20th centuries, have been either renovated or restored depending on their state of repair.

Finally, several important areas of the building have been embellished with contemporary works of art. A commission for the purchase of works of art, consisting of members of the Parliament Office together with eight external observers from the art world (large museums and education establishments) was set up for this purpose. At the end of 1998, 11 artists were entrusted with the task of creating works for specific areas of the Parliament building. They were Joseph Kosuth for the illuminated frieze, Julien Willem for the Brussels portrait gallery, Michel Mouffe for a set of mirrors and illuminated blocks, Paul Day for terracotta high-reliefs, Guy Leclercq for the re-mounted canvasses, Richard Venlet for the drawings of the electrical installations, Gilbert Fastenakens for the photos transferred to canvas, Yasmina Assbane for the floral kerchiefs, Rudy Bogaerts for the artistic area dedicated to the memory of famous personalities, Wim Delvoye for the "Love letter from Mohammed to Caroline", Patrick Corillon for the "Three stories of Oskar Serti".

Following its establishment on the site of the former Governor's Palace, the Brussels Regional Parliament has asked the architectural firm Art & Build to restructure the interior of the block formed by the rue du Chêne and the rue du Lombard.

The architects have suggested a range of installations including a multi-purpose hall and annexes for the use of the inhabitants of Brussels and their elected representatives, located beneath a hanging garden. This new arrangement creates an essential link between the different sections of the Parliament and enables people to move freely between the semi-circular building, the parliamentary offices, the reception halls and the administrative departments. The area also boasts large atrium windows that provide abundant natural light and extraordinary views of the hanging garden.

The architects have designed this 'city garden' to reflect the theme of the central square or 'agora' of antiquity. A large wooden platform enables exchanges and meetings to take place, and acts as a natural extension of the reception halls. The large blank walls are covered with a wide range of plants, creating a real vertical garden. In fact, thanks to a remarkable technique developed by the French botanist Mr. Patrick Blanc, the Parliament benefits from more than 400m<sup>2</sup> of gardens extending to heights of up to 27m.

Along with the semi-circular building, this new complex helps to reinforce the image of the Brussels Regional Parliament as being in harmony with the city around it.