

PALAZZO MADAMA

France acquired the land on which Palazzo Madama was built from the monks of the imperial Abbey of Farfa in 1478.

In 1505 it was purchased by the Medici family, who carried out major conversion and restoration work, and transferred the works that had been salvaged from the library of Giovanni de' Medici, the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and the future Pope Leo X.

In 1534, the palace was inherited by Alessandro de' Medici, the illegitimate son of Giulio de' Medici who had lived in it for many years before being elected to the Papacy as Pope Clement VII.

On Alessandro's death in 1537, the palace was leased to his wife, "Madama" Margaret of Austria - hence the Palace's name - who lived there from 1538 and 1580.

In the 17th century the Palace was widely restored and the interiors embellished with richly decorated ceilings and friezes. In 1737, on the death of the last Medici, Grand Duke Gian Gastone, the Palace passed to the House of Lorraine. In 1755, it was purchased by Pope Benedict XIV to be used for Papal government departments: the Court, Police Headquarters, the Treasury, and subsequently the Papal Post Office. In February 1871, Palazzo Madama was selected to house the Senate of the Kingdom of Italy.

This entailed radical renovation work. The Chamber was built on the former courtyard, and Senate assembled there for its first sitting on November 28th 1871. Palazzo Madama today hosts the Chamber, the premises of some of the Parliamentary Groups, the offices of the Presidency and some of the services and offices directly concerned with parliamentary business.

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Guided visits

around Palazzo Madama

first Saturday of each month
(from 10 am to 6 pm)

*by the
Institutional Communication Office*



THE SENATE OF THE REPUBLIC



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THE LEGISLATURE

The Italian Parliament comprises two Houses: the Chamber of Deputies, and the Senate, which have identical powers.

Their primary function is to legislate: by passing a motion of confidence in the Government they perform the function of political guidance; they also oversee the Government using their powers of scrutiny. Parliament sits in joint session for the election and the swearing-in of the President of the Republic, and in the event of the impeachment of the President, and for the election of some of the members of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Judicial Council.

THE SENATE OF THE REPUBLIC

The Senate has 315 elected members, who must be at least 40, who are returned by voters aged 25 and over.

In addition to the elected Senators, there are also Life Senators, appointed by the President of the Republic from among citizens who have honoured the country with outstanding achievements in the social, scientific, artistic or literary fields, and former Presidents of the Republic who are ex officio Life Senators.

The President represents the Senate, oversees the work of its organs, chairs the debates, puts

motions to the vote, decides on the voting order and declares the voting results.

The Vice Presidents, Quaestors and Senators Secretaries make up the Senate Bureau, the highest decision-making authority on administrative and disciplinary matters.

The Bureau appoints the Secretary-General of the Senate, who heads all the Senate departments.

Membership of the Parliamentary Groups, which are composed of at least ten members, is based on the political affiliations of Senators. Each Parliamentary Group elects its own Leader and one or more Deputy Leaders and Secretaries.

The Group Leaders constitute an ad-hoc "conference" with the Vice Presidents of the Senate, to assist the President in the conduct of business, by setting the order of business and calendars.

THE WORK OF THE SENATE

The legislative function is exercised jointly by both Houses.

For a Bill to be enacted into law it must be passed by both Houses, with the same wording, before being promulgated by the President of the Republic and published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* (Official Journal).

Legislation may be initiated by a Bill tabled by

any Member of either House, the Government, at least 50,000 voters, the Regional governments and, on some matters, the National Council for the Economy and Labour.

The President of the Senate refers Bills to Standing Committees competent by subject-matter or, in the case of certain Bills, to ad-hoc Committees.

Committees are small legislative assemblies. They can sit in a reporting capacity, when they examine a Bill and report back to the full House, in a drafting capacity, when they draft the Bills that are finally put to the vote in the House, in a legislative capacity, when they examine and adopt Bills without submitting them to the House, and in an advisory capacity, when they issue an opinion to another Committee.

In addition to exercising the legislative function, both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies vote on a motion of confidence in the Government, and may withdraw their confidence through a motion of no confidence.

Senators may also put 'questions' and 'interpellations' to the Government, to seek information on specific matters or on the reasons and purposes of its policies on major or general issues.

